

BROKERING LITERACIES:
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF LANGUAGES AND LITERACIES IN MEXICAN
IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

by

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Abstract

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This dissertation studies how English language acquisition and literacy transformed family relations and structured educational ambitions within a specific Spanish-dominant urban immigrant community. Ten first-generation Mexican-origin immigrant families living in New York City were the focus, all members of a small, under-funded, self-sustained educational mentoring program, whose core of eleven dedicated volunteers were also participants in this qualitative study. The grassroots organization offered free after-school tutoring services while also promoting active family involvement in schooling and positive views toward ethnic and linguistic identities. The organization also helped to mediate and bridge the linguistic miscommunications between schools and language minority parents. In addition, the program cultivated a sense of community and academic participation closely allied to ethnic identity, encouraging a sense of value for bilingualism as a political tool for—and the everyday reality of—immigrant children. Finally, the program also sponsored and reinforced the notion of standard English acquisition as valuable for academic success, while offering a space where standard and nonstandard languages and literacies freely mixed and where bilingual exchanges

between individuals openly nurtured, critiqued, and, ultimately, defended the distinctive, monolingual spoken and written standard English language of schooling.

Through ethnographic observation and analysis of oral and written language at the program's center, the study examines the rhetoric of "brokered" social relations in the bilingual exchanges among the organization's volunteer staff of college and high school student mentors and its numerous youth and adult members, paying particular attention to documenting the various linguistic skills developed by bilingual youth, mentors, and parents. I argue that the notions of culturally valuable literacy skills of translation and language brokering, undervalued and existing outside the dominant models of school culture and literacy practices, were actively utilized at the center. Day-to-day translations between languages for the children participants at this mentoring program meant involving and engaging monolingual family members in their schooling lives, which were largely conducted in a second language. This collaboration in immigrant families, though, produced conflicts from linguistic inequalities which re-distributed authority in family linguistic exchanges. The program's mentors mediated such shared power contexts, allowing language minority parents access to collaboration in their children's educations in English, while also encouraging language brokering skills among young bilinguals.

Dedicated *con respeto* to
all families in times of troubles and blisses;
to my families stretching across two continents;
and especially to my parents, *en confianza*,
Roberto and Anna Alvarez

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Transcription Conventions

,	Brief pause.
. . .	Sustained pause.
—	Sudden stop in speech.
[. . .]	Words omitted.
<i>italics</i>	Indicate emphasis in voice and change between languages.
[]	Words in brackets convey relevant non-verbal information and words inserted for clarification.

Introduction:

Engaged Study: Community Languages and Community Building

“Brokering Literacies” is a study of how English acquisition can transform family relations in a specific Latino urban immigrant community. My research examined the effects of English literacy on family structures within ten first-generation Mexican American families participating in an after-school mentoring program in New York City. Through ethnographic observation and discourse analysis, I analyze social relations in the bilingual exchanges among related individuals in this community setting. For these families, becoming bilingual and accumulating linguistic capital had complex unintended impacts on their relationships. Acquisition by some family members of high-value cultural capital thus secured an asset that re-wrote traditional family relations, which consequently affected family attitudes toward schooling. Paying particular attention to the interactions between parents and children, this research investigates how power relations between English and Spanish literacy fluctuated, especially for dependent children who gained the upper-hand in English. This acculturation was identified as a point of intervention for educational support and community building for the grassroots mentoring program.

My research draws on sociolinguistic theory regarding how bilingual literacy and language brokering reconfigure the social and generational relations and educational outcomes in immigrant families. The concept of language brokering is fundamental to understanding the engagement of social relations in bilingual and bicultural experiences of families in immigrant language-minority (LM) communities. Language brokering is the enactment of distinct strategies between specific agents in local contexts with significances beyond the messages conveyed. As a

theoretical model it considers both the social structures which necessitate brokering for marginalized agents, as well as the agency of brokers to move between structures. The applications of language brokering in this study follow three research objectives: 1) of representing bilingualism and language brokering as socially articulated forms of linguistic capital within a symbolic economy; 2) of examining shifting power relations in the rhetoric of language brokering; and 3) of exploring the consequences of monolingual acculturation into the dominant language. The first objective frames bilingualism and language brokering as observable, complex inter-social practices which enact power relations between communicants. The second objective examines the rhetorical moves behind brokering and how such moves are set within structures of linguistic capital. Finally, the third objective theorizes language standardization and linguistic hierarchy as they relate to family relations among immigrants and to literacy skills of school-based language arts.

Such research draws attention to the disruption of family structures following access to the language of power (Delpit and Dowdy; Portes and Rumbaut; Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco; Suárez-Orozco and Todorova). This dissertation applies that “disruption” thesis in the case of Mexican families associated with a community literacy program at an urban site; it observes oral language uses and written texts as cultural and ideological practices, not merely as self-contained linguistic skill sets (Delpit and Dowdy; Heath; Heath and Street; Purcell-Gates; Street; Valdés). The analysis identifies power inequalities that shape the real lives of immigrant families transitioning between languages and cultures (Bourdieu and Wacquant 7; Stanton-Salazar and Spina 237; see also Bourdieu, et al.; Orellana, *Translating Childhoods*).

My ethnography is localized within Mexican-origin immigrant families at a neighborhood after-school program located in one of New York City’s outer boroughs, one of

the City's *pequeños Méxicos* (Gaytán; Gálvez; Rivera-Batiz; Solís; Smith), or one of the five boroughs' Mexican immigrant ethnic enclaves found in East Harlem; Corona, Queens; Port Richmond, Staten Island; Mott Haven, South Bronx; and Sunset Park, Brooklyn. "Brokering Literacies" adds to the growing body of research into New York's Mexican-origin population. Mexicans are the most numerous recent immigrants to New York City's rich, diverse cultural history. The first Mexicans immigrants migrated to New York after World War II (Gaytán; Solís; Smith; Yoshikawa), but only a few thousand lived there until the 1990s. Mexicans have since increasingly become a presence in the City's cultural ethnoscape, numbering according to the 2010 U.S. Census 320,000. This is a tremendous increase from the 2000 Census figure of 170,000 (Gaytán; Rivera-Batiz; Smith). Different activists I met during my fieldwork put the 2000 number close to 300,000, and the 2010 number at around 400,000. The discrepancy, they claim, is on account of undocumented individuals not reporting in 2000 or 2010. The population size debate withstanding, among Latinos, they are outnumbered by Latino groups who have already made more of a foothold in the culture of the city, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and Ecuadorians (Latino Data Project).

In other parts of the United States, Mexicans form the Latino majority, but not in the northeast. Larger numbers of Mexicans in recent years, though, have begun to find their way to the chilly winters and humid summers of this region so geographically and culturally distant from the borderlands or Mexico's interior. The continued migration of Mexicans from the largely rural Mixteca region encompassing the states of Guerrero, Puebla, and Oaxaca has increased by vast numbers and the Mexican population in New York is experiencing a boom (Dreby; Gálvez; Smith). According to the CUNY Graduate Center's Latino Data Project study "Mexicans in New York City, 1990-2005," the Mexican-origin population is New York's fastest growing Latino

group. If yearly population growth among all of the City's Latino national subgroups continues at current rates, Mexicans will become New York City's largest Latino nationality in 2024 (Bergad, et al.). The same study also points out that among New York Latinos, the Mexican population has the lowest levels of education, as nearly 49% do not graduate from high school (11). These low educational statistics are staggering, especially in terms of future leadership prospects for the growing population (Cortina and Gendreau; Rivera-Batiz; Smith; Yoshikawa). These are some of the lowest educational success rates in the city. The mentoring organization under study here is aware of these dismal statistics, against which its own statistics of success and educational achievement among its small Mexican community offer a valuable contrast.

Moving from the macro to the micro, I apply the methodology I refer throughout the study as critical ethnography. Critical ethnography connects the micro-data of everyday practice with macro theories of social structure. At the micro level, this critical ethnography examines how an under-funded grassroots family literacy community program organized along ethnic lines—run completely by volunteers and in-kind donations, including the program's space itself—fostered household appreciation for schooling in English and Spanish languages and literacies for a cohort of ten first-generation Mexican-origin families and eleven volunteer mentors. At the macro level, the study takes notice of a two-hundred-year history of Mexican migrations into its dominant northern neighbor's lands with attendant linguistic, cultural, and political conflicts across a common border (see Anzaldúa; Bowden; Chavez; Davis; Dreby; Gómez; Limón; Paredes; G. Rodriguez; Tobar; Sánchez; Shorris). At the theoretical level, the study weaves abstractions of asymmetrical power and structured inequalities manifested rhetorically and institutionally as well as individual experience at a family-based community center.

My involvement as mentor allowed me to gain familiarity with the program and its member families and volunteer staff. My experiences with the program as both mentor and researcher for this dissertation have been instrumental in formulating my understandings of the educational importance of forging connections between the languages and literacies of homes and schools (Farr; Guerra; Heath; Martínez; Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco; Taylor; Zentella), and of the absolute necessity of mentorship for brokering relations between families and educational institutions (Rhodes; Smith). Despite the ambitions of the program to greatly affect the lives of its member families, fiscal realities seriously constrained its goals. Operating for most of its existence without a budget and on the generosity of donations and volunteers, the program managed to stay afloat for ten years, and to reach hundreds of families living in the community. Similar studies of New York grassroots Mexican organizations promoting human and legal rights (Gálvez; Solís), and the transnational Mexican community works committees (Hellman; Smith), have documented how what began as movements within the Mexican immigrant community, planned and mobilized by like-minded individuals, formed into non-profit agencies. The problems the literacy center faced as a grassroots program were being “forced to adapt to the expectations of funders, [and to] comply with regulations governing nonprofit organizations and seeking to rationalize, systematize and make more efficient their capacity to attend to the needs of their constituency [. . .] now cast as clients, not simply as members” (Gálvez 104). Immigrant parents who in other circumstances were uncomfortable with educational organizations, either because of language differences or organizational formalities were eased with the non-formal, stand-alone nature of this program. The program’s independence increased community trust for the organization, and it also invited parents as

much-needed participants for the program's successful operation. Families did not feel like clients of the program, but, rather, as necessary constituents.

This parent and family involvement with mentoring and tutoring consistently became the focus of my field observations, and thereby led to the connections between what I saw as learning attitudes toward English and Spanish when reading and writing, and as shared enthusiasm for school work between youth and older role models helping with homework, while also engaging monolingual parents and siblings, who would often also show educational enthusiasms of their own. Mentorship and literacy combine different strands of scholarship within anthropology, linguistics, and sociology. Building on the body of work in literacy and in second-language (L2) scholarship (Auerbach; Brandt; Farr; Heath; Kalmar; Orellana; Otheguy and Zentella; Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, and Todorova; Tse; Valdes; Zentella) and mentoring (DuBois and Karchner; Gaytán; Rhodes; Smith), as well as dealing with the Mexican community in New York (Dreby; Solís; Smith; Gálvez; Gaytán) this study looks to the embedded social relations in which literacy as a social practice gets shaped by and for specific cultural contexts serving different intentions with different audiences.

This approach to bilingualism draws on "New Literacy Studies" (NLS) proposed by Harvey Graff, Brian Street, Shirley Brice Heath, Deborah Brandt, and others (Collins and Blot; Heath and Street; Kalman; Kalmar; Pahl and Rowsell; Purcell-Gates). NLS can be thought of as a de-centering project of postmodernism where literacy is not seen as an autonomous, independent, singular, stable, school-distributed skill, but rather a "bottom-up" historically-dependent, socially-ubiquitous, situationally-constructed, individually-plastic, and culturally-changing phenomenon. In practice, NLS has uncovered the paralinguistic devices used by agents to establish and maintain social relationships in different cultural contexts outside of educational

institutions, such as instant messaging among American youth (Haas and Takayoski), and the fraudulent documents composed by scribes for paying clients in Mexico City (Kalman). The NLS examine languages in connection with identifiable co-occurring features of situations. How meaning gets made thus becomes of critical concern, and how language communities make meaning among members.

From this NLS perspective, my research sought to uncover the positive sociolinguistic tools and cultural competencies bilingual children developed and built upon while brokering between adult monolinguals, and the value of brokering for family functioning. A significant line of research documents “the wide range of linguistic resources available to children in bilingual communities and the ways children learn to choose among these resources for their symbolic value” (Schecter and Bayley 14; see also Bayley and Schecter; Orellana; Vasquez, Pease-Alvarez, Shannon, and Moll; Zentella). The act of bilingual brokering is one unique if under-examined rhetorical skill which has a high-profile in the lives of the immigrant families here studied, but little or no academic presence or value in terms of school curricula or institutional notions of parental involvement (Valdés; Valenzuela; Zentella). Barely recognized or integrated into school-based language arts, the language brokering performed by immigrant children in this study has a community-based language function rewarded and cultivated only outside school. The connection between home and school has often been a site for debate on linguistic inclusion or pluri-lingualism within schools (Valdés; Zentella). The entrance of home languages into institutional instruction has increasingly been promoted as encouraging healthy schooling outlooks, or cultivating a sense of inclusion of marginalized students’ home lives at school (Gee; Labov; O’Neil; Orellana; Purcell-Gates; Tobar; Zentella). Likewise, the entrance of the language

of institutional instruction into homes must be brokered in a manner that reduces the alienation of language minority (LM) parents.

Literacy and language in this dissertation are the overarching cultural frames for knowledge, thought, and action. Shirley Brice Heath asks in her monograph *Children of Promise*, “How can we [as instructors] enable students to use what they already know to move confidently into new learning? How can we distinguish between what our students don’t know and what they just don’t know how to express—in either spoken or written language?” (12). The relation between language standardization and language instruction is pivotal. Students who do not speak, read, or write standard English already know this. Schools can help language-minority immigrant students by recognizing that unilingual standards inhibit family involvement and the dialect relations inherent to families; nor do such monolingual institutional expectations question the misguided negative values and ideas associated with immigrant students (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, and Waters; Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco). As I argue in Chapter 4, it would benefit schools to tap into immigrant “support networks” and “help-seeking practices” (Stanton-Salazar) of immigrant families as junctures of educational mentoring and community collaboration.

Along the lines of collaboration, this study confirms the importance of family literacy for cultivating positive attitudes toward schooling. New ground examined here involves the movement between minority and dominant languages, that is, bridging linguistic divides which alienate immigrant parents from the school-lives of their children. As the coming chapters will discuss, literacy and translation were fundamentally intertwined with the social hopes of educational achievement encouraged by the after-school program. Family involvement along with academic informal mentorship advanced the conversational use of Spanish for academic

work despite its minority positioning in relation to English (Anzaldúa; Galindo and Gonzales; Lippi-Green; Mignolo; R. Rodriguez; Sánchez) but also encouraged language-minority parents to participate with homework in English. This multilingual approach permitted Spanish-speaking Mexican parents into their children's U.S. schooling, despite the difficulties LM parents faced communicating fluently and directly with American educational institutions. The immigrant parents who participated in the organization engaged at some level in their children's educations through seeking out sponsors for their English development. What the community organization lacked in funds and infrastructure, it made up for in involvement, compassion, and energy from its participant families and volunteer mentors. Together the neighborhood organization's volunteers and member families effected positive impacts on youths and parents about language learning and schooling. In conjunction with member parents, the community organization brokered the sponsorship of dominant literacy, and thereby culturally accommodated immigrant families while also encouraging children's assimilation into the dominant language.

MANOS: The Mexican American Network of Students

The children and parents in this research were from ten Mexican-origin immigrant families interacting with eleven core volunteer staff at a community mentoring organization in New York City, here pseudonymously named the "Mexican American Network of Students" ("MANOS"). As a volunteer mentor for several years at MANOS, I have followed the organization's ups and downs as it struggled with day-to-day operations. MANOS's location for four years had been in the basement of San Juan Bautista Catholic church in a notoriously dangerous urban area of an outer borough, which I will call "Foraker Street." During my fieldwork at MANOS, I noted how monolingual Spanish-speaking Mexican American youth

mentees become competent bilingual speakers by learning reading and writing nearly entirely in English. I also noticed how these emergent English-dominant bilingual youth corrected their parents impatiently in English when their monolingual Spanish parents tried to assist with English homework. The English-sponsorship of the community organization offered one avenue for LM immigrant parents to participate in their children's educations, but it also revealed some of the power dynamics in first-generation families living divided by languages (Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, and Todorova).

MANOS offered free evening, after-school tutoring services while also promoting active family involvement in schooling and positive views toward ethnic and linguistic identities. Through ethnographic observation and analysis of oral and written language use at this self-sustained, under-funded family literacy center, I focus on the "brokered" social relations in the bilingual exchanges among the organization's volunteer staff of college and high school student mentors and its numerous youth and adult members. Youth participants in this after-school mentorship program brokered forms of communication between monolinguals—especially their parents and different institutional figures outside the organization's bounds. Outside MANOS, it was common practice for these emerging bilingual children to broker exchanges for their parents in asking for street directions, in business transactions, and when dealing with school authorities. In each of the immigrant families here under observation, only children acquired English-dominant literacy and varying levels of bilingual fluency, thus producing subsequent transforming stresses on parent-child relations and family involvement in their educational endeavors. The child brokers served as liaisons with exceptional influence in bilingual exchanges where they assumed creative or independent agency when communicating for their parents. Chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation argue that when brokering languages in written and oral

forms individuals were situated in linguistic power relations, which at times translated into inter-generational conflicts when bilingual children brokered family and institutional life, and the predicaments of educational success and failure. In Chapter 4, I document how MANOS often helped to mediate such difficulties and to bridge cultural miscommunications between schools and the Mexican immigrant families on Foraker Street. MANOS volunteer mentors also became supportive sponsoring agents in the lives of the youth and parents who looked to educational success as a life necessity.

Dissertation Organization

Chapter 1 establishes the theoretical framework of the dissertation, highlighting Pierre Bourdieu's theory of language use as cultural capital hierarchically valued and unequally distributed in asset markets, following his notion of *habitus*. According to this model, there are no neutral or innocent speech acts; all speech acts are socially structured performances which in turn socially structure the setting (*In Other Words* 20; *Language and Symbolic Power* 34-40; *Outline of a Theory of Practice* 76-78). In Bourdieu's system, communicative relations among senders and receivers are always already situated in structured hierarchies of standard and nonstandard (*Distinction; Language & Symbolic Power*). In each of the following chapters I will look into how such power relations and social games with language compared with other instances of communicative rhetorics and tactics in the linguistic marketplace, especially those experienced as formal in schooling, at home, and at the center. Sociolinguistics, literacy studies, poetics, rhetoric, translation, and narrative theory support my theoretical aims in understanding the language practices of everyday life for immigrant families.

In addition, Chapter 1 argues that in the cases of Language Arts pedagogy, brokered rhetorics and poetics of relations between languages display strategies that could be extended in constructing arguments, encouraging invention, and expanding and modifying notions of critical and poetic differences between standard languages and the social values of nonstandard, minority languages and audiences. The contexts of immigrant family life and schooling in the United States encouraged bilingual shifts and artful rhetorics and poetic turns in two languages in everyday interactions in different family and home situations. I argue that language brokering is fundamental to the bilingual and bicultural experience of immigrant youth in linguistic-minority communities (Orellana; Orellana, Reynolds, Dorner, and Meza) and should be conceived as “biliteracy events.” Biliteracy events are distinct activities between specific actors in local contexts with implicit significance beyond the explicit messages conveyed. Shirley Brice Heath defines such communicative actions as “literacy events” in which writing, reading, or speaking mediate participants’ agencies and relationships (*Ways With Words* 200). The difference in the case of language brokering is that the translator’s rhetorical interpretation of the subject matter mediates and co-constructs messages between languages and often between monolingual parties. Language brokering events understood as biliteracy events are saturated with conflicting authorities—the parents, the children, the organization tutor, each positioned differently in the linguistic and social hierarchy.

Chapter 2 reports the day-to-day instances of language brokering between languages at MANOS. I analyze numerous translation events as documented in my fieldwork, paying particular attention to the self-conscious strategies brokers tactically employed as they navigated between audiences, languages, and literacies. The social values of nonstandard, minority languages and literacy practices will demonstrate how children were sometimes precociously

pushed by their translation responsibilities to assume adult-like authority in their families for the making of meaning and choices, especially when dealing in official genres like applications, disciplinary reports, parent notices and school permission slips. While language-minority parents gained enormously by having bilingual children for translation services, they found themselves in weak positions to cultivate bilingualism for themselves or for their children without assistance outside of school hours. This confirmed research that language constraints, cultural unfamiliarity, and work commitments limit immigrant parent involvement according to their children's teachers' expectations (Menard-Warwick 120; see also Portes and Rumbaut, *Legacies*).

Chapter 3 describes the rhetoric of the "immigrant bargain" (Smith) and the social effects of "survivor guilt" (Gaytán). All the MANOS parents in this study had faced life struggles their children have yet to completely fathom at their young ages, but which their children had heard parts of in stories. Nearly all the MANOS children were familiar with the narratives of their parents' lives in Mexico, and they appreciated the sacrifices the migrating generation had performed in order for the next to gain a better footing in the United States, and subsequently, in life. In Chapter 3, I argue that the MANOS children understood how hard life could be for their immigrant parents because of their family roles as language brokers. As language brokers they were privy to the adult conversations of their parents and other adult monolinguals for whom they brokered. They made contact with their parents in public encounters, and, at times, they witnessed their parents' mistreatment because of their accents. I contend that language brokering and the "immigrant bargain" (Smith 123, 125-126), therefore, were rhetorically related through the brokering of power and identity between social domains. When translating the immigrant bargain and its rhetoric of guilt, the MANOS children felt compelled to "grow up" only when at a certain level of emotional and intellectual maturity. The looming family history narrative

behind language brokering led some MANOS mentees to feel the social pressures of translation, and it led others to give up hopes of impressing their parents. They saw linguistic capital in the form of English as the primary goal of upward social mobility.

Chapter 4 documents how family members who spoke and read only Spanish nevertheless remained engaged and involved in children's schooling lives. I explore how language-minority immigrant parents still learning the dominant language attempted to "sponsor" their children's education and literacy development in the dominant language. Indeed, the LM parents in this study were unable to assist their children with school activities in oral or text-based standard English—which schools assigned in increasingly large amounts, especially during the third and fourth grades. In such circumstances, I argue, concerned immigrant families turned to extended support networks and brokered strategies to compensate for their own literacy limitations. Before finding MANOS, LM parents brokered their children into English language sponsorship. They secured English language tutoring resources through their social networks (Gaytán), eventually finding MANOS. Though removed from the language of schooling for their children, MANOS parents sought to overcome the cultural barriers limiting their involvement in English-language institutions. In the case of MANOS, the context offered a welcoming space where languages freely mix and where bilingual exchanges between individuals openly encouraged, nurtured, critiqued, and defended the distinctive, monolingual standard English language of schooling—sometimes in Spanish, sometimes English, and sometimes Spanglish. Chapter 4 looks to how MANOS as a community organization brokered the sponsorship of dominant literacy as a community organization, and thereby culturally accommodated immigrant families while also encouraging their assimilation into the dominant language. The program also

sponsored and reinforced the notion of standard English acquisition as a valuable prize for academic success.

Chapter 5 details the status of MANOS as a grassroots organization without a stable budget from public or private sources. Though MANOS had been around for over a decade and had achieved significant media coverage and political recognition, it barely stayed afloat, and though afloat remained disorganized. The importance immigrant families placed on dominant language acquisition and educational success for their children will be examined to explain in part the bottom-up support which sustained the precariously under-funded organization. MANOS had difficulties stabilizing its volunteer staff resources so it was often short of sufficient mentors to work with children. Immigrant parents' demands for MANOS's services was high and aspiring parents flocked to the organization in large numbers requesting assistance in learning English and homework support for their children. The failure to provide adequate service had been one material limit on MANOS's impact. Chapter 5 also discusses two other factors maintaining MANOS'S viability: addressing community needs and facilitating community involvement. In terms of community involvement and need, MANOS offered a safe space or "safe house" in Pratt's framework (1991) where LM parents aired grievances about their children's schools, and also a place where they learned more about schools in dialogue with one another, and with mentors such as myself. As a broker itself, the organization thus mediated between Mexican immigrant families on Foraker Street and the larger Mexican community in New York City, as well as between families and local authorities, primarily the formidable New York City public schools. These services were obviously indispensable and in preciously short supply in low-status immigrant communities.

Finally, the autoethnography of my own family experience and position as research/mentor/volunteer also must be acknowledged, which I offer as Chapter 6. My trajectory entailed educational frustrations, cultural disconnects, and ultimate monolingual literacy in the dominant language, and consequently a limited form of social mobility. Motivated to position myself in this research, to “show” my linguistic and cultural journey as a second-generation Mexican American and how it intersected with my research at MANOS, the autoethnography of Chapter 6 discloses the inevitable bias every researcher brings to her or his project, though not all research reports include the Postmodern self-reflection of what I learned about myself when composing my inquiry (Doloriert and Sambrook 587). My English literacy and bilingual family background fundamentally related to the monolingual and bilingual members the families participating in this study perceived in their own bilingual and monolingual experiences, and how they perceived their own literacies in relation to each language. Chapter 6 probes into the politics of parental choice for monoliteracy in the dominant language for second-generation immigrant children. I document this narrative with personal interviews with my parents that illustrate the rich literacies in my family’s immigrant history, and also institutional encounters and experiences with language brokering.

Chapter 1:

The Ethnography of Translation:

Documenting Language Brokering and Power Relations

in First-Generation Immigrant Families

This chapter introduces the mentorship program under study and the ethnographic methodology of my inquiry. I first establish my ethnographic practice before I detail the project overview, which includes sampling techniques used for determining my informants, ten first-generation Mexican immigrant families and eleven (including myself) after-school program mentors. I include my procedures of accumulating, storing, sorting, and analyzing qualitative data gained in this investigation. I then focus on the mentorship program itself, the urban area in which it was situated, and the program's mentor and member demographics. I briefly profile the ten focus families who participated in the study. Then I describe how I established rapport, or *confianza*, in the community. After this introduction of the population methods of my study, I will then discuss my research thesis on the theory of "language brokering" in bilingual exchange vis-à-vis the acquisition of dominant English literacy and its effects on the immigrant families and mentors attending the Mexican American Network of Students (MANOS) program. My first research goal is to document how language brokering by bilingual children imports into the family system elements of disruptive authority; my second goal is to theorize how this disruptive authority may be transformed into a family-bonding tool and a potential academic strength upon which school curricula could build following suggestive work in this direction by a number of researchers from diverse disciplines (Buriel, et al.; Gee; Heath; Hidalgo; Orellana; Valdés, Fishman, Chávez, and Pérez; Zentella).

This chapter details the theoretical lens through which I will analyze brokered relations among families and mentors at MANOS. I frame my analysis within New Literacy Studies (NLS) theory which emphasizes literacy as a social process, meaning that all language use (including translation) is a context-bound, purpose-driven, in-process, and situated activity whose meaning is embedded in the social conditions of its production (Heath and Street; Street). As will be documented in this study, MANOS mentees activated new and distinct power in their bilingual translations: the power to speak so as to enable and shape immediate action and have an action occur, to communicate, and to intentionally miscommunicate. For some of the MANOS mentees, power in language brokering included them sometimes raising their voices to command and discipline their parents and dismissing their parents' nonstandard English accents. At the same time, when language brokering between their parents and English-speaking institutions, youth often felt proud and that they performed a useful service for their households.

Translation between languages is only one aspect of the social activity of language brokering. Language brokering happens between and among audiences as conscious contributions to meaning construction between communicants. Power dynamics are also embedded in language brokering activities and this affects authority in social situations when dominant language proficient youth take leadership roles in their immigrant families. This is the dimension that makes their rhetoric unusual. Children in immigrant families develop responsibilities required by their bilingualism (Dorner, Orellana, and Jiménez; Farr). Translation becomes a form of bilingual power, enacted as leadership responsibility to shape the brokered discourses. I argue that the literacy skills of translation and interpretation in such family transactions are potential resources for academic writing. In recognizing these potential linguistic skill sets, research into the social practices of literacy can identify and examine how skills within families can become

“cultural displays of knowledge [. . .] leveraged for literacy learning” (Orellana 141; see also Buriel, et al.; Orellana and Reynolds). In Language Arts pedagogy, the study of brokered rhetorics and of the poetics of relations between languages provides some promising methods for instruction. These approaches display strategies that could be pedagogically extended in constructing arguments, encouraging invention, and expanding and modifying notions of critical and poetic differences between standard languages and the social values of nonstandard, minority languages and audiences. The contexts of immigrant family life and schooling in the United States encourage bilingual ingenuity through artful rhetorics and poetic turns in two languages in family and home situations (Roca and Colombi).

Language brokering is fundamental to the bilingual and bicultural experience of immigrant youth in linguistic-minority communities (Orellana; Orellana, Reynolds, Dorner, and Meza) and is usefully conceived as “biliteracy events.” Biliteracy events are distinct activities between specific actors in a local context with implicit significance beyond the explicit messages conveyed. These sorts of biliteracy events qualify as “literacy events” because writing, reading, or speaking mediate the participants’ agencies and relationships (Heath, *Ways With Words* 200). The “biliteracy event” is a special case of a “literacy event” because in the case of language brokering the translator’s rhetorical interpretation of the subject matter mediates and co-constructs messages between two languages to monolingual audiences. Like other kinds of literacy events, biliteracy events are saturated with conflicting social relations of authorities—the parents, the children, the MANOS mentors—each positioned differently in the linguistic and social hierarchies of standard English. The bilingual individuals I profile here all lived between languages and experienced the complexities of juxtaposing the “standard” hierarchies of English and the heritage language, and the hierarchies of English in relation to their heritage language. It

is from the socially enacted power differentials where language brokering has its significance for immigrant families living between two languages and translating cultures. Power conflicts were of course part of all kinds of literacy events between adults and children, but the biliteracy events enacted at MANOS were unique in the sense that they offered glimpses into how one community fused languages with reading, writing, and speaking and mediated the power differentials between children, parents, and English-dominant educational institutions.

In Part 1 of this chapter, I introduce MANOS in further detail, in particular the involvement of language minority (LM) parents with their children's English homework. LM parents' everyday experiences with English in life necessitate access to English language brokers to help with communicating important family matters. In Part 2, I step back to propose what I term an *emic* and *etic* argument for my self-reflexive, critical ethnography, a claim for critical ethnography's descriptions of practices from within one culture while theorizing comparatively among cultures. My participation in the study builds rapport or *confianza* with the community, as I became both welcomed by it and a member. For Part 3, I provide a general overview of my project at large. This includes the demographics of New York City's Mexican immigrant population and a brief history of Mexican immigration to New York City. Part 4 frames the project narrative and its research design and methods. Here I detail the MANOS parents and children members involved, and my motives for initiating the study. Part 5 profiles the ten MANOS families participating in the study offering brief glimpses into their migration and education histories. Part 6 finishes the chapter with a literature review of language brokering and how it relates to the critical lens applied throughout the dissertation.

1. Introduction

Speaking with fifteen-year-old Gina Cruz, I asked how María, her monolingual Spanish mother, helped with English-language homework. Gina told me:

Like . . . when she helps me . . . ‘cause a long time ago my older uncle—like, [would] do our homework with us and she would be there and he would tell her what it is . . . so it was really my uncle and mom would help. Like if she didn’t understand something she would go to my uncle . . . I didn’t have anybody else to help me. My mom wants to make sure I do good in school. Yeah, and she would like tell the teacher that I don’t have no one to help me but she was doing the best she can—all of that. She wants me and my brothers and my sister to be—like—she wants us to be stuff that she couldn’t do—you know? And she didn’t do school in Mexico because she had to work and stuff so she wants us to go to school. But she can’t—like—help us a lot, but—like—she always finds us help.
(5 Oct. 2010)

Gina reported the strategy her mother María used for obtaining educational support in English for her four children—Gina and her three younger siblings (at the time ages 15, 12, 9, and 5). Indeed, as Gina pointed out, María did participate in her education by scouting for resources which she could draw upon, but also by sitting with her daughter while she received assistance, thus receiving instruction and explanations herself. It was through her persistent searching that María located MANOS, where I mentored Gina and her siblings. María worked mornings and afternoons cleaning apartments in Manhattan; after work, she would take her four children to two different after-school programs. The last one, MANOS, finished at 8 PM. By around that time, I could see that the Cruz family was exhausted.

Nevertheless, the energy with which María involved herself in her children's educations by seeking resources was fueled by her high hopes for their futures, and for their future families. Despite not being fluent in English, she exerted great pains to make sure her children had access to further English-language learning. This sometimes led Gina, an average student, to have a sense of guilt because she felt like she was disappointing her mother. In the same interview, she said she credited her self-diagnosed low work ethic to be the root of her grade-point average, "[. . .] I think, like, if I try harder I could do better . . . because I'm not working hard enough" (5 Oct. 2010). María, for her part, had several times communicated to me her own sense of disappointment: because of language barriers she wasn't able to help with her children's homework, which she realized as an important part of their upbringing, as well as for future educational successes. She took Gina's grade-point average as her own limitation, which she tried to compensate for with all the different support programs she found. She was typical of MANOS parents in that she went to great lengths to secure mentorship and English support for her children.

Thirty-three-year old María had emigrated from Mexico sixteen years before, and had relocated from California to New York City ten years later. She had picked up bits of English over her sixteen years, but she was still not fluent. In California, language barriers did not prevent her from finding free after-school programs for her children, which she learned about through her social network there. When she moved to Foraker Street, she had to rely on her only bilingual connection in her revised network: her brother Pedro and his wife Rosa. The children's tutoring sessions with bilingual Uncle Pedro happened too rarely because of his long work schedule and also his residence a long train ride away. He was a language broker with limitations for María. María and Pedro, originally from a rural town in the state of Morelos, Mexico, lived in different

boroughs of the city. Nevertheless, María discovered through the years of living in California how and where to find more consistent educational support. Her LM status did not prevent her from actively seeking and securing English resources for her children's bilingual development. When she moved to New York, she used the same skills she had acquired in California to seek out different social programs around their neighborhood, in particular at churches, and in the meantime relying on her brother as the sole means of support, but only for a temporary period. Through such tactics she gained advice in various exchanges with mothers she met through her increasing Foraker Street social network, composed of relatives and friends, as well as friends of relatives, relatives of friends, and friends of friends (Dreby; Gaytán; Hellman; Smith).

The Cruz family, like most immigrants, practiced bilingualism in the concrete contexts of daily experience, in both formal and informal variants in both Spanish and English (Purcell-Gates 211-213). Gina's six-year-old brother Miguel, for example, was familiar with informal and formal Mexican Spanish, standard Spanish, American English, and standard English modes of address. In different contexts he referred to me as *chavo* (guy), *caballero* (gentleman), dude, and sir. Mentoring with MANOS youth, I have learned that for children, linguistic exchanges in everyday practice in all families moved between formal and informal varieties of languages. Conceived in this way, we all broker formal and informal languages in our social encounters. How we exchange communication in the linguistic marketplace depends on the different rhetorical configurations of audiences and situations, or contexts (Zentella). What we understand and acknowledge as the formal varieties of languages are institutionalized, standardized, and legitimated into positions of authority through schooling (Bourdieu and Passeron; Labov; Gee; Heath), and the informal localized varieties of language, though not published or publicly presented, are conducted with practical intentions. For bilinguals, brokering between formalities

in different languages is a complex skill that develops through years of social practice, and requires schooling both at school and in everyday life in general.

Yet it was their everyday experiences in their relations to social institutions, most especially schools, that particularly challenged monolingual LM parents like María—immigrant parents with few economic, educational, and dominant language resources. During my research for this study, I had met hundreds of Mexican immigrant families facing the same educational predicaments as the Cruz family. The primary conundrum such families encountered centered first around negotiating the dominant institutional language with their home minority language. As I mentored and researched families such as the Cruzes, I had observed emerging bilingual speakers like Gina's five-year-old brother Juan learning to read and write usually only in English, while monolingual parents, by and large all mothers, found limited means to fully participate in the learning of their children. Though not in the dominant language domain, they did contribute, however, and this must be recognized, especially because their contributions often pass overlooked by educators.

While both mothers and fathers participated at MANOS, the majority of parents involved were mothers. Virtually every MANOS mother expressed the important role mothers played in the educations of their children. María herself defined the gender division of labor in families like this: “Es bien importante que nos apoyan nuestros niños, y . . . pues . . . eso es la vida de las mamás porque el hombre trabaja más horas. Pero sí, cuando hay tiempo, el ayuda” (It's very important to support our children, and . . . well . . . that is the life of mothers because the man works more hours, but yes, when there's time, he helps) (22 Jun. 2010). All but one family in the study were dual-parent homes. This no doubt contributed to the additional time for mothers to spend with their children, even despite sometimes working part-time. Indeed, most of the

mothers in the study maintained part-time hours. This was as opposed to fathers who worked on average more than seventy hours a week. This created a certain paradox in families where fathers—the parent who typically spoke more English because of contact with English speakers—had less time to practice English with their emerging bilingual children and less time to help them with homework in English. Nevertheless, fathers often did help with homework on their days off from work. The one father of focus in this study, Tomás Rivera, worked fewer hours per week than his wife, 30 hours compared to 45 hours, and as their family schedule afforded, he accompanied his son Edward to MANOS. His childcare duties and involvement were unique when compared to the other fathers of MANOS children.

Typically in Mexican immigrant families, then, the role of seeking help for children with their schooling and scouting for educational resources largely falls upon the shoulders of mothers (Hondagneu-Sotelo). The familial division of labor between the genders based on the available time open to cultivate children allows mothers, who work fewer or different hours than fathers, more flexibility of free time and greater influence on this aspect of their children's lives. For the MANOS mothers who worked part-time, finding babysitters was a challenge, and for some babysitting became an additional source of income.

The MANOS mothers I profile here often pooled resources to assist one another with childcare duties and also by sharing their investigations into school resources. Mothers participated in learning with their children at MANOS as they observed their children receiving tutoring by MANOS mentors. This was in addition to taking part in the daily upkeep of the program, including organizing tables and chairs, cleaning up around the space, and preparing and serving treats for children, mentors, and parents. María admitted to me that she felt her resources were limited when it came to helping her children with their homework. But also by sitting with

her daughter while she received assistance, she thus obtained instruction informally herself, often through the translations of her children. As I previously mentioned, it was through her determined investigating that she found MANOS in the first place.

The clues of LM parental involvement that educators often miss happened at MANOS, because of its intimate setting, and also because of its embracing attitude for bilingualism and learning. As I would read aloud with children, mothers would often watch and read along, sometimes struggling more than their children with the words, and sometimes learning on pace with them. Very often mothers reading with children in English offered assistance in Spanish, while asking me to clarify pronunciation and usage. I would more often than not serve as a guide to their English literacy, an agent of the larger “sponsor” of English literacy as Deborah Brandt describes the macro economic forces that influence institutionalized notions of literacy. I assisted mentees in English, and I sometimes tutored parents who were learning English alongside their children, as well as demonstrating educational habits for interacting with their children. For example, after watching multiple reading sessions between her son, nine-year-old Marcos, and me, Victoria Rico Olivaz began reading to him using a pencil to guide his eye movements on prose, and also to spell out phonics and syllables. She would ask questions—in Spanish—about what happened in the narrative after each page. I watched her tutor her son’s English homework in Spanish, and I understood that mothers in Victoria’s linguistic predicament were not given full credit for their involvement in their children’s lives by educators.

Also not given full credit were the children like Marcos. I must admit, I noticed how upset he was when his mother began using some of the techniques she picked up from me. He admitted he was “kind of embarrassed” to hear his mother read to him in English because of her accent. I asked him if he thought his mother was getting better at reading and understanding

English, and he said, “yeah, because she didn’t know how to say some words and I helped her, and now she knows some of those words” (1 July 2010). Marcos shared his linguistic gifts with his mother in various ways in their family life. Bilingual youth like Marcos, and Gina, typical of all the mentees in this study, understood and came to terms with linguistic disparities in their lives conducted in different languages at school and at home. I claim that one way they negotiated this was by becoming “brokers” for both Spanish- and English-dominant audiences. In the next section, I will describe language brokering between bilingual and monolingual subjects in this study situated from my standpoint as English-dominant mentor-researcher. My ethnographic project began first with the brokering of community service and study participants, which I detail in the next section. I also outline some of the key assumptions about the roles of youth language brokers in immigrant families.

2. Ethnography: The Ethics of *Emics* and *Etics*

I began this chapter with the words of one of my informants reported in my fieldwork because ethnography rests heavily on informant materials. Gina’s voice is compelling because it speaks to the heart of this study, the linguistic and cultural divisions in immigrant families. When she said during the interview that her mother María would tell her teachers “I don’t have no one to help me,” but that she “always” found help, she clarified the importance of the ways languages and education become sources of observed social practices. As I observed and interacted with the Cruz family, and all the families at MANOS, I noticed different behaviors toward approaching learning, academic achievement, and English dominance.

Close reading and “thick description” of observed events can reveal much; though generalizing from qualitative accounts is problematic. Assigning meaning of application to the

material sets values to examining local activities in different contexts. Rather than drawing conclusions based on large sample sizes as quantitative research does, qualitative research speaks to unique cases, and how cases compare with other cases (Purcell-Gates). Valuable qualitative research makes theoretically rigorous connections between how individual cases both formulate and contribute to potential interpretations of cultural activities (Willis). These individual cases add to studies of different situated contexts for understanding the multiple social uses of literacies (Barton, Hamilton, and Ivanic; Heath and Street). It is grounded in the core research values of reliability, replicability, and validity (Heath and Street 28). My aim is to closely examine individual literacy events in a small sample, not to make grand claims for all first-generation immigrant families, or even for Mexican families in New York City. The isolated, small cohort in one respect is seemingly much too inconsequential and limited to make grand theoretical claims about linguistic power and family relations. Rather than look at MANOS as unrepresentative of a larger, quantitative picture of migration, family relations, and language and schooling, I focus on the actual, uncommon, and personal: on the small-scale particularized, grounded, and specific research into a unique multilingual cohort. Thus it is not so much that ten families and eleven volunteers are a limited number of study participants, but instead the longitudinal observations and critical acknowledgements that this grassroots, self-organized community exhibits and challenges certain theories of immigrant parent involvement in the schooling and language development of their children, and how this affected the family formation.

Like quantitative studies, the first fact one comprehends when conducting ethnographic research is awareness that careful observation can reveal only a slice of social life. As an anthropological method of research, ethnography provides a detailed, in-depth description of a

corner of everyday life and practice within various configurations of social relations (Mills). As a research tool, it qualitatively “fleshes out” the “fully sensuous human form believably grounded in and articulated with structural forces, structures and processes” (Willis 353). Social configurations always come into play between ethnographers and informants. All life writing regards the rhetorical orientations brought to the task by and for an unseen audience. This involves studying the political assumptions involved in telling, collecting, editing and distributing what we know. The investigator as much studies data as colors it (Fuchs and Howes 5). The investigator in this relational configuration “starts the game” (Bourdieu, “Understanding” 609) and establishes rules of representing textually the play of the social interactions, as well as the *etic* accounts which abstract practice into theories. The *emic* descriptions I offer in this study narrow to my point of view.

I have chosen to use an ethnographic methodology that gives precedence to the immediate experience of first-generation immigrant families. The activities and logics of agents in this study, myself included, must be understood as rational responses to structures into which we found ourselves historically embedded. Social interactions were the substances of our activities in the informal setting that MANOS fosters. Florence Weber writes in “Settings, Interactions and Things: A Plea for Multi-Integrative Ethnography” that “a social setting often contains a set of ‘sites’ linked to one another by a common definition of the situation and by the mutual acquaintance of the participants” (485). She adds that, “Ethnography stresses not the structural functioning of fields but the reality of the chains of mutual knowledge and interdependence that constitute them. It reconstructs the effective, actualized interactions, including interactions at a distance (through various means of communication), through which the information and judgments that determine practices and acts are conveyed” (485-486). The

common definition of MANOS from mentors and family members was a safe space where children received help with homework, made art projects, and played with friends, and where parents could meet and *platicar* (chat) about their families, schooling, or other things in Spanish. The mutual acquaintances of individuals of different ages likewise represented an inter-generational chain of shared mutual knowledge, and language differences, and how these shaped communicative practices between links. The MANOS space certainly set the stage for languages to circulate.

As I previously mentioned, the MANOS families were embedded in national linguistic marketplace where higher status English dominated and established the value for all relations of communication circulating between senders and receivers in a market economy. The hierarchal circulation of a linguistic marketplace metaphorically capture the ethical responsibilities pertaining to the *emic* of my own linguistic power in communication, and the potential pitfalls this could reveal with interview participants (Bourdieu, “Understanding” 609). Chapter 6 of this dissertation explores the auto-ethnography of my own brokering relationship between the highly prized, specialized form of English I have struggled to attain, and that of the working-class variety of rural Chicano English I was born into. I preface this with my *emic* admission that I am not fully bilingual in Spanish. In fact, I consider myself monolingual English in my speaking, reading, and writing. Translation was mostly on my mind during my fieldwork at MANOS because I had limited communication in Spanish, and MANOS parents had limited communication in English. Consistently I recorded in my fieldnotes how such language divides created power distinctions during tutoring sessions involving triads of parents, children, and myself. I also noted power conflicts in families, such as when children had the power, in English, to castigate their parents for their errors in speaking English. The negotiation of agents’ uses of

languages pointed to where I deemed rhetorics, or shifts of voices for different audiences for which language brokers mediated during biliteracy events. Children's uses of their English skills became self-consciously rhetorical when they adjusted their translations to fit the intended receivers. These youth displayed metalinguistic bilingual awareness in their familial interactions (Solís 126-127). MANOS youth, for example, were acutely aware of different accents in English and Spanish, as well as what accents signified for audiences. As I will explore in further detail in Chapter 2, MANOS mentees and I found ourselves situated within an educational nexus of power that emphasized an essay-text-based literacy. The high stakes English Language Arts examination for New York City was the scholastic language obstacle for several MANOS students, and helping them prepare was one way I tried to mentor them. If children did not pass this test, it meant summer school, or being held back.

Finally, the *etic* and *emic* question of positionality and reflexive ethnographic research methods will continue to be of focus, and will be further explored in Chapter 6. With regards to who becomes an "insider" and "outsider" within discourse communities, I will argue that linguistic and cultural capital partly determine this, but that in addition researchers' tactics of brokering insider and outsider perspectives also position their relationships within communities in ever-fluctuating local and macro contexts.

3. Families Engaging Community and Schooling: Project Overview

The majority of my fieldwork has occurred at MANOS's current location, in the basement of San Juan Batista Catholic Church in a notoriously dangerous area in one of New York City's outer boroughs, which I will call "Foraker Street." Historically, Foraker Street had been home to numerous New York immigrant groups since the early nineteenth century, with

different waves of European ethnic groups and nationalities settling and then moving to suburbs in Queens, North Bronx, Long Island, or Staten Island. At the time of this study, Foraker Street was one of New York City's Mexican immigrant barrios. Like several little Mexicos in New York (Sunset Park, Brooklyn, Mott Haven in the Bronx, and *El Barrio* in East Harlem, Manhattan) the Mexican community of Foraker Street, initially concentrated in the middle of a predominantly Puerto Rican neighborhood (Smith 19-20; 30-34; Solís 19). Because of the racial diversity of New York City, the boroughs' little Mexicos were often ethnically and racially diverse, but they have emerged around areas with relatively recent Spanish-speaking migrants from Latin America (Latino Data Project).

The Mexican population was unique among Latinos in New York City in a few ways. The first was that at just over 70 percent, Mexicans have the highest percentage of foreign-born immigrants among all Latino groups in the New York metropolitan area (Gálvez 23; Rivera-Batiz 1; Smith 28; Yoshikawa 36). Because of this large percentage of non-native immigrants, the cultural adjustments they faced as "newcomers" among more established Latino groups both served as a boon in terms of being able to use their native Spanish, but also a challenge in terms of establishing ethnic difference. Linguistic identity, often enacted as national rivalries, served to divide Latinos rather than unite them. In New York City, Spanish identity was differentiated by accent derived from national origin and region, but also by social class with educated Castilian reigning as the most distinguished in the Spanish linguistic marketplace (Otheguy and Zentella 15-16). In New York City, standard Spanish speakers were predominantly outnumbered by speakers with nonstandard Caribbean Spanish and mainland Latin American Spanish accents (Otheguy and Zentella; Zentella). Among New York's six largest Latino national-origin groups, there were significant differences in rates of primary language spoken at home. 24% and 23% of

Cubans and Puerto Ricans speak English at home, while less than 8% of Mexicans, Colombians, Dominicans, and Ecuadorians did so (Barrera-Tobón 4). Regional dialects of Spanish from all over the Americas and Europe intermingled in New York City, as did different generations of Spanish and English dominance. Linguists have largely grouped the New York Spanish speakers into “Mainlanders”—of the continental Americas—and “Caribbeans,” and the influences of English on speakers from both regions (Otheguy, Livert, and Zentella 770). Caribbean and Latin American mainlander Spanishes accommodated to one another’s accents and vernacular differences. Both dialect and language contact with English shaped Spanish in New York City and promoted, in the second generation, the formation of a New York Spanish speech community (Otheguy and Zentella). In most regions of the Americas and in Europe, Caribbean Spanish has little social prestige, but in New York City it has acquired a measure of local status (Otheguy, Livert, and Zentella 796). In other parts of the United States, Mexican Spanish carried more social prestige, while in New York this was not the case. For youth growing up in New York, the Mexican accent in Spanish and English marked negative social stereotypes about citizenship, education, and class.

The Mexican immigrant population of New York also stood out because it was a young one. Falling in line with 2000 Census data for all Hispanic groups, the Mexican median age was over a decade younger compared to the rest of New York City, 24.3 years compared to 34.4 (Rivera-Batiz 5; “Mexicans Are Now New York City’s Fastest Growing Ethnic Groups”). This number was 30 percent less than the overall New York City population (Rivera-Batiz 5). In 2010, the Mexican median age was still younger than the city average, as the young next generation began to age and young migrants continued to arrive. According to 2000 Census data, close to 60 percent of the New York Mexican population 25 years or older had not completed

high school. In 2008, this number was at 54% (Ramos, Franklin, Gonzalez, and Abina-Sotomayor 8). At 44%, the City's Dominican population also faced similar difficulties. Dominicans and Mexicans in New York City had the highest poverty rates among Latino nationalities at around 30%.

Such alarming educational statistics underscored the need for MANOS's services to Foraker Street's Mexican immigrant community. Yet, despite an enormous unmet need for educational services, MANOS struggled to continue because of lack of institutional support. In this study I follow MANOS through its ups and downs for five years. The under-funded, grassroots organization had struggled year by year to secure a donated location, to recruit mentors, to pay for heat during the winters, and, generally, to provide sufficient services to its members. Despite these hardships, it had persevered for nearly a decade through the sheer will of its founder Carlos Portales, his volunteer mentors, and the MANOS families. From my perspective as one of these volunteer mentors, I had witnessed the organization's attempts at expansion. Nevertheless, MANOS remained essentially the same small-scale, family-driven after-school program it began as. A long-standing goal had continually been to change its shape through its leadership and achieving legitimate non-profit 501(c)(3) status. This goal had always been seen as a work-in-progress. Near the end of my study, MANOS partnered with an already established 501(c)(3) educational organization focusing on the Mexican immigrant community of New York City. In another ten years, the face of MANOS may be completely different. In the meantime, because of the demand within the local Foraker Street community, MANOS continued to function primarily as a homework tutoring center for local children, mostly of Mexican descent. Although less structured than most funded after-school programs, among the numerous social organizations mobilized by Mexican immigrants in New York City, MANOS

was recognized as an established program. MANOS had won several honors from New York City and State governments, as well as from various cultural organizations in the tri-state area, for its services to New York's Mexican community.

The data for my project was gathered primarily over five years, beginning in early 2006, while I mentored at MANOS until the end of 2011. My involvement as a mentor continued after the project as well. My involvement in the mentees' educations justified my research interests to MANOS parents and mentors. When I decided to conduct an ethnographic study of the program and its community for my dissertation research, I was met with encouragement and complete willingness from all involved with MANOS.

The MANOS mentors, of which I include myself, varied in ages from 16 to the late 50s. The majority were young professionals in their twenties who volunteered once or twice a week, usually Friday evenings. Several arrived to Foraker Street in their office clothes, and a few came from distant outer boroughs. Nearly all the mentors were first-generation college students or second-generation Mexican Americans. Several Mexican Americans from different regions of the United States attending college in New York volunteered as mentors. Local youth in high school earning community service hours also volunteered as mentors. Below in Table 1, I provide a list of all the mentors taking part in this study. All names, save my own, are pseudonyms.

Table 1: MANOS Volunteers and Mentors, 2008-2011

<u>Mentor</u>	<u>Age*</u>	<u>Level of education**</u>	<u>Place of birth</u>
Monica Abalos	19	Applying to college	New York, U.S.A.
Liana Abarca	22	Attending undergraduate	Maryland, U.S.A.
Steven Alvarez	31	Attending graduate school	Arizona, U.S.A.
Amy Chen	22	College graduate	Mexico D.F., Mexico
Laura Kruchenko	24	College graduate	Dnipropetrivsk, Ukraine
Pilar Lopez	24	College graduate	Bogotá, Colombia
Leti Navarro	19	Attending undergraduate	New York, U.S.A.
Carlos Portales	34	Attending graduate school	Puebla, Mexico
Roberto Sanchez	19	Applying to college	Puebla, Mexico
Jon Taylor	28	College graduate	California, U.S.A.
Cristina Trujillo	28	Attending graduate school	New York, U.S.A.

* As of spring 2011.

** Also as of spring 2011.

The mentors here listed in Table 1 will be further profiled in Chapter 4 when I argue for the importance of brokers for literacy sponsorship. In that chapter, I will also explore what scholars have theorized about the “free spaces” (Fine et al.) that community-based organizations offer “disconnected” populations (defined by class, gender, race, and/or ethnicity [Solís 99]) where members can mentor one another with educational information outside of a school-institutional context. The members joined a large voluntary staff who helped in one way or another with MANOS. Carlos Portales, founder of MANOS, estimated he has recruited over

1,000 volunteers through ten years of operation to help MANOS in different ways, from the primary function of helping children with homework, to other tasks such as tapping media connections, or raising funds to cover costs for printing flyers, building shelves, or transporting furniture. Portales also arranged a steady volunteer relation with part-time interns from Jesuit universities in Mexico fulfilling social service graduation requirements for a semester abroad. Jocelyn Solís and Alyshia Gálvez studied similar transnational college interns for social programs serving Mexicans in New York. Alyshia Gálvez's *Guadalupe New York: Devotion and the Struggle for Citizenship Rights Among Mexican Immigrants* and Jocelyn Solís's dissertation "The (Trans)formation of Illegality as an Identity: A Study of the Organization of Undocumented Mexican Immigrants and Their Children in New York City" both document how community groups serving the Mexican populations of New York rely on volunteers from universities in Mexico City to staff their programs. As previously mentioned, the structure of the MANOS organization had at times faltered, and numerous volunteers had come and gone, but Portales had always been involved, always sacrificing his time and money for the project to stay afloat. In Chapter 5 I will go into further detail about Portales and the motivations driving him to be a community leader.

The families participating in this study had all been members of MANOS for at least two years, as I wanted to be certain that a consistent group would continue with the study. Many families briefly passed through MANOS, but only a few had truly become "regulars." They composed the core of the families here.

4. Project Narrative and Research Design

At the end of her dissertation studying identity formation among undocumented Mexican immigrants in New York, Jocelyn Solís theorized compelling questions about future research into the Mexican immigrant population: “How do levels of literacy at home affect children’s literacy in school? Does formal schooling prepare Mexican children to become cultural brokers between their families and mainstream society?” (304). Solís’s questions had yet to be answered when I began my research, and I employed her notions of home and school literacies and cultural brokering as pivots to conducting my fieldwork at MANOS. The research project unfolded in this manner: after gaining approval from founder Portales to conduct the study of MANOS and its members and mentors, I advertised publicly in both Spanish and English at the center for volunteer mentors and families as subjects for my research (Appendix A and B). Encouragingly, there was great interest from all the center’s families and mentors. I then informed all interested participants of the potential risks and benefits, and also of respect for privacy. Sometimes with youth language brokers, and sometimes with adult language brokers, I assured parents and children that their identities would remain confidential, and that they could still participate in the study if they didn’t want to sign a release form. Because several volunteers did not possess documents of legal citizenship, the anonymity of these individuals of course needed to be securely reassured. Two individuals gave me oral consent but chose not to sign any release forms. I respectfully accepted their chosen compromises, and was thankful that these individuals had enough trust in me to take part in the study. The potential benefits I assured all participants would be greater understanding by parents of the importance of their participation in their children’s academic lives, and the best routes toward understanding the significance of bilingualism within the immigrant generation.

Those selected for the study were from a steady base of active participation with MANOS over the years. After narrowing the interested participants to ten families and ten mentors, and after receiving signed or oral releases from participants, I distributed questionnaires (see Appendix C and D) in English or Spanish for both children and adults. I conducted my first round of family interviews in homes during the summer and fall of 2010. These interviews were conducted in both Spanish and English with bilingual children and/or mentors serving as translators when needed. I digitally audio-recorded these interviews, as well as interactions with parents, children, and myself when working through homework, or when speaking, writing and/or reading at the MANOS center. The semi-structured interviews began from questions I gathered from different scholarly texts, with impromptu follow-ups. Interview location was left for parents and children to decide, and as it happened, all invited me to their homes. Several families and mentors also visited my home. As a general research practice, the participants chose location and time, setting the tone for comfort.

My data consists of digitally recaptured images of texts produced by MANOS children, parents, and mentors, photographs, as well as transcripts from semi-structured and structured in-person and written interviews. Since late 2006 I had begun visiting homes of MANOS mentees on occasional weekend days in order to tutor. From the families, I also requested and collected as many pieces of writing as possible, treating these as literacy “artifacts” in order to examine how formal and informal literacy practices in the families happened and what they looked like. I also audio-recorded homework tutorials involving other mentors, parents, and children. I gathered and transcribed the information, organizing transcriptions into scenes of “literacy events” (Heath, “Protean Shapes in Literacy Events”; Purcell-Gates) and biliteracy events, searching for patterns in linguistic transactions as data for “literacy as social practice” (Kalman; Loeza). Heath

developed the analytic tool of the literacy event in order to understand the social practices of reading and writing in different contexts, or “any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of participants’ interactions and their interpretive processes” (93). I recorded events surrounding reading, writing, and language brokering, and I collected resulting texts. I categorized these artifacts on the basis of formality, accounting for audience, genre, and attention to the formal aspects of written communication and rhetoric as understood by the producers/audiences.

Ethnographic fieldwork in this manner closely follows that elaborated by Shirley Brice Heath in her study *Ways With Words*, focusing research attention on identifying, mapping, and understanding the nature of out-of-school language and literacy practices of immigrant families (369). I was searching for communicated information in less institutionalized settings; for contexts of more familiar or practical literacy experiences where one need give less attention to formal elements. My hope was to find texts that fell between categories which I think would largely define connections between home- and school-related literacies. “Between” literacy items have different elements in combinations of formality and languages, and as such call attention to genre conventions and audience expectations. Movement between oral and written languages also takes mode into account, as well as acts of translation. For a MANOS program goal, I hoped to find a meeting-ground between home- and school-related literacies that would ultimately benefit bilingual families as a potential homework model.

In Chapter 6, I autoethnographically probe my ethnic and class identifications and how they necessitated reflexive examination of my stance as researcher, and, indeed, how this played out in the conclusions I argue in the study at large. Briefly I will mention that one form of identification between my research subjects and myself which unexpectedly came to the

foreground was the shared history of migration to New York City. As a migrant newcomer to the intimidating metropolis of New York City, I gained a foothold thanks to MANOS, which provided a social escape from my claustrophobic isolation in this new city, far from my expansive network of family and close friends who all lived in Arizona and the western United States. When asked by one MANOS volunteer about the *confianza* or trust I experienced with the MANOS youth I mentored, I admitted I thought of them as *primos* or *sobrinos*—cousins or nephews. Parents of these children I thought of as close friends, and it was through these relations of trust, or *confianza*, that I had come to know entire families in unique ways in a safe setting where I could co-experience the joys and difficulties they faced educationally, as well as socially and economically. As a researcher, this allowed me to gain entrance into the community as an embedded and authentic active participant. My level of engagement with this cohort offers a wealth of sociolinguistic intricacies most researchers don't have access to.

My years in the organization thus helped me build *confianza* in the community. This was important because having trust from the community allowed me to become a part of it, and to participate in it in a worthwhile and satisfying way (see Guerra; Hidalgo; Hondagneu-Sotelo; Smith; Valdés). Mentoring MANOS youth was rewarding, naturally, but more rewarding was mentoring youth along with their parents and siblings. Because entire families were involved at MANOS, I was often privy to some of the intimacies of their lives together—including jokes, gossip, games, and spats. These relations with youth and parents established me as a familiar member of this ethnic community, from which I derived my *confianza*. This relation also entailed sharing a common ethnic background and working-class belief in educational mobility. As an observer and partial insider, my store of *confianza* had its limits. My dominant language, my family history of migration and citizenship, and my educational trajectory, formed limits that

shaped access to particular kinds of rich information in the lives of participants in this study, and my opinions about what I think I observed and participated in at MANOS. Regardless of limits, my membership in the community was what gave my perspective validity. Counters to my objectivity in my research are warranted, though in the same manner that they are warranted in all qualitative studies. The reflexivity of this study, however, recognizes this without furthering any illusions that an objective intimate study of and in communities could ever be possible.

5. MANOS Families: Con Cariño, With Love

MANOS's most important mentors were its active parents, the Mexican mothers of Foraker Street. Research (Gaytán; Guttmann; Hondagneau-Sotelo; Portes and Rumbaut; Smith) in gender roles and the family division of labor point to the cultural responsibility of education as “motherly” caretaking. By and large this was true at MANOS, though at different times fathers could also be found helping around the center, either with homework, or with helping to move desks and chairs, or cleaning up. Mentoring at MANOS, though, I learned about families through the interactions I had with mothers and children, as mothers were the primary regular caretakers I encountered. They were exceptional in helping their children succeed in school, despite their limited English abilities, and they contributed to their children's educational needs in manners deemed fit and necessary for their children's well-being.

The MANOS mentees ranged from ages two to seventeen. Most were born in the United States. All were fluent bilingual Spanish and English speakers but nearly all did not know how to read or write Spanish, and were “below average” in reading and writing English. In all their cases, bilingual spoken fluency did not translate into bilingual textuality. Those who were called “1.5 Generation” youth, that is, who were raised to age 10 or so in Mexico, were all able to read

and write Spanish; in general, the longer youth from generation 1.5 were in the United States the more proficient their spoken English and the worse their spoken and literate Spanish. Not a single parent in my association with MANOS had been fluent in English speaking, reading, and writing. The Mexican immigrant parents in this study were all significantly older than the median age of 2000 Census data, at 33.5 years compared to 24.3. Two parents had completed their high school educations—one, a father who earned his diploma in Veracruz, Mexico, and the second a mother earned her General Education Development (G.E.D.) diploma in New York. All the parents in this study hailed primarily from south-central Mexico, in particular the states of Puebla, Morelos, and Veracruz, as seen in Figure 1.1.



Figure 1.1: the Federation of Mexican States. The Mixteca region encompasses the states of Guerrero, Oaxaca, and Puebla.

Below in Table 2, I offer a list of the participating MANOS families. I follow this with brief profiles of each family to conclude this section of the chapter. As the case with the MANOS mentors in this study, all names are pseudonyms.

Table 2: Parents and Children Involved at MANOS

Parent	Age*	Birthplace	Children	Age	Birthplace
María Cruz	33	Morelos, Mexico	Gina	15	California, U.S.A.
			Susan	12	California, U.S.A.
			David	9	California, U.S.A.
			Juan	5	New York, U.S.A.
Linda Fernandez Mejia	34	Puebla, Mexico	Jesús	13	New York, U.S.A.
			Marisol	11	New York, U.S.A.
			Flor	7	New York, U.S.A.
Elisabeth Gonzales	33	Puebla, Mexico	Dieguito	9	New York, U.S.A.
			Frankie	6	New York, U.S.A.
Reina Molina Vasquez	32	Puebla, Mexico	Felix	10	New York, U.S.A.
			Samantha	8	New York, U.S.A.
Jaclín Montez Ybarra	34	Puebla, Mexico	Nansi	10	New York, U.S.A.
			Ana	7	New York, U.S.A.
			Gloria	4	New York, U.S.A.
Victoria Rico Olivas	36	Puebla, Mexico	Marcos	9	New York, U.S.A.
Tomás	29	Veracruz, Mexico	Edward	9	Puebla, Mexico

Rivera Altamirano

Guadalupe	38	Puebla, Mexico	Sarita	17	New York, U.S.A.
Rubio			Felipe	11	New York, U.S.A.
			Miguel	6	<u>New York, U.S.A.</u>
Evelyn	28	Guerrero, Mexico	Nico	8	New York, U.S.A.

Saucedo Lopez

Juana	31	Puebla, Mexico	Luis	11	New York, U.S.A.
Uribe Sanchez			Pablo	4	<u>New York, U.S.A.</u>

*As of spring 2011.

The Cruz Family

María Cruz and her four children had been members of MANOS for two years. The family had moved to the east coast six years ago, after living near her sister's family in California for ten years. María's brother lived in a different *pequeño México* in another borough of the City, and he convinced her that work opportunities and treatment of immigrants were better in New York than California. She was born in a rural area of Morelos, Mexico, which she noted was the reasoning why she had only two years of formal schooling. Her father died when she was young, and her mother supported María and her six siblings as a migrant farm worker throughout the central and northern Mexican countryside, traveling with the crop seasons across the country. María noted that she and her siblings also worked to contribute to the family income. She immigrated to the United States when she was sixteen years old. She worked cleaning offices and apartments in Manhattan.

María's first language was Mixtec, an indigenous language to Mexico. She learned to speak Spanish in Mexico growing up, but Mixtec was the language of her small home community in Morelos. Later in her life, she learned to read and write Spanish in California where she simultaneously had been learning more spoken and written English. Her children were soccer enthusiasts, and her daughter Gina demonstrated a remarkable commitment to helping her mother. Gina always translated bills, report cards, and generally speaking, anything written in English deemed important. "Because I have to help her, because for some of the stuff in English she don't have anyone to help her. And she helps me too," Gina said during an interview (29 May 2010).

The Cruz children all attended San Juan Bautista's private school. Gina attended a private Catholic high school near Foraker Street, and her younger siblings all attended the K-8 school, which also housed MANOS in its basement in the evening hours. The tuition for all four Cruz children was covered by scholarship. María was proud her children were able to have a private, religious education.

The Fernandez Family

I've known the Fernandez family for all five years I mentored at MANOS. Linda had migrated from Puebla, Mexico when she was eighteen, and she came directly to Foraker Street where she had cousins and friends of her family from her *pueblito* (small town) already settled. She had eight years of formal schooling in Mexico, after which she began working to help support her family. For employment, she used the term *alma de casa*, or housewife. She knew of numerous after-school organizations around Foraker Street, and she constantly searched out resources for her children. She was learning English at one organization up the street from

MANOS. Her children often reported to me they felt exhausted from all the programs they attended. According to eleven-year-old Marisol, “We go from one after-school at our school, then to another one at the church, and then to MANOS” (30 Apr. 2010).

The Fernandez children attended a charter school several blocks down from Foraker Street. When I first met them, Marisol and Flor attended San Juan Bautista’s elementary school, while Jesús attended a nearby public school. Jesús had been diagnosed with a learning disorder, and the Fernandez parents found more support for him through the public school system than through the limited resources at San Juan Bautista.

The Gonzalez Family

Elisabeth Gonzalez and her sons Dieguito and Frankie have been members of MANOS for five years. Elisabeth emigrated from Puebla, Mexico fifteen years ago, and directly to Foraker Street. She completed six years of formal schooling in her *pueblito*. She worked as a caretaker for elderly individuals around Foraker Street. Her father originally immigrated to New York in the early 1980s. The family was completely reunited in the United States in 1995.

When Elisabeth first arrived at MANOS with her two boys five years ago, they were still speaking largely only Spanish. The shift to English dominance had not been subtle with these two children, as I noted that once Dieguito began learning English, his younger brother did as well. “He copies what I do, so my dad said to make sure I do good stuff so he will do that too,” he said during a coloring session/interview we had one day after he finished his homework (2 Nov. 2011). The two boys attended a charter school several blocks south of Foraker Street—the same charter school as the Fernandez children. When I first met Dieguito, however, he was

attending a public school, the same school as Marcos Rico. Elisabeth opted for the charter school route after learning about it from MANOS mothers.

The Molina Family

Reina Molina Vasquez was originally from a small town in the state of Puebla. She completed eight years of formal education. Reina migrated to New Jersey seven years ago, and she moved to Foraker street five years ago. She and her children had been MANOS members for four years. Reina had earned her G.E.D. diploma in Spanish in New York, and she worked as a nanny for a wealthy family living on the Upper East Side.

Her children were very talented. Samantha had a knack for art. Felix, often the last of all MANOS children to finish his homework each night, had a restless imagination and a charming sense of humor. When overhearing some *chilangos* (Mexico City dwellers) speak their distinct style of Spanish, he picked up a new phrase, which he used with me each time I asked him to write longer compositions in his homework.

“No mánces, güey,” he said with perfect prosody, which he then equally translated effecting the Mexican sing-song accent, “no wáy, dude.”

The Molina children both attended a charter school on Foraker Street, a block away from the MANOS center, and the same charter attended by the Montez and Uribe children. Felix had attended two public schools before attending the charter school. Samantha began her schooling at the charter school. Reina was not pleased with her son’s progress at the first public school, and after a difficult encounter with the school’s administration, removed him to another school. Still not pleased with her son’s education, she heard of the lottery for the local charter school through

MANOS parents. She has been much more content with the charter school than with either of the public schools.

The Montez Family

Jaclín Montez Ybarra had brought her three daughters to MANOS for four years. She was originally from Puebla, Mexico and had immigrated to California twelve years ago. Three years later, she made her way to New York. In Mexico, she had completed six years of formal education.

The Montez Family lived down the street from MANOS. Indeed, they also lived directly next door to another family social program—Jaclín was studying English there. I had observed how the two daughters Nansi and Ana increase their engagement with their schooling, as they each compared grades, homework assignments, and reading selections “at their level” according to Nansi. Ten-year-old Nansi often checked over the homework of her younger sisters, as well as her mother. The youngest, four-year-old Gloria, had been engaging with English at MANOS since she was an infant.

Nansi and Ana attended the charter school located a few blocks away from MANOS. They also attended a Catholic women’s and children’s center that offered after-school homework tutoring and activities. Jaclín always found avenues to gather information about school quality and programs for her children. Because she lived directly next-door to the women’s and children’s center, she was well connected to local offerings and help sessions sponsored by the established non-profit, as well as within walking distance from MANOS. Nansi and Ana were classmates and friends with the Uribe and Molina children. Gloria attended Head Start and was in the same class with Pablo Uribe.

The Rico Family

Victoria Rico Olivas emigrated from Puebla, Mexico to New Jersey ten years ago. She arrived in the same area as Foraker Street two years later. She had six years of formal schooling in Mexico. She had been active in MANOS, along with her son nine-year-old Marcos, for four years. During the end of his first grade year, Marcos was sent home for “fighting and lying,” as he told me. He has been one of the more difficult students MANOS mentors worked with, but with patience and dedication invested in his well-being, he had certainly become one of the mentors’ favorite personalities. He invited me to his birthday party the last few years, and acknowledged to his young friends that I was one of his “oldest best friends.”

Marcos attended a public school several blocks north of Foraker Street, the same formerly attended by Dieguito Gonzales. Victoria did enter Marcos for the lottery at the same charter attended by the Molina, Montez, and Uribe children, but he was not drawn. Nevertheless, Victoria was content with Marcos’s school because as she put it to me through a language broker, the schools “aquí son mejores que Mexico” (here are better than Mexico).

The Rivera Family

Tomás Rivera Altamirano was born and raised in Veracruz, Mexico. At the age of 18, he migrated to New York, where he has lived for 11 years. He had been employed in different delis around Foraker Street, and he currently worked the early morning shift at the deli just up the street from his family’s apartment. He had completed ten years of formal education in Veracruz.

Nine-year-old Edward was small for his age. He wore glasses, and he had a shy but outgoing demeanor—once one came to know him, he warmed up. His father Tomás always accompanied his son to the center, and he sat with him as he did his homework. On certain days

of the week his homework was in Spanish, and on others, English. A MANOS mentor gave him the nickname “Turtle” and this stuck.

Turtle had attended a public school west of Foraker Street, but had recently begun attending San Juan Bautista’s private school on the same sort of scholarship as the Cruz family. His father Tomás was looking into entering him into a charter school lottery. Like Victoria, he was interested in the charter located down the block from MANOS.

The Rubio Family

Guadalupe Rubio was from the same town as Elisabeth Gonzales in Mexico, where she completed six years of schooling. Both of these women had known each other growing up, and both belonged to the same network of friends and acquaintances of emigrants from the same *pueblo* in New York. She had lived in the area close to Foraker Street for 22 years. She was not employed outside her household. The family had been involved with MANOS for three years.

Sarita, the eldest of her children, was a high achieving high school student, a success by all accounts, and she mentored at the organization. Her brothers were sharp, intelligent, and poetic. Felipe, for example, made a book of poetry when he was eight. The children all attended public schools some distance away from Foraker Street. The family was one of the only MANOS families that owned a vehicle and this facilitated their mobility away from the general Foraker Street area. The public school Rubio children attended served a higher tax bracket in the borough, and therefore offered the children more resources. For her part, Sarita attended a high school in a different borough of New York City. She gained entry into one of New York’s more competitive high schools.

The Saucedo Family

Evelyn Saucedo Lopez emigrated from Guerrero, Mexico ten years ago. She had completed ten years of formal schooling in Guerrero. She had heard about MANOS from Marta Robledo, the mother of Edward Rivera. Formerly employed with Marta at a restaurant in Manhattan, she and her son had been members for MANOS for about a year-and-a-half. She currently worked part-time cleaning apartments in Manhattan and lived in Spanish Harlem. Several mentors had expressed frustration when working with her son Nico because of his wandering attention and sometimes difficult personality. His patient mother often would sit with him in order to help keep him focused. The attendance at MANOS for this family often varied.

Nico attended the same public school previously attended by Edward Rivera. In fact, Edward and Nico were ESL classmates at this school, and they became friends. Evelyn and Edward's mother Marta became good friends as well. Evelyn, like Victoria Rubio, entered her son in a charter school lottery but was not selected. She wanted her son to attend a better school because she felt her learning was suffering. She did not want to enroll him in the San Juan Bautista private school because she feared—like Linda Fernandez—that his diagnosed learning disability would not receive the same attention as it would at a public school. According to Evelyn, however, she felt that a charter school would do an even better job at this.

The Uribe Family

Juana Uribe Sanchez emigrated from the same *pueblito* as Jaclín Montez Ybarra, from whom she learned about MANOS four years ago. She has lived in New York for thirteen years, and before that for two years in Mexico City. She completed eight years of formal schooling in Mexico. She was quiet, very intelligent, and understood a great deal of English although she

tended to be quiet in social interactions. I'd been working with her eleven-year-old son Luis on his writing; she reported his improved engagement with reading on his own at home.

Before coming to MANOS, Luis was held back in first grade at his charter school, so his mother looked for programs to help him with homework. Because she worked difficult hours cleaning apartments in the city, she and Jaclín had arranged a childcare schedule where they watched one another's children at different times while one worked. The two families were very close. Also, the Uribe family lived in the same house as the Rubio family.

Luis attended the charter school down the street from MANOS, and, as mentioned previously, he was friends and classmates with the Molina and Montez children. Pablo, as also mentioned, attended Head Start, and was classmates with Gloria Montez. Juana found it helpful to have the network of support offered by Reina Molina and Jaclín Montez. The three mothers often consulted one another about school decisions. The three had recently teamed up with mentor Pilar Lopez to research middle school options online.

6. Brokering Languages and Literacies: Literature Review

At the heart of my theoretical apparatus in this dissertation is the economic term "brokering." I use the term to designate here an exchange activity between three or more parties as informed by thoughtful triad configurations examined by Georg Simmel in *On Individuality and Social Forms*. At MANOS, the power triads were configured in unique ways, unlike what the children would experience with the native English speakers at their schools. Pierre Bourdieu's metaphor of the linguistic marketplace helps explain the power reversals occasionally experienced between children and their parents when translations are involved. When LM parents entered triads with their children and MANOS mentors, their subordinated positions

when speaking with teachers at school were re-arranged. Power relations inscribed within the teacher-parent dyad, which typically exaggerate the linguistic capital of educated teachers, can strain collegial relationships between the standard language of educators and LM parents. In contrast, in the MANOS triads, the voices of LM parents were heard and respected, translated and interpreted. As language brokers, the MANOS youth were included in the configurations, and their thoughtful input and translations were elicited from monolingual parents, mentors, and other adult and youth volunteers. Language brokers became the axis of triads between monolingual audiences. With modeling from bilingual mentors, mentees also learned how to teach parents, mentors, and volunteers alike, while parents, mentors, and volunteers also learned from and helped one another.

At MANOS, mentees were in the positions of students receiving guidance from adults more proficient in the dominant English language. Yet when brokering more administrative written materials on their own, report cards for instance, mentees not only had to “grow up” by taking direct responsibility for what the text said, but also had to be adult enough to understand the consequences of what their teachers intended to communicate (and in two languages at that). And because English in the United States is the cultural dominant, or, as Richard Rodriguez in *The Hunger for Memory* puts it, the “public” language, language brokering youth have access to developing their skills in this linguistic asset while their LM parents do not. Nevertheless, translation presupposes a multilinguistic setting in which participants do not control all the linguistic forms. It is the forming of linguistic bridges between networks of learning inside and outside institutional settings. The triad shape of social relations offers fruitful data related to social power distributions because it “exhibits in its simplest form the sociological drama that informs all social life: the dialectic of freedom and constraint, of autonomy and heteronomy”

(Coser 187). Triads and the shape of power distributions produce a pair and “other” tertiary, which alters power relations circulating among communicants. Analyzing the discourse triad calls dynamic “attention to certain characteristics of the three-person situation” and an analysis of how “the position of the third person impinge[s] upon the other two, whether this position be as mediator, as holder of the balance of power, or as constant disturber of the solidarity enjoyed by the other two” (Mills 351). At the heart is the power broker, the mediating participant linking or destabilizing the link of communication among disconnected communicants.

The linguistic activities of brokering and being brokers color all the exchanges of languages analyzed in this study. To “language broker” is to serve as liaison with influence in exchanges between individuals, to partake in an exchange as an active audience assuming creative or independent agency (Orellana). According to Lucy Tse, language brokers “influence the content and nature of the message they convey, and ultimately affect the perceptions and decisions of the agents for whom they act” (180; see also Buriel et al; Jones and Trickett; Portes and Rumbaut; McQuillan and Tse; Weisskirch and Alva). Language brokers do not always change messages to suit their own advantage, though they certainly reserve that right, especially the right not to translate material threatening to their own views.

I use the term “broker” as a designated position within the triadic social activity. Youth language brokers studied in this dissertation who mediate adult-to-adult conversations at MANOS often voiced their concerns about the translated contents of both oral and written texts, “para-phrasing” texts between different monlinguals (Orellana 26). The children in this study brokered for parents at the center, but also in such tense circumstances as admission to emergency rooms, consultations in law offices, and interviews with child psychologists and school counselors. In one case, Sarita, the seventeen-year-old daughter of Guadalupe, brokered

between her Spanish-speaking thirty-eight-year-old mother and the English-speaking teachers of her two younger brothers, offering her mother more than mere translations; she provided analyses of situations and assumed the function of adviser. Especially in matters academic, her bilingual control of English and Spanish had increased her family stature in the eyes of Guadalupe, resulting in a role reversal of sorts where the child guides, counsels, or socializes the parent. As Orellana rightly contends, second-generation language brokers in families don't always see themselves as parents to their parents. Rather, language broker youth consider their translations as contributions to the good of the family. Sarita, incidentally, was initially a mentee in the program but later became involved as a mentor.

My observations at MANOS indicated that children and adolescents language brokered mostly for their parents and other family members, and that language brokering influenced family dynamics. Studies of language brokering by Robert Weisskirch argue that during language brokering, "the authority position of the parent may be suppressed as the child or adolescent acts as the spokesperson for the family" (546). During such cases, children of immigrants become "parentified." (Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco 74-75). When the MANOS mentees at the center assisted their parents with written and spoken English, there sometimes was a family role reversal where children socialized parents (Schiefflin and Cochran-Smith). At the same time, however, when I asked different MANOS mentees about translating for their parents, they saw it as something they owed their parents, on a level with keeping spaces clean and doing homework. Without doubt, there were instances when language brokering disrupted power relations among parents and children, but these re-positionings were not stable as no child wields consistent power over parents. How the relations fluctuate is only a matter of contexts and situations. Power reversals are both positive and negative effects of

language brokering, but linguistic skills develop here as well in the movement between languages in communication. Studies by Dorner, Orellana, and Li-Grining find that “higher levels of language brokering were significantly linked to better scores on fifth- and sixth-grade standardized reading tests” (451). This suggests that language brokering could be emphasized in schools with bilingual students as an untapped potential.

Marjorie Faulstich Orellana’s research has been on the cusp of understanding how broker-mediated social events affect the children of immigrants and their schooling potential. She argues in her ethnographic fieldwork in Chicago and Los Angeles that “children take on a wide variety of translating tasks and that these require considerable linguistic, arithmetic, and social-cultural dexterity” (Dorner, Orellana, and Li-Grinning 452). The researchers provide examples of bilingual youth who “explain their own or siblings’ report cards to their parents, translate at doctor’s offices and banks, make purchases at local drug stores, fill out credit card applications, screen phone calls from telemarketers, and translate movies and television shows for family and friends” (452). Added to this dimension of the social-cultural practices of brokering is the extension into the social-cultural practices of textual interpretation and literacy. Acts of textual interpretation (typically of the children’s homework, but sometimes over teacher comments and report cards) are literacy events, as theorized by Heath, where a text of some kind is integral to verbal exchanges between community members through which they deploy collaborative interpretation. Heath finds that individuals with limited schooling turn to their communities for mutual aid in making sense of official documents received from authorities. She records how nonstandard English speakers use collaborative efforts to understand standard English texts. Such literacy events mediated by texts are further complicated when second-language translation is involved. Over the years, my research interests in languages and my

mentoring experience at MANOS introduced me to what New Literacy Studies (NLS) scholars must deem as biliteracy events happening in and between families. The NLS reframed literacy as social practice, highly-contextualized, culturally-situated communication.

The brokering Heath describes among families and communities using nonstandard dialects also takes place at MANOS but with the additional layer of translation. The mentees' skills of translation developed through family interactions within the bilingual community of MANOS. These skills affected their outlooks on learning and dealing with social situations. Jocelyn Solís argues that bilingual children develop a sense of linguistic power, which in turn has the ability to "affect their relationships in other spheres, or how they place contradictory demands on their lives. For instance [. . .] children may [. . .] acquire [. . .] skills that can cause tension later when they question parental authority" (155; also Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco 74-75). On more than one occasion, I observed emergent English-dominant bilingual children at MANOS correct their parents impatiently in English when their monolingual Spanish parents tried to assist with English-only homework, saying to their LM parents in English such things as "you're dumb" and "you can't read." At such moments, some MANOS parents defended themselves in Spanish and some did not. Some parents quietly submitted to their children's rude remarks and continued trying to assist using their Spanish literacy skills and heavily-accented spoken English. This disrespect of children for parents and the tolerance of such rudeness by the parents contradicted the normally strict parent-child protocols in immigrant families (Smith 8; Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco 75).

These intra-family conflicts regarding competence in English showed some signs of resolution. For example, the timid use of English among monolingual mothers could lead to them becoming more confident in trying to speak English, though "with an accent" (Lippi-Green). As

the parents struggle to speak English, some children became more forgiving and even encouraging. At the same time, other students harbored shame and embarrassment for their mothers when they tried “sounding like they know how to talk English”—as one mentee put it to me. Acquisition by some family members of high-value cultural capital thus secured an asset which occasionally re-wrote traditional family relations.

The sociolinguistic dimension of child-parent power relations can be framed within Pierre Bourdieu’s status-based theories of social inequality. Bourdieu synthesizes a status-based social model of language economy based largely on J.L. Austin’s theories of performativity (*How to Do Things With Words*), Basil Bernstein’s theories of class-encoded language (*Class, Codes, and Control*), and William Labov’s research into the social stratification and “nonstandard” usage (*The Social Stratification of English in New York City*). Bourdieu economizes differential language use into a hierarchical market system of unequal linguistic capital, extending his theories about the structured distribution of various forms of capital: cultural, economic, social, and symbolic (*Distinction*). All speech and textuality in society, according to this theory, are ascribed different levels of “distinction” or prestige (*Homo Academicus; In Other Words; Outline of a Theory of Practice*). Bourdieu examines linguistic exchange as an always already structured interaction whose form and content carry certain ascribed levels of value or distinction, low to high. Bourdieu defines linguistic exchange in *Language & Symbolic Power* as

a relation of communication between a sender and a receiver, based on enciphering and deciphering, and therefore on the implementation of a code or a generative competence—is also an economic exchange which is established within a particular symbolic relation of power between a producer, endowed with

a certain linguistic capital, and a consumer (or a market), and which is capable of procuring a certain material or symbolic profit. In other words, utterances are not only (save in exceptional circumstances) signs to be understood and deciphered; they are also *signs of wealth*, intended to be evaluated and appreciated, and *signs of authority*, intended to be believed and obeyed. [. . .] The exclusive goal of linguistic production and the distinctively instrumental use of language which it implies generally clashes with the often unconscious pursuit of symbolic profit. For in addition to the information expressly declared, linguistic practice inevitably communicates information about the (differential) manner of communicating, i.e. about the *expressive style*, which, being perceived and appreciated with reference to the universe of theoretically and practically competing styles, takes on a social value and symbolic efficacy. (66)

The value or consequence of an utterance or text produced by all speakers or writers, then, depends on the socially-ascribed value of what they say (message), how they say it (linguistic form), who they are (social status), and who they are addressing (audience). A certain “amount” of cultural capital is behind each linguistic “exchange” agents make. How much “capital” an agent has—whether because the agent is a high-status individual or one who manipulates high-status discourse well—“credits” one’s authority, one’s perception by others that she or he is socially dominant. Differently valued forms of speech and writing structure the market relations of linguistic exchanges, according to this framework. In the case of language brokering at MANOS, the mentees capture the most valuable language (English) while not in its most valued standard form, but with enough value to disrupt their social status (lesser than adults), and sometimes leading to a contradiction that causes disruptions in the family system.

For LM families, the academic English required by schooling necessarily entails language brokering and power inequalities. The ability to translate seamlessly between languages is a form of symbolic power. It permits non-English agents to broker linguistic capital in the linguistic marketplace, and I argue language brokers profit in a number of ways. Their possession of English in their families signifies Bourdieu's notion of ethos in *Language and Symbolic Power*: "a sign of status intended to be evaluated and appreciated," a "sign of authority, intended to be believed and obeyed" (66). At other times, this caused pressure and sometimes emotional pain when mentees felt ashamed for their parents' nonstandard English accents. Sometimes this accounted for a rapid transition to English dominance in the second generation and eventual heritage language loss.

Bourdieu avers in *Language and Symbolic Power* that "the sense of value of one's own linguistic products is a fundamental dimension of the sense of knowing the place which one occupies in the social space" (82). To know where one stands in relation to all others standing within the institutional and symbolic power spatial framework shapes the ways one speaks but also locates where one articulates in relation to centers of power, and of being heard and believed. Bourdieu argues that every time an individual with minimal cultural capital or command of "legitimate" competence enters into an exchange with the holders of the "legitimate" competence, dominated individuals are condemned to a practical, material recognition of the laws of price formation which are the least favorable to their linguistic productions, and which condemns them to a more or less desperate hyper-active attempt to be correct, or to passive silence (97). Legitimate competence at MANOS entailed expressive command of English, as it was understood that only through English would academic mobility happen. The laws of price formation in the linguistic marketplace added appeal value to the

power of monolingual, standard English as language for the mastery of literacy. This was unfortunate because otherwise valuable language brokering triads limited parent participation in tutoring sessions when relegating lesser value to Spanish as an academic language. During reading and writing assignments in English, most MANOS parents distanced themselves as observers in the exchanges between their children and mentors. Nevertheless bilingual mentors and mentees brokered monolinguals into conversations, and they became proficient translators and interpreters.

In order to understand the potential social and academic benefits language brokering might have for children, we must also understand how translation functions beyond language into culture. In “Immigrant Adolescents Behaving as Culture Brokers” Curtis Jones and Edison Trickett argue in favor of the positive sociolinguistic tools and cultural competencies bilingual children develop and build upon while brokering between adult monolinguals, and the value of brokering for immigrant families. Similarly, a significant line of research documents “the wide range of linguistic resources available to children in bilingual communities and the ways children learn to choose among these resources for their symbolic value” (Schechter and Bayley 14; see also Bayley and Schechter; Vasquez, Pease-Alvarez, Shannon, and Moll; Zentella). However, bilingual brokering is a uniquely under-examined rhetorical skill vis-à-vis its value in terms of school curricula (Valdés; Zentella). My research focuses on the rhetorical value of language brokering as social activity embedded in linguistic power relations that maintain and sustain the everyday language and literacy skills of communities. Barely recognized or integrated into school-based Language Arts, the language brokering performed by the children in this study has a community-based language function rewarded and cultivated only outside school. Brokering and translation happened in everyday practice for these families, and not as something learned by

students for a test. They learned about the social relations between Spanish and English within New York City, and their accents among the seas of those around them. As I will argue in Chapter 4, MANOS youth language brokers also observed how their parents' nonstandard English accents marked them as immigrants in the U.S. mainstream (Orellana 77-78). This proved to be a difficult issue for youth to fully comprehend, and they sometimes leveled blame at their parents for their Spanish dominance. The importance of mentors at such junctures is pivotal.

Conclusion: From Theory to Practice: Schooling Values and School Values

The MANOS parents' efforts to involve themselves in their children's educations resulted in what Bourdieu in *Distinction* theorizes as an investment in academic capital, or the "guaranteed product of the combined effects of cultural transmission by the family and cultural transmission by the school" (23). However, first-generation parents at MANOS unfortunately had little formal education and linguistic capital to offer their children (Smith 212; Yoshikawa 113). As monolingual Spanish-speaking parents from Mexico they could not function effectively in American school English. Their marginalized access to standard English prevented them from passing on the high-status forms of linguistic capital exchanged at schools. What's more was that they were unable to financially invest in their children's educations or other cultural practices such as private lessons or trips to museums and concerts. MANOS's mentorship program, for some parents, served as a last and only resort to do something for their children. It also functioned as a protected site away from the schools, where mothers aired their grievances with their children's schools, where they could learn about the schools without

having to interact with school officials who intimidated and embarrassed them. The ease of speaking in Spanish, of course, facilitated this most.

In the next chapter, I look to how this *etic* moves into the *emic* of participants' perspectives and instances of language brokering in praxis. The theory-heavy *etic* of this chapter built my own ethos in staging the true beginnings of this study, and with that of the MANOS community on Foraker Street. The *emics* of our exchanges in standard and nonstandard Spanish and English reflected the practices that structure the social relations among families living between two languages.

Chapter 2:

Language Brokering In Practice:

Linguistic Power, Bilingual Events, and Family Life

Language brokers make rhetorical choices when they translate regarding the audiences receiving translations and senders offering messages because they are in-between agents with their own interests. The most important rhetorical choice language brokers make is between rhetorical translation as situation-based connotation versus literal translation as meaning-based denotation. The sociolinguistic negotiation of agents' uses of languages points to shifts of voices for different audiences for which individuals broker communication as an economy of linguistic exchange. As form of linguistic exchange, translation broadly conceived as brokering, must be understood less as making sense from one language to another, but more as a meta-linguistic bilingual awareness (Solís 126-127)—an awareness that language minority (LM) and emerging bilingual families are tuned in to in their day-to-day linguistic interactions.

This chapter examines bridges between languages and literacies and how they structured power relations among different generations of individuals within the MANOS community. Language brokering is saturated with conflicting authorities and social bridges between languages and cultures (Orellana; Reyes and Halcón; Roca and Colombi). Prior research into the complex strategies of youth language brokers examines navigating between audiences, languages, and literacies (Orellana; Orellana and Reynolds; Orellana, Reynolds, Dorner, and Meza). As in previous research portraying children as social actors living in their existential present and not as “adults in the making” (Orellana 5; Corsaro), I will draw on the youth's

language brokering at MANOS to consider how these youth's understandings of their families, their educations, and their languages contributed to their literacy skills.

Further I will claim that the rhetoric of translation come to the fore when children negotiate between minority home languages and English as inculcated by schooling and contact with the English speakers (Corsaro 162). The MANOS context affirms scholarship that claims language brokering has the potential to place tremendous responsibilities on youth translators in families when bilingualism becomes a form of linguistic power. I diverge from the scholarly literature, however, when I argue that language brokering at MANOS is not a matter of children usurping power from parents, but more about deploying their bilingualism for the welfare of the family. Brief linguistic power inequalities emerged in MANOS families when bilingual children tried to manipulate parents with their commands of the second language by either disciplining or shaming them for their nonstandard English accents. Therefore moments of questioning authority through the institutional language popped up now and again, but not to consistently override all parental authority in Spanish. The "parentification" that comes from taking on family responsibilities as a result of fluency in the dominant language should be considered as a positive attribute for heritage language cultivation among bilinguals in immigrant families. Youth language brokers develop authority in their commands of languages among adults. They translate, interpret, and advise as a regular activity in everyday life, and these language skills offer schools a bilingual context for language development in the curriculum.

All language use has rhetorical potential to structure situations between interlocutors, audiences, conceptions of the existent, and signification (Berlin 87). Becoming a mentor for MANOS and being welcomed into families struggling with language of academic institutions, I had observed the rhetorical dimension of persuasion practiced by agents in conjunction with

literacy development (89). As I document later in this chapter, the bilingual individuals of MANOS enacted rhetorical power in different ways: the power to speak up rather than to remain silent, to gain attention of audiences, to interrupt someone, or of dominating turn taking. There was also the power to make something happen as well as to stop something from happening, of raising the voice in order to discipline, for example, and the power to evaluate language for correctness.

Part 1 of this chapter examines how bilingual MANOS mentees exercised linguistic power in their families through English. Youth language brokers moved between audiences and sometimes used their skills of translation for their private advantage. In Part 2, I give snapshots of ten biliteracy events at MANOS. These vignettes demonstrate some of the everyday experiences of language brokering and family literacy within the Mexican immigrant community of Foraker Street. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of the vignettes in Part 2 and an extended analysis of the potential ramifications of language brokering, schooling, and the “parentification” of MANOS mentees.

1. English and Authority: The Power of Languages in Bilingual Families

During a one-on-one tutoring session with fourth-grader Dieguito Gonzales in preparation for his approaching English Language Arts (ELA) exam, I asked him to complete an abridged practice test. Since he would have rather been spending his Saturday afternoon with his friends playing in the park than the damp basement of San Juan Bautista taking an exam, he was reasonably upset with the additional burden placed upon him—especially since it was on top of all the test prep he was receiving at school, both during class and at his school’s sponsored after-school program. Pilar Lopez, another MANOS mentor, was helping another group of three

mentees with the same exam, but Dieguito required more individualized attention. When he was working with the rest of the group, he was doing everything he possibly could to distract the other mentees from taking the practice exam seriously. I decided to move him to another table hoping he would focus.

His mother Elisabeth had stepped out to buy some snacks for the studying mentees, and also because Dieguito didn't like being tutored with his mother next to him. "She nags too much," he had told me several times. She gave him his space, and he used this to his advantage because her direct supervision would have left no question about focusing on the practice test.

The exam was timed, to simulate test conditions, though certainly not entirely. Dieguito had completed the majority of the exam, all of the multiple choice questions. He slowed down at the short written response questions, and he made small effort on the last two longer writing portions. When he arrived at the first of his short essay prompts, he tapped his pencil on his test and fixatedly stared deep ahead.

"What are you looking at?"

I startled him. He rolled his eyes.

"This is stupid. I'm not going to write anything."

"You have to write something, this is the test," I said. "This is for you to practice, but if you don't want to do it, that just means I'll have to mark those questions wrong when I grade it."

Dieguito still had fifteen minutes to complete the exam—plenty of time to finish each of the two short writing questions and to review his answers.

"It's not a real grade," he said.

"I'm going to give you a grade."

"I know how to do them, I just don't want to. It's easy."

“Then do them. What’s the problem? This is to help you when you take the real test.”

“This is a stupid test, it’s not even hard.”

Dieguito was clearly bored with the exam, but I also knew from his previous scores on exams that he didn’t care much for writing. He wrote a one sentence answer for one reading response question which asked for a paragraph. For another writing question, he wrote three quick sentences. He left plenty of blank lines, even though he wrote his letters extra large. He used up as much time as possible doing this.

I graded Dieguito a generous 55% for the exam.

“I don’t care,” he said. “It’s not a real test anyway. Now I can go with my friends in the park.”

That being the case, I tried to reason with Dieguito about the importance of taking the practice exam seriously, and also how important the rapidly approaching test would be for him in order to determine if he would advance to fifth grade or repeat the fourth. I also held over his head the looming prospects of summer school.

“I know, I know, I know,” he said.

Elisabeth returned from the grocery store and had finished distributing small paper plates of cookies and cups of water for the children who had finished their tests. Pilar told her in Spanish about why Dieguito was sitting by himself, and she shot him a firm glance. When she finally made her way to her son, he eagerly took a few cookies.

She looked over the exam, first the score, then from page to page, surveying the readings and multiple-choice questions, and she nodded. He had only missed a few of the questions on the multiple-choice portion, despite quickly skimming the passages. He was able to begin by closely reading the questions and performing scans of the readings in order to approximate what he

thought would be the best multiple choice answer. Sometimes this worked, but usually it backfired. However, he was deducted the most points for not completing the writing portion of the practice exam.

Elisabeth turned the exam over page by page looking to see which problems Dieguito missed. When she arrived at the writing section, I could see the disappointment in her face. She asked Dieguito, “y porqué no escribiste?” (Why didn’t you write anything?)

Here it comes, I thought. I quickly caught Pilar’s attention. I motioned for her to listen in on the conversation between Elisabeth and Dieguito. Spanish was Pilar’s first language. I quickly filled her in with what happened between Dieguito and me when I tried to coax him into finishing the writing portion of his practice exam.

Dieguito explained to his mother in Spanish, “porque el exámen is difícil—y no había tiempo para terminar—” (Because the exam is difficult—and I didn’t have time to finish—)

“No,” Pilar interrupted, “tell her the truth. Tell her how you refused to do the test.”

Elisabeth looked at Pilar, and then at me. I nodded.

“You said you knew how to write them, and that it was easy,” I said to Dieguito and Pilar.

“Él le dijo a Steve que los exámenes son fáciles y sabe hacerlos,” Pilar said to Elisabeth. (He said to Steve that the exams are easy and he knows how to do them.)

“¿Y entonces, porqué no escribistes nada? ¿No quieres a pasar a quinto?” Elisabeth asked Dieguito. (Then why didn’t you write anything? You don’t want to pass to fifth grade?)

Dieguito didn’t respond. His mother continued to ask him for a reason for not completing the exam, and for not wanting to pass the fourth grade. Finally he responded to her in English,

interrupting her, “because it’s not a real test anyway, who cares? I already went to school all week!”

There was a brief silence from everyone.

Then Elisabeth said, “Entonces, si tu no quieres estudiar, no quieres terminar tu exámen, no quieres a jugar con tus amigos, ¿verda’?” (Then if you don’t want to study or finish your exam, you don’t want to play with your friends, right?)

“No!” he said. “It’s Saturday and I already went to school every day!”

I stepped into the conversation and spoke to Dieguito, again explaining to him—in English—how important it was to practice writing, and how important his writing would be for him later. And for the time being, he really had to focus on his ELA exam because he was on the verge of not passing.

He didn’t want to hear that in any language it seemed. He and his mother exchanged phrases with one another in Spanish, too fast for me to catch most. Pilar also added to the exchange in Spanish—alas—also too fast for me. I heard the word “traducciones” (translations) and I knew they were talking about how Dieguito tried to pull a rhetorical fast one with his mother about not completing his practice test.

Tutoring Dieguito and children like him at MANOS allowed me to participate in experiences of first-hand bilingual encounters like this. My emerging bilingualism at the community center and that of other largely monolingual adults demonstrated how authority as symbolic power behind languages fluctuated in translations between words and deeds, and between rhetorics communicating seemingly objective information without subjective “takes,” and the exchanges of symbolic capital between languages circulating in the linguistic marketplace (Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*; Zentella, *Growing Up Bilingual*). As in

this single instance, nine-year-old Dieguito used his bilingualism tactically in a strategy to dodge authority, as he assumed he had the advantage over his mother and me because of our monolingualism.

Thankfully bilingual Pilar was there to language broker. I had the good enough sense (and just enough Spanish) to catch her attention before the whole event happened, because some bilingual MANOS mentees (Dieguito included) had previously used my monolingualism to their advantages in dodging homework. Sometimes I wasn't lucky enough to have a language broker I could trust near me, and I had to use mangled bits of Spanish to try to figure out or express what I thought. Initially, when I first started working with Spanish-dominant parents, I think I made matters worse by trying to speak a form of infantile English further alienating them—they sometimes did the same to me in the Spanish equivalent. I realized that using a language broker kept more of the sincerity behind my statement than trying to meet where I considered halfway, which was over the bounds of my own language limitations and frustrations as I began my own journey toward emerging bilingualism.

Pilar's bilingual capacity allowed her to communicate freely with Elisabeth, which I was unable to do, and—in this instance—to check Dieguito's attempts at deceiving his mother. From my perspective as monolingual, English-dominant mentor, her language brokering was much appreciated, as she served as a more accurate mediator between the events as they happened and Dieguito's individual interests in miscommunication. She redistributed the power relations among agents involved as she broached the triad. She also held Dieguito accountable for his mistranslation of events.

What was interesting to me in the encounter was when Dieguito was caught in his act of mistranslation and held accountable for his deception, when disciplined by his mother in

Spanish, he reverted to English and yelled his true reasons for not completing his exam: his schooling life ended yesterday, Friday. Today was *his* day to enjoy because he worked hard all week. Saturday was his day off from school, and thusly he refused to allow school to encroach on what he perceived as his time. When he exclaimed this to his mother, Pilar, and me, he—in effect—silenced us all. I couldn't say if it was the tone or the coupling of it with English which made it more pronounced. Pilar didn't translate Dieguito's counter-argument to Elisabeth, there was no need. His tone said it all, and also stated his position with authority. When his mother finally responded, she did so with a reasoned punishment in Spanish: no playing in the park that afternoon.

The story continued, though. Dieguito wouldn't accept defeat, as he continued arguing with his mother in Spanish, reasoning and compromising with her that he would read for an hour if she would let him go to the park for an hour. When he was on the verge of tears, she finally consented, because, as she told Pilar—and me via translation from Pilar—she felt *compasión* for Dieguito's academic struggles, and she wanted him to have a little bit of fun after all the extra studying he'd been doing at MANOS and at the after-school program at his school, a public school a few blocks away from his home on Foraker Street. His tactics proved successful for him. His tears looked genuine, and—for my ears—his Spanish sounded convincingly sad.

Dieguito's fluid rhetorical tactics in two languages among different audiences never ceased to amaze me. On numerous occasions he brokered communication between Elisabeth and me, without intentionally mistranslating certain elements. He also helped me communicate with small children who hadn't started school yet and who spoke little or no English. This was the case with his younger brother, six-year-old Frankie, whom I had watched become increasingly bilingual as he started attending school a few years earlier. Frankie, though, was not the family's

language broker, as Dieguito held that responsibility. At different times, Dieguito admitted, this made him proud, and sometimes embarrassed. When his mother had to communicate with English speakers whom he felt showed no respect to his mother's linguistic abilities, he said he felt frustrated because "it makes me mad when they look at her like she don't understand, because really she knows a bunch of stuff but she don't say. [. . .] But she can't talk very good" (3 Jun. 2010). His rhetorical schemes responded to what he perceived as his own bilingual power over his mother, as well as other adult monolinguals with whom he came into contact.

Cultural practices such as Dieguito's rhetorical tactics when brokering languages—while useful for intellectual as well as practical use in everyday life—do not get cultivated in schooling, and therefore are not part of his ELA exam. These skills are of course learned, but not deemed "educational." I agree with Jaclyn Solís that, "being 'educated' goes beyond formal schooling and includes exposure and participation in institutions [. . .] where expressing knowledge different from that permissible in 'official' spaces and predominant discourse is possible" (155). Becoming educated extends beyond learning various subjects or disciplines into the socializing of subjects through discipline (Graff), and it also happens outside of institutions in reactions to institutions' spheres of influences (Berlin; Compton-Lily; Martínez).

I describe biliteracy events as instances of such reactions, and I examine language brokering exchanges in their socio-cultural contexts, with a goal "toward understanding cross-cultural patterns of oral and written language uses and paths of development of communicative competence" (Heath, "What No Bedtime Story Means" 122). The patterns that emerged demonstrated what the stratification of different languages within families looked like in cultural practice. The stratification of languages within MANOS families was the product of social differentiation and social evaluation of minority languages in relation to the dominant language.

Children schooled in the dominant language cross sociolinguistic barriers culturally constructed around monolingualism and social isolation. In the previous example, Dieguito used Spanish to isolate my monolingualism, and at the same time, he used English to isolate his mother. As an educator, I felt I had an obligation to communicate with Elisabeth about her son's performance on the practice exam, but as a monolingual, I was obliged to have Dieguito translate for me. Simplistic as it seems, this everyday occurrence of language difference offered two models of language brokering. First there was the model of Dieguito's intentional miscommunication which forwarded his agenda—to get the burdensome tutoring session out of the way so he could go play. Then there was Pilar's language brokering, which rectified Dieguito's intended deception, and which held him accountable for his mistranslation of events. Dieguito used his language brokering to block his mother from his studies, while Pilar used hers to re-open that path, and to offer mentorship for both youth and parents.

In a sense, I ground my theoretical understandings in my larger research study with Elisabeth and myself as bases into understanding how communication between monolinguals and bilinguals in discourse communities affects the power relations between people. We were two monolinguals, one in the dominant language with high social prestige, one in the minority language with low social prestige, and we each dealt with bilingual youth in order to interpret homework and school-related issues. The language brokers' rhetorical interpretations of the subject matter constructed messages which traveled through bicultural brokers between monolingual parties, brokered as a form of social contact and enacting a triadic relation of power between interlocutors. Such brokered linguistic exchanges at MANOS were enacted as distinct language activities between specific agents in a local context with social significance beyond the

messages conveyed, and as I argue in Chapter 3 rhetorical exercises in *ethos* during public situations.

Heath's use of the term "literacy events" ("What No Bedtime Story Means"; *Ways With Words*) designates the actual social practices people enact when communicating linguistically. Heath's literacy events are heuristic tools for examining the forms and functions of language in both written and oral forms. For Heath, literacy events are the most important encounters to examine because these productive contexts of language use have been less systematically studied than decoding skills favored by schooling. She argues along with other New Literacy Studies (NLS) theorists that home, family, and community language practices vary by social class, ethnicity, and region; these diverse practices use grammars, lexicons, and rhetorics which can differ markedly from standard usage and the more they differ the greater they affect student literacy and language performance in formal schooling. The competing authority of Dieguito and Pilar, for example, set the stage to attach the connotative rhetoric behind Dieguito's direct deception of his audience. His intentions became clear for his monolingual interlocutors, and Pilar's *ethos* of trustworthy bilingual was thereby reinforced because her language brokering defended the deceived interlocutors

Increasingly, my fieldwork at MANOS revealed to me how immigrant parents who attended the grassroots after-school mentoring program gave great weight to their language brokering children's advice in normatively parental domains of family life. This was when situations such as Dieguito's deception—built largely from his authority in the family in dealing with English—became both moments for learning and also for questioning the influence of children in immigrant families, both as a situation for power disruption and also for acquisition of language skills. The shifts of power between generations I found, however, happened less

intensely than as presented in language brokering and literacy research. This, however, did not mean that children were completely ruled by their parents, or that they ruled their parents, but, rather, they took pride in the power their English commanded, especially when they were able to use it to help their parents. Eleven-year-old Felipe Rubio described a recent memory when he language brokered for his mother, Guadalupe,

Like we went to a store and it's only me and my mom, and we talked to someone who didn't speak Spanish. And I said what they said to my mom, and I told the other person what my mom said, and helped both of the people. It made me feel like I know more Spanish. It felt like . . . like I helped my mom with something. It makes me feel proud, because I'm doing a good thing. I'm doing something good.
(21 Feb. 2011)

Felipe's language brokering completed the shopping transaction, and for Felipe, his involvement with adults made him feel like he knew more Spanish, or that he was putting his Spanish skills to test and performing well, and speaking between adults also endowed him with authority, with *ethos*. He noted that he felt he knew more Spanish, credited to his ability to translate difficult phrases or semantics from English to Spanish and from Spanish to English. It certainly was a test of his skill in translating in the moment, but also of making sense between adults.

When I asked him if he had ever watched his mother conduct herself in English in public, he said "sometimes people can't hear her when she talks" (21 Feb. 2011). He credited this to her soft voice in English. Her voice in Spanish, though, he said, was not soft. He further clarified his statement about her English by saying that she spoke loud enough, but people couldn't hear her because of her accent, or that they couldn't hear her the way he heard her. In Chapters 3 and 4 I

describe some of these situations in the contact zones of asymmetrical power relations that language brokers encountered with their parents in public domains.

2. Family Literacies and Languages: Studying Biliteracy Events and Contexts

According to Shirley Brice Heath, learning how to “take meaning” (“What No Bedtime Story Means” 104; 118) from writing happens in social interactions in families before formal schooling begins. Different communities socialize children into language in patterns of actively “taking” meaning from texts; some of these ways with words offer either advantages or disadvantages depending on the social location of the speaker and her idiom. Heath argues that the “ways of taking employed in the school” lead to certain cultural advantages for middle-class—or mainstream—families well aware of the academic ways with words (119). Heath claims that “mainstream ways exist in societies around the world that rely on formal educational systems to prepare children for participation in settings involving literacy. In some communities these ways of schools and institutions are very similar to the ways learned at home; in other communities the ways of school are merely an overlay on the home-taught ways and may be in conflict with them” (*Ways With Words* 51). To clarify how community-based literacy conflicts with or matches school-based literacy, Heath studies the “specific literacy features of the environment upon which the school expects to draw” (51).

Beginning with the premise that social situations concretely express and enact power relations, studying literacy as an everyday practice can reveal how cultural contexts shape relationships and discourses of power, and how they get perpetuated and reproduced through official schooling (Purcell-Gates viii). Literacy in such a scheme is not an “autonomous” (Street) or generalized skill set, but rather is embedded and framed within complex ideological, social,

and cultural conflicts and contexts. According to Victoria Purcell-Gates's research in *The Cultural Practices of Literacy Study*, this "more complex" view presents literacy as a socially structured meaning activity. Purcell-Gates's collection of field studies of literacy as "cultural practice" examines "literacy as practiced by different sociocultural groups in a globalized world" and the "nature(s) of the relationships between literacy as practiced outside of formal instructional contexts and literacy learning acquired within contexts of formal schooling" (10). Audiences and contexts offer ranges for literacy, bilingualism, and monolingualism in this regard, especially in conjunction with the parents at MANOS who do not have fluency in English. Working at MANOS, my initial interest was understanding what language skills would help bilingual children improve their schoolwork. My position as researcher and mentor, though, eventually led to observations of more complex literacy events underway, ones involving triads and brokered social relations. In my reflected observations, language brokering took shape as a simultaneous event of translation and interpretation. It was a rhetoric of communicative exchange, structured within relations of value among languages and groups of interlocutors in the linguistic marketplace (Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*; Gee; Zentella).

One of my goals in my research at MANOS was to understand when and how agents selected among languages and frames of expression. Consistently I noted at MANOS how this bilingual setting created power distinctions during tutoring sessions involving triads of parents, children, and mentors (including myself, an English monolingual with limited Spanish). I also noted linguistic power conflicts in families, such as when children assumed the authority in their use of English, to discipline their parents, as when Dieguito boldly exclaimed his evasive intentions in English to his mother, Pilar, and me at MANOS that afternoon narrated at the beginning of this chapter. In the following biliteracy event sections, I detail the debate over the

strengths and faults of language brokering in immigrant, LM family contexts, as well as a less generalized analysis of what gets deemed as “parentification” in language brokering studies.

In the following section, I offer ten instances of “biliteracy events” which I partook in or observed at MANOS over a few weeks in the late summer-early fall of 2010. Each documents how linguistic power among parents, children, and mentors occurred in the formal and informal language practices as they happened and how in these “events” agents enacted linguistic power through rhetoric in situated contexts. The social relations mediated by texts and interpretation were further complicated with the rhetorical act of translation. Some of these scenes record the frustrations monolingual Spanish literate parents had in not being able to deploy their literacy skills to assist children in their English homework assignments. Others record some of the more humorous instances of living between languages and families communicating across generations. All document coming-of-age among cultures and forging a linguistic sense of self. Because historical context plays a tremendous role in the social negotiations of meaning, different elements of personal histories underscore the contexts of events here narrated.

Biliteracy Event One: Homework and Home Work

Chapter 1 began with 15-year-old Gina’s experiences receiving English support for her homework, and how her mother María went to great lengths to find language brokers who could help her where she could not. As Gina’s English improved, she gradually became the language broker for her family, and she became a mentor for her younger siblings and her mother. Figure 2.1 is a piece of writing she brokered for her mother.

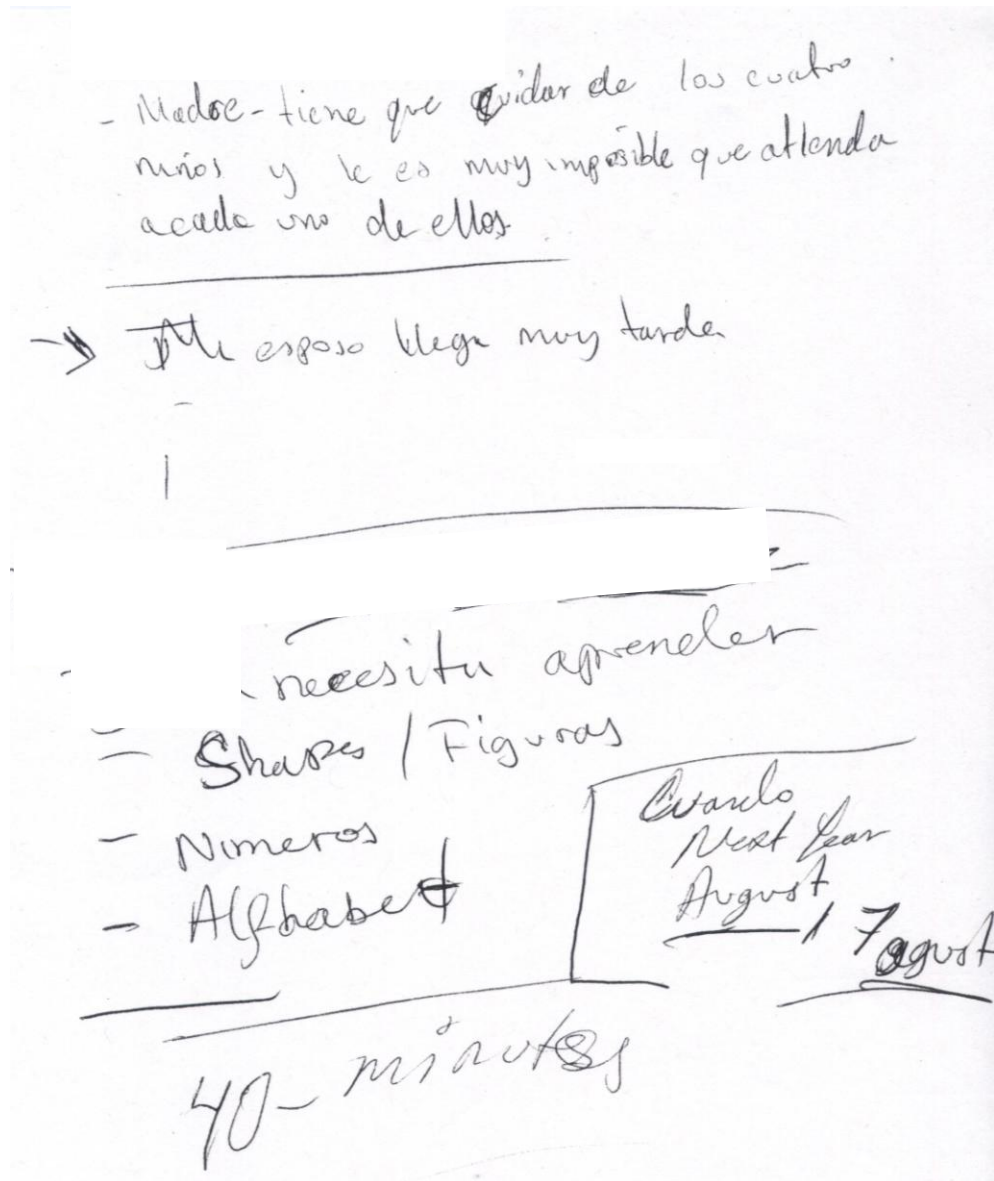


Figure 2.1: Notes taken by 15-year-old Gina for her mother María as she helped her youngest son Juan with his homework, as well as practicing writing sentences in Spanish. Identifiers have been omitted.

Figure 2.1 served as a record for the brokering literacies of Gina as she translated from English into Spanish while mentoring her mother and her younger brother Juan. At the top of the page, she practiced sentences in Spanish, “Madre—tiene que c[g]uidar de los cuatro niños y lo es

muy imposible que atienda a cada uno de ellos” and “Mi esposo llega muy tarde.” (Mother—has to guide the four children and it’s impossible to give time to each one of them; My husband arrives very late”). The sentences were for a Spanish writing class her mother was currently enrolled in at another community program just down the block on Foraker Street. Gina wrote the sentences with her mother as she copied them onto her own page. Her mother first thought of the sentences in Spanish with Gina’s assistance, and composed them verbally. With this, Gina modeled the sentences in writing on her piece of paper alongside her mother. It was a technique she had learned from working with some of the MANOS mentors when receiving help for her vocabulary sentences in English.

Below the line she drew on the page, Gina re-wrote in bullet-point form a note from Juan’s kindergarten teacher to María. Toward the bottom of the page, she included in condensed form a Spanglish translation of suggestions from Juan’s teacher: “necesita aprender [needs to learn] –Shapes/figuras; -Numeros [Numbers]; -Alphabet” and a note to work to practice these everyday for 40 minutes.” In the corner is the date when MANOS would re-open for the fall semester. The question of “when” was written in Spanish and the answer “next year” was offered. Also, August was written in both Spanish and English.

María mentioned during an interview—brokered by Gina—that she had never attended school as a child (23 May 2010). She began working with her mother picking tomatoes in the northern Mexican state of Sinaloa at the age of six. Her first language, the language spoken in her family, was Mixtec, an indigenous language in southern Mexico. She never learned to read, and she learned Spanish through selling items in public. Only two years before our interview in 2010, she had begun learning how to speak, read, and write English, and read and write Spanish at the same time. I conducted a few interviews with María with Gina and without her. I should

admit that without a language broker, the majority of our interviews were in Spanglish—I would ask questions in English or broken Spanish and she would answer in Spanish, with a few English phrases here and there.

Gina was a large help for her mother's increasing biliteracy, as in the example of this document she produced, which not only served a pedagogical function, but also as a guide for parenting in the guise of academic tutoring for a younger sibling and reminders for community commitments. The voice of her writing here took the tone of teacher, or family pedagogue. This fit her role in her family, as María noted that her daughter accompanied her to all parent-child conferences at schools because she was her translator and also advisor. Gina said she was proud to help her mother, and that she also wanted to learn to read and write Mixtec so she could communicate with her grandmother if she went to Mexico.

Gina by all measures exemplified the multi-dimensional model of youth involvement with brokering. Her brokering, she admitted during an interview, was like “helping with home stuff,” or a duty for her household, or housework (Orellana). It was one of her contributions to the family's household, and she went about it with pride and also a certain assurance of her own responsibility. She helped her siblings with their homework, and she also helped her mother with her homework in English and Spanish. Through all of this, she also found time to do her own homework. Her brokering skills gave her tremendous importance connecting her family to the English-speaking world. When brokering for her mother, she claimed she did her best to help her understand implications of what she translated, thus extending her translation services from denotative rhetoric to connotative rhetoric, where she pushed meanings from literal translation to connotative sense. María continually praised her daughter to MANOS mentors for being such a great help to her mother and her siblings.

Biliteracy Event Two: Censorship and Humor

One evening, nine-year-old Edward “Turtle,” his father Tomás, and mentor Laura Kruchenko worked together on a writing assignment which asked Edward to compose a short response about an animal he would like to visit. Because she was mentoring three children at the same time, Laura did her best to involve each of the MANOS mentees with one another’s homework assignments. With Edward’s assignment, she opened up the question to the students sitting at her table, as parents observed. Dolores, a third-grader who helped the group read a worksheet about habitats, said she would like to visit a polar bear. Nine-year-old David who conceded that now would be a good time to see polar bears before they go extinct, and that would also be his choice. (He said he learned in science that the polar bears were going extinct.) Edward decided he would like to meet a penguin. The sentence he decided on writing was “I would like to visit a penguin.” Tomás stood beside his son watching him toil with the words on the page, at sounding out letters along with him. He also held his finger to the page to help him keep his place—something he had seen Laura performing while reading with his son. Edward, however, quickly lost interest in the sentence and imitated a penguin’s wings with his arms.

“Avanza Edward, a pierdas tiempo muchacho,” (hurry Edward, you waste too much time) he said to his son, who at this time stared at his pencil’s tip, twisting it around near his nose.

“Take it easy,” he said. Edward, beginning to write again, said under his breath, with the intention of communicating to Laura in English, that “he always tells me what to do.”

“Que le dijo?” Tomás asked Laura.

Laura admitted that she couldn’t hear what he said. She asked Edward to repeat what he had just said.

“I don’t know,” he said.

“O sí!” Tomás said. “Avanza!” he repeated tapping the worksheet forcefully. Some of the other parents at the table nodded, perhaps out of identification, and also to show solidarity with Tomás.

As Edward spelled out “penguin,” he had trouble with the final vowel [I]. Tomás helped him well enough with this, and Edward followed him attentively, until he mis-pronounced penguin as “penguís.”

“Penguís!” Edward said abruptly. And he started laughing. “Penguís, penguís! He said penguís!”

Laura also laughed, but mostly because of Edward’s antics, and less so because of Tomás’s pronunciation. Tomás also hesitantly began to laugh at his mistake and his son’s teasing. A few of the children at the table began to chant as well. “Ya, okay, vamanos,” (enough, okay, come on) Tomás said as he tapped the worksheet.

Even despite his difficulties completely understanding all of Edward’s homework, Tomás had remained loyal to aiding Edward as much as possible, and as a result I noticed that his confidence in attempting to speak English—knowing most of what he said was pronounced with an accent—had increased. In this example, Edward offered a strong critique of his father’s pushiness through a language he could not speak in order to communicate to his English audience his displeasure. When Tomás asked Laura in Spanish what Edward just said, she was unable to answer, but she also turned the tables on Edward to own up to his statement in Spanish. Naturally asking Edward to broker such an exchange proved ineffective, especially because translating what he said in Spanish would have resulted in his “knowing his place” in relation to his father’s power. Instead, he refused to play the game—or respectively chose to maintain his

bilingual advantage over his father. The linguistic luxury of speaking with a tongue his father had trouble understanding allowed him to make open critiques of his father in public to English speakers. This is what James Scott in *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* called the “hidden transcript,” where opposition to authority takes shape as a hidden or furtive form below the authority’s radar. The transgressor manipulates a fugitive form of expression in the shadows, out of reach.

Biliteracy Event Three: Brokering Communication at Work

For a *Cinco de Mayo* celebration sponsored by the Chicano Caucus of Columbia University and held outside the university library’s quad, MANOS founder Carlos Portales organized the entertainment and food vendors. He opened the invitation to all MANOS families to take part, either in contacting someone they knew who could perform for cultural events, or by preparing and selling food. The results on the steps before the campus library were Mexican *folklórico* and Aztec performance dancers, mariachis, poetry, and plenty of food vendors—including a taco truck from Foraker Street. I was reminded of some of the *Cinco de Mayo* celebrations I used to attend growing up in Arizona—though nothing quite like this one experienced on the powerful Ivy League space.

Several MANOS mothers pooled money together to prepare large batches of tamales and tostadas to sell at the event. One mother, Juana, set up a beauty care products table. Her son, eleven-year-old Luis, helped her with the suitcase, and also with setting up the intricacies of the display, as if he had done so before. I approached them and asked them how they were.

Juana, always cheerful, said hello to me, and we shook hands. I shook hands with Luis next and said hello. I said it was nice to see him giving his mother a hand.

“Sí verdad, Luis es un buen ayudante a su mama” (yes it’s true, Luis is a good assistant to his mother).

“She said I help her.”

“I understood most of that,” I said.

Juana was pretty much always able to understand my English. I could say things to her in English, and she would usually respond in Spanish, but sometimes in English. She often would use MANOS tutoring sessions with her sons to practice her English. She also spoke a good deal of English in her jobs cleaning apartments in Manhattan. She had attended school up the eighth grade in Puebla, but as the oldest child, she claimed it was her duty to help support her younger siblings. First she migrated to Mexico City working domestic jobs there, but eventually found her way to New York City. Through her financial support to her family all of her younger siblings have completed high school, and one graduated with a degree in education from college, and another attended college but did not graduate. When her boys Luis and four-year-old Pablo were older, she hoped to complete her education, and eventually earn her college degree, before returning back to Mexico. She had begun selling cosmetics within the last six months as a way to earn some extra money working from home. Her best customers were the mothers of MANOS, as well as the mothers at another after-school program just up the block on Foraker Street.

Juana and Luis both fielded and answered questions from interested browsers of her wares. I sat near them and observed Luis handle all the English language brokering duties for his mother, and how together they counted money and made change. One female customer asked about the ingredients of some lotions. Juana held the bottle and read some of the ingredients, but then checked them with Luis, who read them, and then with the customer who read them. The customer made some comment about aloe content, which neither Juana nor Luis were sure about,

but Luis pointed out that a certain cocoa-butter version of the lotion was very popular. He began in Spanish then corrected himself: “Claro—esta—señora—es muy rica: you must smell this—”

Luis then told the customer that there was no aloe in this type of lotion, but this his mother highly recommended it for the smell.

Juana said something to Luis in Spanish, and he responded to her. Later he told me that she told him to tell the customer to smell the lotion, and he responded that he already had.

“Such a good sales team,” the customer said with a smile, and she purchased a bottle of the cocoa-butter lotion.

After I asked Luis how he liked helping his mom with work. “It’s fun because I can try to sell stuff and help my mom because sometimes she can’t talk to the people who speak English, and I can talk to them to help her” (2 May 2008). For his effort, Juana gave a portion of each sale to her son.

Biliteracy Event Four: The Value of Translation

Victoria Rico Olivas invited a few mentors—Portales, Pilar Lopez, and me—to her apartment for a small birthday party for her son Marcos. She was preparing *mole verde* stew and was also making her own tortillas. She requested that we conduct a group interview while we all met for Marcos’s party. Marcos thought that would be a good idea too, as he always enjoyed knowing when I recorded because he said, “it makes me feel famous.”

After we all ate—possibly way too much—I asked her if it was okay if we presented our gifts to Marcos. Victoria was as surprised as Marcos at the gifts we all chipped in for: a backpack, some new notebooks, coloring books, markers, pencils, a sharpener, a ruler, and folders.

When the interview began, I noticed Marcos seemed very intent on hearing every word his mother said. Different questions were presented to her from me, and then translated by Marcos, or by Portales. Portales also asked some questions to confer some of his speculations about languages in families. He asked her about “paredes entre las lenguas” (walls between languages) and Victoria replied:

Sí—este—y le digo que lo repita pero el sabe que son palabras que no me tiene que decir. Y me lo dice en inglés para que no lo entienda yo. Hasta que te voy a ver le digo “a ver, dime, me lo vuelves a, dimelo en español. Porque soy una tonta.” Y me dice, “ya mami, es que te dije que eres una estúpida,” me dice. [laughs] . . . Le digo, “no me vulevlas a decir así Marcos, porque te voy a dar en la boca.” Y dice, “que si lo digo en español me vas a entender más rápido” [laughs] “Si muchacho grosero,” le digo. “Crees que así me dice? Me dice, ‘eres un tonta mami.’ No soy ninguna tonta,” le digo. “Y si cuando me decía ‘compramelo, compramele’ portate bien, y si te lo compro.”

Yes, and—like—I said to him repeat them, but he knows that there are words that I don’t know how to say. And he tells me in English that I don’t understand him. After that, I go to see, I say, “let’s see, tell me, repeat it to me, tell me in Spanish. Because I am a dummy.” And he tells me, “yeah Mom, I told you you are stupid,” he tells me. [laughs] . . . I say to him, “don’t say it like that Marcos, or I’ll smack your mouth.” And he says, “when I say it to you in Spanish, you learn it faster.” [laughs] “Yes smart guy,” I say. You know what he tells me then? He says to me, “you’re a dummy, mom.” “I’m not a dummy,” I tell him. “And if you tell me ‘buy

me this, buy me that,' sit tight, and you'll see if I buy you anything." (26 Jul. 2010)

For Victoria, the walls between languages also established rules of intelligence, or equated English command with a form of intellectual dominance and Spanish only as a form of deficiency. This internalized notion happens culturally for LM parents, and it gets reinforced and reproduced through schooling. The physical threat of violence from Victoria to Marcos's mouth never equated to the symbolic violence of the English of which he spoke.

Marcos responded to his mother's words simply by saying, "yeah, she don't understand me in English."

During the interview, Victoria interrupted things in order to show us a photo album. All of the mentors at the party were unaware that Victoria had two grown children living in Mexico with families of their own. Victoria showed us photos of his sisters, as well as her two grandbabies. I asked Marcos what he thought about his sisters in Mexico. He said he had never met them, but that he spoke to them on the telephone sometimes. "They don't speak English because they live over there," he said.

"Sí, él habla con sus hermanas a veces," (Yes, he speaks with his siblings sometimes) said Victoria.

"In English?" I asked.

"No, solamente en español," (no, only in Spanish) she said.

"Because they live in Mexico," Marcos said. "They speak only Spanish."

Victoria continued with a thought,

Con quien le hable inglés, el puro inglés. Aquí a MANOS y con sus amiguitos. Si con sus hermanas, luego dice habla conmigo, de México, y le empieza hablar en

inglés. Ye le digo . . . si ese es tu hermana y no sabe. Y despues mi otra hija se queda callado [laughs] y me dice yo no se que me dijo mi hermanito. Y luego le digo no Marcos, tus hermanas no hablan inglés. Solamente español. Ah dice, no es que me olvidaba [laughs]

He speaks English with those who speak English. Here at MANOS with his little friends. Yes and he talks to his sisters in Mexico, and he begins speaking in English. I tell him . . . yes this is your sister, and she doesn't understand. And later my other daughter remains silent [laughs] and she tells me she doesn't understand her little brother. And later I tell Marcos your sisters don't speak English, only Spanish. Ah he says, then they weren't ignoring me. (26 Jul. 2010)

Marcos's confusion—as more than one parent termed it—was not uncommon. Sometimes the bilingual MANOS mentees lost track of their audiences and followed thoughts with no heed to what language they were speaking. Their movement between audiences and languages bounded over cultural barriers that de-linked the two languages structuring the lived experiences of Spanish/English bilingual children like Marcos. Speaking to his siblings in Mexico had been one way for him to practice his Spanish without the generosities of English slippage that Spanish speakers in the United States allow. When he did slip into English, as in the case narrated by Victoria, he was left wondering where he lost his audience. As he became more acquainted with the conventions of audiences in different languages, he was able to navigate his linguistic presentations with more expertise.

Biliteracy Event Five: Language Brokering Homework Assignments

MANOS mentor Jon Taylor sat with Reina and her children Samantha and Felix, and he helped them finish their writing and reading homework. Samantha was working through some photocopies of stories circling verbs and pronouns in numbered sentences, and Felix was slowly answering an essay question about a fictional visit to the moon. Before Felix began writing, his mother brought a note from his teacher which requested that he use a writing web to organize his thoughts. The note was written in English, and before Jon read it, Samantha said in English, “it’s because he’s in trouble. He’s not doing good at writing.”

“Yes I am,” Felix said to his sister. “You’re flunking math anyway.”

“Verdad, mommy? La maestra de Felix está muy enojada con sus tareas.” (Right, mommy? Felix’s teacher is very angry about his homework.)

“Ya Samantha okay,” said Reina to silence her daughter.

Jon reviewed the report, which said that Felix was “a joy to have in class” but that he “needs more practice with his reading skills and he needs to take his time with his writing.” She also advised that he always use a “writing web” to organize his ideas before he completed his writing assignments. Reina read the comments and understood most of them, and what she didn’t understand, she asked Felix for clarification. He, of course, couldn’t translate what a “writing web” was, nor did he have a word for “writing web” because it’s a conceptual model of pre-writing, or an invention strategy for structuring a piece of formal writing. When he read the comments, Reina asked him to explain what the writing web was to Felix in English so he could explain it to her in Spanish. Jon also had a difficult time explaining composition development, body paragraphs, and organization, which proved as difficult for Reina to grasp. The best thing,

Jon thought, would be to show the writing web rather than try to describe it, and also how it was used to organize ideas. Figure 2.2 was the resulting text.

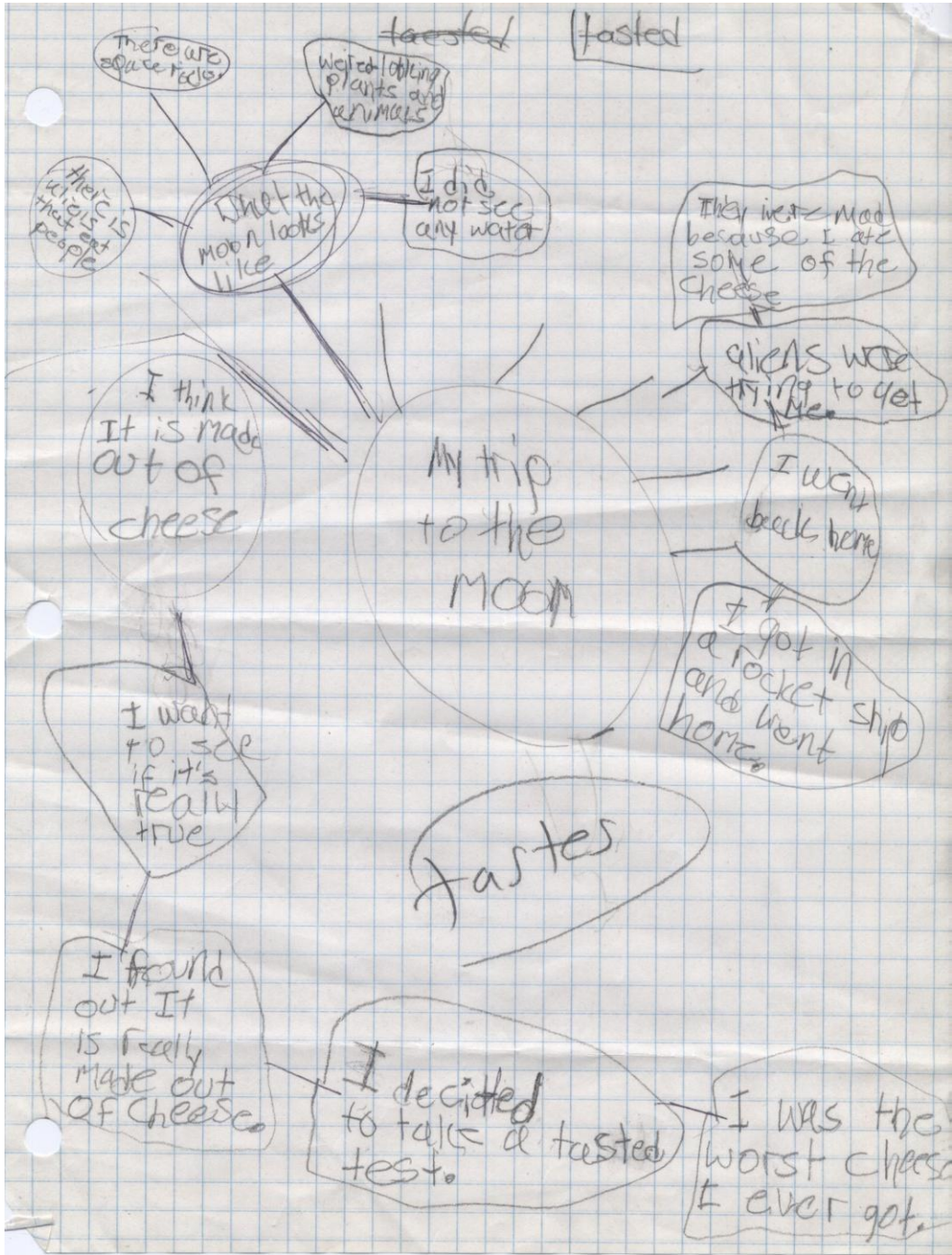


Figure 2.2: Writing web of Felix Molina, fourth grade. The homework sheet called for a piece of writing that used all the senses to describe a fictional trip to the moon.

The writing web here was literally centered on the trip to the moon. This was clear enough for both Felix and his mother to see. When they started breaking off into ideas which contributed to the central motive of the writing, they were both able to visualize organization. He organized sentences and bits of phrases to describe the order through which he would claim that the trip—a scientific mission really—was to confirm his speculation that, in fact, the moon was made out of cheese. This cheese, as he ended his short narration, when tasted by our narrator, was the “worst cheese I ever got.” Reina appreciated her son’s imagination. In Spanish, she added the contribution that he should include the part about how the cheese tasted. Jon later admitted that not having a command of Spanish did not affect his ability to teach the writing web to both Reina and Felix—and also Samantha who also contributed some ideas to the drafting of the web and the essay. Together with her son, she was able to picture the meaning for a writing web as a visual paradigm for essay development—or essay-text literacy.

The “web” was not something that came natural to the language practices of Felix’s experience—but with the example of the logic of structure, he was able to gather some of the formal elements of standard English prose and higher levels of textual organization. A web is a technique of developing written composition so it can’t be natural to the language practices of anyone whose language use so far has been oral and not written. The dual task here is to perform competently in a second language (English) and to perform competently in a textual version of standard English (written language). It was also important that his mother witnessed Jon’s demonstration of the web strategy, as she would continue to practice webs with her son as well,

using her Spanish to help him plan his writings in English. Together they were able to learn about the academic essay genre and how to position subjects within the form.

Biliteracy Event Six: Speaking “Both”

Eleven-year-old Marisol Fernandez and I had finished going over her homework, and we also read together for 25 minutes. After completing everything, we took things easy until MANOS closed for the evening. We were chatting while we drew pictures. I was working on a desert scene, complete with saguaro cacti, purple mountains, and harsh yellows, and she was sketching out a pretty sweet orange and green *calavera* (skeleton) mermaid, imitating one she had seen previously drawn by mentor Monica Abalos. I left my digital recorder at the center of the table running.

SA: Do you speak English and Spanish?

Marisol: Yeah.

SA: What about your mom and dad?

M: Only one.

SA: Huh?

M: Only one.

SA: Only one what?

M: Only one speaks English.

SA: Only one speaks English?

M: English and Spanish.

SA: Who speaks what languages?

M: Well my mom and dad only speak Spanish. And my dad speaks English and Spanish, but not my mom.

SA: Does he help you with your homework?

M: When he's not working, but he works a lot, and when he's at home he likes to rest. My mom's the one that tries to help me more. She takes me and my brother and sister places to get help too.

SA: Does she speak any English?

M: A little bit. Not that much.

SA: So you talk to your mom and dad in Spanish?

M: To both.

SA: When do you use English?

M: At school.

SA: Where else?

M: With my friends, but sometimes in Spanish.

SA: But you talk to your parents only in Spanish?

M: Spanish. Only Spanish.

SA: How come?

M: [laughs] Because they don't know Spanish—English, I mean. [laughs]

SA: What about when you talk to your cousins?

M: I only have one cousin here. A boy.

SA: Do you talk to him in English?

M: Well yeah. And sometimes on the weekend he helps me with my homework.

SA: Do you talk in English with him in front of your parents?

M: [laughs]

SA: Why you laughing?

M: Because sometimes they don't like me to talk English to him in front of them.

SA: Why not?

M: Because they don't understand what we're saying, and they ask what we're saying.

SA: And you tell them everything you're saying.

M: Sometimes not everything because then I'll get in trouble.

SA: Do you say bad words in English in front of your parents?

M: Nooo.

SA: Why not?

M: I'll get in trouble.

SA: But you said they can't understand English.

M: But they know the words are bad words. And they know because they still get mad when they hear them. (30 Apr. 2010)

Marisol was candid in pointing out that she knew her parents understood certain words in English that she should not speak, yet at the same time, she used words like “shit,” “bitch,” and “damn” in front of mentors, who had made her mother aware as well. Because her mother would step away to help clean up around the MANOS center during tutoring sessions, she would leave her to work with mentors alone. During these moments, it seemed Marisol would use these opportunities to challenge her English speaking audience with foul language, or to command attention from other children. In our one-on-one conversation she let down her guard and described aspects of being a language broker which affected her.

In one aspect, my interview with Marisol stressed generation change regarding language absorption in immigrant families. In the urban environment of Foraker Street, children functioned bilingually in an inner-city culture where youth language was ritualized and at times vulgar, and thus youth assimilated into these patterns for speech. Of course MANOS parents didn't want their children cursing or broaching topics considered impolite in public spaces. This was something which all children—immigrant or not—maneuvered around parents. Because their parents were monolingual Spanish speakers, the bilingual MANOS youth like Marisol could hide in plain sight their vulgarities and urban argot by simply saying them in English. Marisol's parents understood a few words and expressions if not entire statements she used, and would discipline her to clean up speech, though words they were unfamiliar with would slip by. It was interesting to note in her talk with me when she claimed her parents asked her to translate things she said with English speakers in their presence because they wanted to know what she said. Willingly or not, it seemed they "didn't like" when English excluded them from certain conversations. Nevertheless, as she admitted, when she language brokered for them, she didn't always translate everything for fear she would "get in trouble."

Marisol and I continued to color, and before I could get into the subject of her language brokering for her mother, she offered her own assessment of how she would also use her English not to communicate *groserías* (dirty words) and to help her mother. Marisol claimed that she helped her mother with translating notes from her teacher, as well as reading signs around Foraker Street, and also while watching films and television in English.

Biliteracy Event Seven: The Frustrations of Linguistic Differences

Elisabeth, the mother of Dieguito, never had to learn English, she pointed out, “porque hay muchos latinos aquí [en New York] quien hablan el español” (because there are many Latinos who speak Spanish here [in New York]). She didn’t speak or write much English, but over the course of her and her sons Dieguito’s and Frankie’s involvement in MANOS her English vocabulary had expanded, though she still could not form complete sentences in English. For her, words and phrases were much easier to assimilate than were sentence-forming skills.

Neither of Elisabeth’s two sons took ESL classes when they started school even though they spoke only Spanish when beginning their schooling. They both drew on their inherent ability to learn language simply by interacting with speakers. Elisabeth felt the immersion into English most effective, even despite advising from family and administration at the school. Dieguito, she explained, spoke a little bit of English which he picked up from his older cousins who already started school and from watching television, but he was nowhere near as fluent as he was after being in school for five years. She remarked about the speed with which he had learned English and compared this to her own difficulties in learning the language.

In an interview brokered by her son, I asked her why it was important for her that her sons spoke English. She said, “Para mi es importante porque me gustaría que tenga una carrera,” (for me it is important if one wants to have a career) (15 May 2010).

Dieguito translated this as, “she said it’s important because she wants me to have a good job.”

For Elisabeth, English was a sure form of upward mobility, a different lifestyle with different educational opportunities for advancement than was available to her, despite her

knowledge that many people in the United States speak Spanish. She acknowledged that in the job market, English was required for any good job, and that bilingual skills were also an asset.

Besides helping Dieguito with his homework at MANOS, she said, “Yo le pongo televisión y a leer mucho.” (We watch television and read a lot.)

“Yeah, lots of TV, like cartoons and stuff. But not in Spanish,” Dieguito said. He also added that cartoons in Spanish were not as good as in English.

Reading with him, she admitted, could be difficult because her son was “una crítica” regarding her English pronunciation.

“She’s not very good at English,” he said.

One particular early June evening—just over a month after interviewing Dieguito and Elisabeth at their apartment near Foraker Street—I helped Dieguito with writing his spelling words into sentences. While we were completing the task, I spontaneously asked him how he enjoyed the informal graduation ceremony we had witnessed the previous week as part of a MANOS fieldtrip outing. Four mentors and a group of four MANOS mentees and parents, including Dieguito and Elisabeth, traveled downtown to Baruch College of the City University of New York, to attend an awards celebration for local Mexican American high school graduates who planned on attending college. MANOS founder Carlos Portales gave a speech about the importance of education, and several students who won awards also gave speeches. The audience was composed of family members, teachers, educational foundation donors, and various Baruch faculty.

“What do you say? Did you like the college?” I asked Dieguito while he was folding a piece of paper into an origami ninja star.

“I was bored in college.”

“Dude, that’s because you didn’t eat any of the food.” He stopped folding to look at me. He didn’t understand my joke. “What were they talking about, did you understand them?”

Dieguito didn’t say anything.

“What’d they say? About the students, what did they say?”

“That they’re doing great work and stuff like that.”

“Right, they were doing great work—just like you. And that you can go to college too right, except you won’t be bored—”

As I was talking with Dieguito, Elisabeth approached.

“Steve, como se dice esta palabra?” (How do you say this word?)

“Mande?” (Excuse me?) I asked.

“Esta palabra,” (this word) she said pointing to list of words on paper.

Slowly I repeated, “Blame. Blame.” I stretched out the vowels like rubber bands.

Elisabeth repeated, but mispronounced it, “Blem, blem.”

“Blame, blame,” I said.

“Blem, blem.”

“Blame, blame.”

“It’s blame! Blame!” shouted Dieguito.

“Como cielo?” (Like a cloud?) asked Elisabeth.

“No, no, no, no es como . . . um . . .”

Dieguito said, “It’s like, I blame you for this . . . or you always blame me.” He sounded like he was getting upset. He stopped folding his origami project.

I said to Dieguito, “How do you say that in Spanish?”

“She’s not saying it right.”

Elisabeth was still pronouncing to herself “blame, blame” and getting slightly closer to the phoneme (e).

Dieguito returned to his project. He was going to leave translation to me on this one.

I looked up blame in my Spanish-English dictionary. While I was looking it up, Elisabeth pointed to another word on her sheet of words. “Y esta?” (And this?)

I found “blame.” “Blame es culpa. Culpa.”

“Y esta es frem” (and this is ‘frem’) asked Elisabeth, mispronouncing the same vowel again.

“Sí, frame, yes. Como blame y frame son rimas.” (Yes, frame, yes. Like blame and frame are rhymes.)

“Sí, frem, blem.”

“Frame.”

“Frame, frame, blame, blame,” Dieguito said.

“Frem, frem.”

“Fraaaaame,” said Dieguito.

“Es el parte de pintura o foto,” (is part of picture or photo) I said, gesturing a frame with my hands.

“O sí, cuadro,” Elisabeth said.

“Like a picture frame. Like a picture in a frame,” Dieguito said.

“Sí, cuadro. And this one here,” as I pointed to another word on her list, “is flame. This is different than frame—esta tiene ele y esta tiene ere.” (This has el and this has ar.)

“Flame.” Her pronunciation was getting closer to (e).

“Es fuego.” (It’s fire.)

“Flama?” she asked.

“Es una flama, no es fuego,” (It’s flame, it’s not fire) said Dieguito.

“Sí, creo que sí,” (yes, I think that correct) I said.

“It’s like what Godzilla spits out his mouth, like he has *flames* of *fire* that come out of his mouth and he destroys the city. Mami, Godzilla tiene flamas de fuego—gigantes—y con esas flamas destruyó la ciudad.”

“Oh,” she said. She looked at me.

“I guess that’s true,” I admitted.

“My mom doesn’t like Godzilla,” Dieguito said.

Dieguito’s attitude with his mother’s language questions revealed his impatience with mother’s accent. His rising anger with his mother was one way for him to assert his authority in English, and also his way of using his language brokering—on one hand—to help his mother and—on the other—to add cutting remarks. His perceptions of her accent affected his perceptions about the worth of his mother’s English in the linguistic marketplace, which he used on various occasions to discipline Elisabeth. Dieguito had on several occasions expressed to me that he favored English over Spanish, and that his Spanish was “not really that good—not like English” (15 May 2011). For youth like Dieguito, the turn toward the dominant language over that of their parents obliges them to assimilate to the dominant language at the expense of their heritage language.

Biliteracy Event Eight: Covert Language and Exclusion

While helping six-year-old Miguel Rubio complete a book report about dinosaurs, and with his mother Guadalupe sitting next to him, also helping, I pointed out that dinosaurs hatched from eggs.

“No shit,” he said, “I knew that already.” He looked at his mother.

I also looked at her. I couldn’t believe the six year old just said “shit” in front of his mother without flinching.

He looked at me, then back at her.

Guadalupe made no response.

“Que?” she asked noticing we were both looking at her.

“No shit, they lay eggs—”

“Hey!” I responded “you can’t say that. Do you say that in front of your teachers at school?”

“No.”

“And why not?”

“Because I’ll get in trouble.”

Of course I asked why, then, he said such words in front of his mother.

He didn’t say anything, and Guadalupe asked me, “Que haciendo?”

I responded in my best broken Spanish, “tu hijo dice malas palabras en inglés.” (Your son says bad words in English.)

Guadalupe gave her son some pointed words in Spanish about *respeto*, or respect, and she offered him even firmer words that were inaudible to me as she said something into his ear.

Miguel afterward apologized in Spanish to his mother and in English to me. He said he learned how to use the phrase from teammates on his soccer team.

Miguel's soccer team I later learned from his older sister Sarita was composed almost entirely of children of Mexican immigrants living near Foraker Street—though only a few attended MANOS. The second-generation bilingual youth were gradually assimilating into urban youth culture which includes stylized speech habits. The urban youth code is vulgar and colloquial and inappropriate for addressing adults. Bilingual youth thus learn code-switching, as compared to native-born youth who impulsively blurt vulgarities. Miguel for his part would grow to understand the appropriate moments to use vulgar speech as he built on his skills of translation and moving between formal and informal audiences.

Biliteracy Event Nine: Searching for Words and Ways

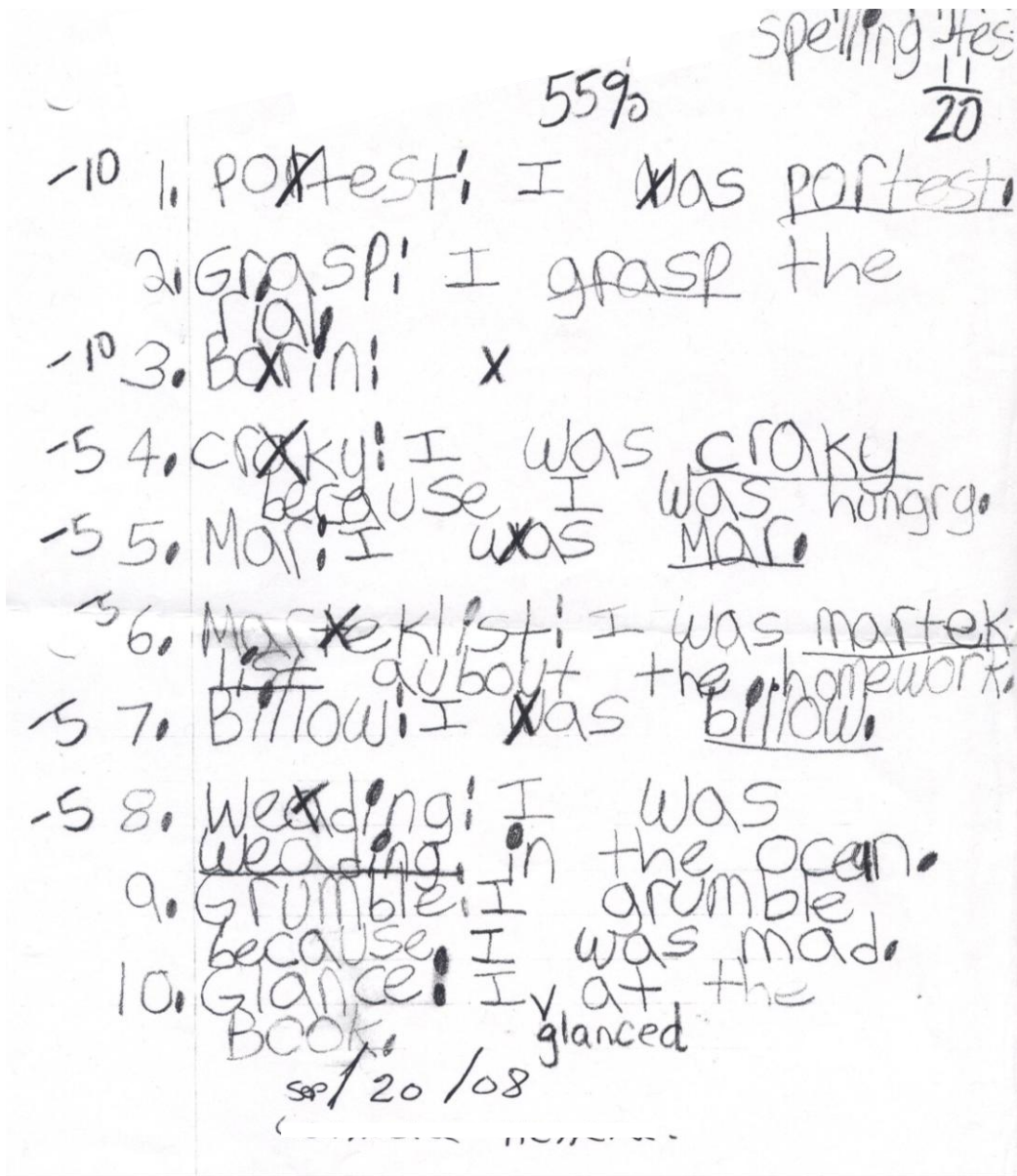


Figure 2.3: Spelling test of Nico Saucedo, second grade. At the bottom of the sample, just below the final word and sentence on the exam, is the partially revealed dated signature of Evelyn Saucedo, his mother.

Figure 2.3 is a copy of Nico's spelling tests from second grade. Nico and his mother Evelyn arrived at the MANOS center that autumn evening worried. She showed me the exam. I noticed her signature at the bottom. I pointed to her signature and asked "porqué?"

She answered me in Spanish, and Nico translated and answered that his teacher made the students' parents sign exams they failed. It turned out that Nico's instructor required all students' parents to sign tests that students did not pass, and to return them. Evelyn reluctantly signed this exam, which she held as proof that her son was having problems.

Nico brokered communication between his mother and me, and I—as mentor—tried to broker information as I saw it happening from Nico's teacher. The complexity of translation in each case happened with an initial intake of information, assessing it quickly, and giving one's translation in a different language. In the case of the spelling test, I assessed what I thought I saw happening in it, the narrative of what Nico executed and how his teacher assessed his performance. This I gave to Nico, which he took in, and then translated to his mother in Spanish.

I asked Nico about how the exam was conducted. According to him, the teacher would say the words slowly once out loud, then again sounding out the word's sounds, then twice more she would say the word. As she did this, the children wrote the word. After this, they were given some time to write a sentence using the word.

On Nico's exam, the instructor's handwriting appeared in the running point tally in the left column, and also in corrective gestures, as in numbers 1,3,5, and 8 on the exam. I could tell Nico was given partial credit for some of his answers noting -10 for some questions and -5 for others. I gathered by looking at the exam, that the instructor offered ten points for completing both the spelling and sentence portions correctly, and five points for one of the two. Most of the

points Nico lost were for spelling. Even when he misspelled the words, he used them in a sentence correctly, that is, save for the first and third words, “protest” and “boring.”

As Evelyn communicated with me through Nico, she didn’t understand most of the words on his spelling tests. She had been able to help him for his first few years of schooling (pre-k, kindergarten, and first grade), but she felt limited in her English resources to be a significant influence in her son’s school language performance in second grade, or beyond. Looking at Nico’s test, which she brought as proof to MANOS that evening, she asked what I thought the problem was. Because I was the language researcher, she expected me to be able to explain some of what I saw happening on the test.

I told her what I saw. Actually, I presented my argument to Nico in English to translate to his mother in Spanish:

“Tell her that it looks like you’re confused with some of your vowel sounds.”

He said to Evelyn, “Mami, Steve me dijo que tengo confusión sobre los vowels.”

Evelyn nodded, and asked him in Spanish, “cuales son vowjels?” (What are “vowels?”)

He clarified: “Los sonidos como oo, ah, ee.” (The sounds like oo, ah, ee.)

“A sí.” She nodded at me. “Vocales.”

She said something else quickly to him, and he responded. They took a few turns. When there was a break in their speaking to one another, I spoke to Nico.

“Okay, see look at this word, ‘billow’ I think that’s supposed to be ‘below.’ You sounded it out close though. Billow means something else though.”

My initial observation was that he accurately wrote the sentence using it as a preposition, but that he was hearing a slightly different phonetics in his head. I also thought that the New York English accent pronounces “below” as “billow.”

He showed his mother the word, and while they looked at it, I wrote the mis-spelled words on another sheet of paper. I showed mother and son the words, and sounded out the phonetics of each word.

“I was pretty close,” Nico said. “I sounded it out too.”

“Looks like you did. You gave a good try, but you have to also remember what the word looks like. Sometimes the sounds and the way you write them are different.”

“Sí Mami, Steve me dijo que, que necesito acordar las palabras.” (Yes Mami, he told me that I need to remember the words.)

“Tell her that you need to use a dictionary too to look up the words you don’t know to write your sentences.”

“Oh!” he said.

“Que? Que, que?” (What? What, what?) said Evelyn.

“Tell her,” I said.

“El me dijo que cuando yo escribo mis sentences, necesito usar un diccionario.” (He told me that when I write my sentences, I need to use a dictionary.)

“Sí como no? Okay,” (Yes, of course. Okay) she said and she nodded at me.

I tutored Nico that evening at MANOS, and we practiced using a dictionary and writing sentences from his vocabulary list for the current week, as well as for those words he misspelled on his exam. By December his scores had picked up to around the high-C-to-low-B range. He claimed his mother was getting better at helping him with some of his words as long as she kept practicing with him.

Biliteracy Event Ten: Censorship and Humor

Little Gloria Montez, age four, was beginning to use more English in her regular speech, in part because of her participation in MANOS since she was an infant, and also because of her pre-school program which worked as a sort of bilingual primer to kindergarten. Several MANOS students mentioned during interviews that their English learning began during pre-school years. This particular Tuesday a group of children were playing in the art room at MANOS—Gloria, eight-year-old Samantha, seven-year-old Flor, and four-year-old Pablo.

I heard Gloria say something to Pablo with a very pronounced southern Mexican accent. I asked Gloria what she had said, but she didn't respond to me. Then to the group, I asked,

“What was Gloria saying?”

“She said that her dad is going to hit Pablo,” said Samantha.

“But how did she say it in Spanish?”

“Papi te va'a chin-gár.”

“Papa que?” I asked.

“Papi te va'a chin-gár.”

“Papa tepa?”

“Chin-gár!”

“Te var?”

“Papi te va'a chin-gár,” said Flor.

“Papi te va'a chin-gár,” said Samantha.

“Tevare chingar?”

“Papi te va'a chin-gár,” said Pablo.

“No: *tu*—papi te va'a chin-gár,” said Gloria to Pablo.

There was laughter from all the children, and myself included even though I wasn't exactly sure what they were saying.

"She said *chingar*?"

Silence. No more help? Then I asked, "But you said *chingar*?"

"Yeah."

"That means that—to hit you," said Flor.

"Really?"

"Yeah."

"So she said 'my dad's going to hit you.' Why?"

"Because he took her crayons," said Flor.

"Papi te va'a chin-gár," said Gloria taking back her box of crayons from Pablo.

According to Gloria's older sister Nansi, she picked up the form of Mexican slang from watching Spanish language television, and also from the way her uncle spoke to his friends who occasionally visited their apartment. Nansi said these young men used the word *chingar* a lot and also the word *güey* (guy, dude). Gloria, as well as most of the children I played with that evening at MANOS demonstrated how working-class Mexican-origin youth were assimilating to low-distinction Mexican speech form, along with low-distinction urban English from their playmates at school.

The linguistic predicament of MANOS families was a social predicament involving their class location from which they internalized cultural capital of low distinction. The speech codes of urban New York City English were incompatible with the speech and writing codes of the New York City schools. Their casual use of *chingar* exemplified the colloquial code MANOS youth absorbed within their urban Mexican community of Foraker Street.

The meaning of the verb *chingar* from Mexican Spanish is quite literally to have intercourse, or metaphorically “to fuck” or “to screw” (Farr 124). It’s a commonly used Mexican swear word. Mexican Nobel laureate Octavio Paz describes its ubiquitous meaning in *The Labyrinth of Solitude* as “a magical word: a change of tone, a change of inflections, is enough to change its meaning. It has as many shadings as it has intonations, as many meanings as it has emotions” (76). The same could be same for the colloquial “fuck” in English. It can be a verb, an adjective, an adverb, a noun, or a particle. It could be used to express anger, pleasure, dismay, and on. Like *chingar*, “fuck” is a versatile word used for multiple purposes and contexts. The versatility and utility of the two words give them a powerful place in everyday speech, which is forbidden in schools given school formality and school circulation of standard usage.

Hearing the words come from little Gloria’s mouth both bemused and shocked me because it was one Spanish word I was familiar with, but what immediately struck me was the Mexican accent in which she said it. The tone in her voice sounded less child-like and more like the adult language spoken within that particularized speech community, spoken with authority or membership (Limón). My own membership, however, in trying at odds to pronounce the phrase after hearing it was not even a matter of questioning. Language groups construct certain norms that identify certain words or phrases as incorrect or slang (Anzaldúa; Paredes). Vernacular literacy and community, or nonstandard dialects, use slang in everyday communicative events (Martínez 22), and in the case of a speech code of low distinction, the important task this presented to the MANOS youth was grasping code-switching along with grasping English.

Little Gloria, by the way, did get her crayons back.

3. Language Brokering, Parentification, and Schooling

Because of their command of the dominant language, its entrance into informal language of the home meant MANOS children had important insight into areas of family life that might be deemed outside a child's realm of opinions. Scholars have argued that language brokering can complicate parent-child protocols in immigrant families (Umaña-Taylor; Weisskirch). Carola and Marcello Suárez-Orozco argue in *Children of Immigration* that during times of language brokering children's roles in the family lives of immigrants become "parentified" (75-77; see also Schiefflin and Cochran-Smith). This of course has both positive and negative aspects, but it has significant weight in the family regarding Spanish language loyalty and home language maintenance (Schechter and Bayley 7; Martínez). One negative aspect explored by Portes and Rumbaut in *Immigrant America* is that when children abandon their family's home language too quickly, parental authority diminishes, as "the stage is set for breakdown of intrafamily communication and the loss of parents' control of their children" (267; see also Carlin; Jones and Trickett; Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco). In each of the MANOS families, there was at least one youth language broker. Indeed several of these children had reported to me they were sometimes precociously pushed by their translation responsibilities to assume adult-like authority in their families for the making of meaning and choices, especially when dealing in official genres like applications, disciplinary reports, parent notices, and school permission slips. The linguistic power these bilingual youth cultivated happened as they were compelled to grow up prematurely through translating both meanings and consequences of such official texts. Without a doubt, this "parentified" sense of power happened through the reinforcement of the linguistic marketplace and the exchange value behind the acquisition of the dominant language.

Similar to Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco, María Elena Puig also terms this possibility of role reversal of children and parents as “adultification” (85) in her sample of Cuban refugee families. Curtis Jones and Edison Trinkett recognize the potential value for the social act of brokering in immigrant families. Translating for their parents, they claim, indeed may prove stressful for youth, but that “such activities may, in principle, also be a source of family solidarity and an opportunity to increase self-efficacy and sense of importance” (409). Jocelyn Solís speculates that investigations into bilingual skills children develop could “affect their relationships in other spheres, or how they place contradictory demands on their lives. For instance [. . .] children may [. . .] acquire [. . .] skills that can cause tension later when they question parental authority” (155; also Schecter and Bayley 7; Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco 74-75).

One possibility to approaching this as a pedagogical opportunity is to affirm the positive attributes of granting children power, or recognizing their “adultification,” or by affirming the positive attributes of granting children linguistic power, and giving greater appreciation to these skills in curricula. Looking to the instances of how power distribution affects social relations in language offers vast realms of wealth for studying the important linguistic practices among students’ communities. As argued in Chapter 1, building on these skills is a necessary undertaking for all educators. Chapter 6 of this dissertation will further posit this idea as a way of moving forward in the language educations of immigrant families.

Children and adolescents language broker mostly for parents and other family members, and this brokering influences family dynamics. “The authority position of the parent,” writes Weisskirch, for example, “may be suppressed as the child or adolescent acts as the spokesperson for the family” (“Feelings About Language Brokering and Family Relations Among Mexican

American Early Adolescents” 548). In “The Language Socialization Experiences of Latina Mothers in Southern California,” Ana María Relaño Pastor claims that

Linguistic stress is one of the sources of conflict between immigrant parents and their children. Children learn English quickly at school, often preferring the dominant language and rejecting Spanish because it makes them feel different from the rest of their peers. Their reactions are in conflict with their mother’s efforts to socialize children to the value of Spanish, which these women respond to as moral issues. (156)

Some scholars ask that researchers consider brokering as “an extension of the family relations as a whole” (Weisskirch 558). In terms of symbolic relations, this is an interesting approach, but does not necessarily consider the emotional ramifications of the responsibility young brokers take on in their role. Lucy Tse reports in “Language Brokering Among Latino Adolescents: Prevalence, Attitudes, and School Performance” that the Latino students in her sample described mixed positive and negative emotions with regards to their brokering, ranging from embarrassed and burdened to proud, independent, and mature (192). Kaur and Mills report that adolescents in their study reported feelings of responsibility and power in their role as language broker for their parents.

When the MANOS mentees assisted their parents in coping with written and spoken English, the family “role reversal” was not a dramatic turn: children helped their parents and considered it as nothing more than helping out around the home or—if outside the home—as helping with home matters. In *Translating Childhoods: Immigrant Language, Youth, and Culture* Marjorie Faulstich Orellana likewise recognizes the power behind language brokering as housework contributing to the overall well-being of home life in LM families (5). The example

of biliteracy event number one with Gina illustrated this. Gina's language brokering for her mother permitted her not only to extend her biliteracy and bilingualism to her, but also to understand the practicality of language uses in her family and her special place as facilitator. She gained responsibility in her family because she used her bilingualism as a service to her household. Orellana's extensive longitudinal research with language brokers speaks to similar strengths immigrant youth acquire as they overcome moving between languages and helping their families.

Research that calls attention to the negative effects of language brokering could underestimate the positive effects of family language brokering in LM communities. Even despite stressors from all members, families provide a wealth of support for learning. In *Subtractive Schooling: U.S.-Mexican Youth and the Politics of Caring*, Angela Valenzuela argues that "subtractive schooling" happens when immigrant and minority children are expected to give up their native cultures, and lose this valuable support for their educational development. Subtractive schooling is one way in which the brokering social relation gets disrupted because it positions the native language as a "deficit" or "deficiency" as it thinks of the value of home language practices as "deficits." The logic is that by subtracting the home language and cultural values of minority families, students can and will assimilate into the mainstream and become successful (López 43). Language is a critical domain for assessing acculturation because it is an indicator of cultural difference and it marks ethnic boundaries (Alba, Logan, Lutz, and Stults 468).

The research into the practices of language brokering that posit negative feelings from brokers do not take into account the fluctuations in power configurations in families, and that whomever wields the power of "adult" during a context always shifts depending on the situation.

These shifts all have rhetorical features we can recognize where certain ways with words prove more advantageous than others. Rhetorically, they require that a broker negotiate how to communicate with audiences and to present a face of sincerity and authority behind the language. As I argue in Chapter 5, harnessing this strength was a key endeavor that MANOS undertook in its mission to encourage standard English as both a form of acculturation and also as a way of staying true to an *ethos* of Mexican immigrant identity.

Conclusion

Language brokering as a means of circumscribing monolingual constraint points to one avenue of understanding how language both excludes but also includes agents within discourses and communities (Gee; Hymes). Brokering language for monolinguals produces language tactics through rhetoric, such as demonstrated by the attempt of Dieguito at the beginning of this chapter. His movements between languages reflected the unique and creative combinations of linguistic tactics and strategies in his learning to deal with monolingual audiences (Street and Heath 46). Dieguito used the constraints of his monolingual mother and me to his advantage as a way to dodge a practice ELA exam that he concluded was not worth his time. Seemingly a skill used for the wrong purposes, he nevertheless nearly achieved his aimed intention. He had used this tactic with success on different occasions, and for this, I was aware of what he planned on doing, and this was why I requested Pilar's attention to check Dieguito's translation to his mother. His tactic did work, after all, on unsuspecting monolingual audiences. I should admit, however, that Elisabeth mentioned to Pilar later that she knew when to verify her son's translations—schoolwork was the most typical time for her to do so because she knew how he liked to get out of doing his homework.

Linguistic constraint happens through contact between languages and discourses, contact between dominant, institutionalized languages and discourses and marginalized languages and discourses. The rhetorical setting for language brokering at MANOS involved bilingual youth mediating institutional and family communication in a constellation of texts, which in turn produced constellations of effects in their daily lives. The rhetorics of language brokering in the case of the bilingual youth at MANOS were between what I classify as bilingual contacts between institutional and familial languages. In facilitating this communication, the youth were rhetors who gained authority—or *ethos*—in their families. Broker children might turn to the dominant language and internalize a perceived “lack” in the home language, imposing a type of self-censorship and relying less and less on the home language as a form of everyday communication. I argue in Chapter 6—citing my family’s experience—that over the course of another generation or two, this eventually results in heritage language loss among immigrant families.

The next chapter examines the pressures MANOS youth faced from the high expectations of their parents, and likewise the futility MANOS parents felt in the face of providing educational support for their children. I will also explore the networks of support MANOS parents developed to compensate for linguistic constraints, including the rhetorics of family narratives they told their children in order to inspire educational achievement.

Chapter 3:

Brokering the Immigrant Bargain: Negotiating Language, Power, and Identity in Mexican Immigrant Families

Queremos más pa' nuestros hijos siempre, verdad?

—Evelyn Saucedo Lopez

Because MANOS parents had remained dedicated to the program's goals of promoting family involvement, they looked for ways to actively participate in their children's educational development. Insofar as their limited command of English undermined them in this endeavor, they turned to their immigrant biographies as sources for their authority as parents. All the MANOS parents surveyed in this study had faced life struggles their children had yet to completely fathom, but which their children had caught glimpses of through family narratives. As they aged, they became more familiar with the stories of their parents' migrations from Mexico. Nearly all MANOS mentees at early ages could offer accounts of their parents' lives in Mexico, their difficult migrations, and their economic hardships in the United States. These migration narratives of the parents supported an intergenerational bond between children and elders because the stories of adult sacrifice involved helping the young. MANOS mentees appreciated the sacrifices the migrating generation had performed in order for the next to gain a better footing in the United States, and, subsequently, in life.

Several of the MANOS mentees had traveled to Mexico to spend time with family there during school vacation months. All the parents in this study hailed from small towns on the outskirts of larger cities, and they maintained connections there. During summer months, it was

not uncommon for MANOS youth with passports to visit. For these youth who traveled to Mexico, the contrasts between what they identified as rural homeland and urban New York City were compelling: “New York is crowded, and over there’s isn’t a lot of people next to each other. And then Mexico there’s animals like donkeys. And it’s very, very hot,” said eleven-year-old Luis about his parents’ village in Puebla, closest to the city limits of Tehuacán, Puebla (10 Feb. 2011). Seventeen-year-old Sara Rubio said of her parents’ village further west in Puebla that “there’s a lot more poor communities. And I feel like we live in a better situation than they do, and it’s sometimes—like—wow, you really don’t see that a lot. The Mexicans over there think that we’re lucky we live in a big city, that we have lots of opportunities, and that we have nicer clothes” (3 Mar. 2011).

Some MANOS mentees—for various reasons including financial difficulties or citizenship issues—hadn’t traveled to Mexico. For the mentees who had never been to Mexico, they arrived at understanding their parents’ homeland and their parents’ lives there through what their caretakers projected to them, through stories, images, or videos. When speaking of Mexico, whether having been there or not, MANOS mentees constantly emphasized its social conditions, especially what they deemed as its poverty in relation to the United States. At the end of this chapter, I present written observations from an informal writing assignment collected from five MANOS students that document how perceptions of social class and nation became tangled in webs of power relations and the various social categories of difference.

Whether having first-hand experience with life in Mexico or not, however, the MANOS youth all internalized a comparative framework for understanding the social relations between Mexico and the United States, and how these played as the backdrops in ongoing family narratives of transnational migration and their social class positions within the American

mainstream. Such family narratives “operate with an overt point of reference—what life was like ‘back home’” (Orellana 18). The “third-world” poverty in Mexico compared to the urban poverty in *el norte* (the north) on Foraker Street led MANOS parents to juxtapose their lives’ stories with their children’s, rhetorically embedding children into the narrative with teleological ends in mind. MANOS mentees sometimes subscribed to these narratives, regarding themselves as individual links in immigrant family chains of social mobility. Sometimes these ends were back in Mexico, sometimes in the United States, or both, but always higher up the socioeconomic class ladder. Social aspirations encoded into these stories moralized their parents’ sacrifices for better lives. Employed as a rhetorical tactic, this was one way for language minority (LM) parents to maintain a power differential over their English-dominant children. At the same time through these types of sacrifice narratives, the MANOS mentees identified with how hard life could be for their immigrant parents, especially because of language differences.

While dominant social contexts shaped how immigrant parents and their children brokered cultures and tongues, the informal contexts of home life equally shaped educational orientations. As language brokers, MANOS mentees were at various times parties to the adult conversations of their parents and other adult monolinguals for whom they brokered. They made contact for and with their parents in public encounters, and, at times, they witnessed their parents’ mistreatment in public contexts. They noticed how their parents’ Spanish accents in English marked them as immigrants (Lippi-Green 233; Orellana 43). Language brokering and the “immigrant bargain” (Smith 123, 125-126) for them rhetorically related the brokering of power and identity between diverse social domains of public and non-public audiences and contexts. According to sociologist Robert Smith in *Mexican New York: the Transnational Lives of Immigrants*, the immigrant bargain “describes the expectation that sacrifice by the parents will

be redeemed and validated through the children's achievement" (194). As when translating, the *pathos* of the immigrant bargain and its rhetoric of guilt obliged MANOS mentees to "grow up" and effect (even temporarily) a certain level of emotional and intellectual maturity—what certain theorists mentioned in Chapter 2 described as "parentification." The effect in disrupting power differentials remained consistent, but it was not something that could be considered as permanently restructuring family relations. MANOS parents still retained power in their families in the midst of competing discourses which undermined adult authority. Bilingual children used their bilingualism when necessary for their advantages and to help with civic interfaces and home duties. Spanish-dominant parents tactically employed migration narratives of their lives to their advantages and to help with home duties so as to legitimize their expectations that the children must work hard in school. Their stories ennobled their visions of social class mobility. The MANOS parents' stories moralized their dedication for their children, as well as their inevitable need to "parentify" their children for translation services. For the MANOS mentees, their parents' messages about education rang loud and clear.

This chapter ends with the brokering and negotiation of the immigrant bargain and social classes performed by MANOS mentees when responding to an image of a school in Veracruz, Mexico. In an informal writing assignment conducted at MANOS's center, mentees interpreted an image from a Spanish-language periodical portraying the educational conditions of poverty among a group of smiling students squatting on the floor of their classroom. The MANOS mentees were free to answer the question however they wanted, in any language or mixtures of languages they wanted, and in any form they wanted. For each of the distinct compositions of the MANOS mentees, the image first called attention to the immigrant ethic that was appreciative for the opportunities available the United States in comparison to the limited opportunities of

Mexico. Secondly, however, they also pinpointed fundamental social class inequalities which contributed to their own interpretations of living the immigrant bargain and their pressures for social mobility.

Part 1 of this chapter examines how the educational expectations of immigrant parents and children align with some assistance from MANOS mentors. I argue that language differences, histories, and family lives impacted how MANOS mentees perceive their school work ethic in relation to their parents' job work ethic. In Part 2, I look closer at the immigrant bargain as a rhetorical maneuver MANOS parents tactically employed to reaffirm their authority in educational matters for their children. The linguistic power tactics of the MANOS parents redistributed inequality, but at the same time exposed their children to their parents' vulnerabilities and sometimes self-identified educational shortcomings. I conclude the chapter in Part 3 with examples of compositions by MANOS mentees about the immigrant bargain. These texts vividly illustrate how these mentees perceived national difference and social class. The group of MANOS mentees' compositions reflected their perceptions of opportunity and mobility, and also of how they saw the hard work children owed to their parents.

1. Family Life: Roles, Expectations, Languages

Perhaps the deepest of structures in all social orders is the family (see Corsaro; Delpit; Dreby; Kasnitz, Mollenkopf, Waters, and Holdaway; Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, and Todorova; Taylor, et al.). From our families, we acquire views of our world and how to act within it. Families socialize children into language use as well as everyday practices. For the MANOS families, linguistic socialization was restricted to Spanish, so MANOS mentees picked up assimilated U.S. ways of being from other sources.

Brokering assimilation (or “integration” or “acculturation” as some scholars term it) was a long-term project into American culture for these Mexican parents, and one met with varying levels of ease or resistance. According to Marjorie Faulstich Orellana in *Translating Childhoods*, the process of socialization and assimilation transmits and constructs a dominant culture into immigrant family identities and lives. She argues that studying the transmission and construction of youth immigrant experiences provide

good cases to think about constructions of normalcy and deviance in adult-child relations because the immigration experience may propel, or speed up, changes in family processes and intergenerational relationships and because the juxtaposition of the beliefs and practices of immigrants and others may help us to see the constructed nature of all such beliefs and practices (3).

For Orellana, studying childhood and family life during immigrant assimilation serves to defamiliarize the commonplace cultural behaviors enacted in social life. The everyday linguistic identities of the MANOS families were both distinct and fluid. In spoken form, they were more likely to flow together into hybrid Spanish/English sentences, or neologisms in Spanglish. In written form, they generally remained more distinct, depending on the mentees’ extent of experiences with print in Spanish and the parents’ extent of experiences with print in English. MANOS parents found that linguistic confusion and low language scores for their children were the results of spontaneous hybridity, or “bricolage” vis-à-vis using whatever language or expression was close at hand to achieve communication. This “bricolage” became “confusion” only in formal settings where monolingual standard English was expected. Several bilingual MANOS mentors also confirmed this in their personal experiences with Spanish and English.

The refusal of formal settings to allow hybrid language use, however, overlooked complex cultural issues such as the legitimacy of the academic institution in enforcing standardization (especially in the intimate space of the home). It was undeniable that the relations of symbolic power in families were affected when MANOS mentees began schooling. What we can term “public” and “home” in the symbolic economy of languages in the United States—and also in a global English framework—is the superimposed dominant standardized English over a minoritized growing Spanish heritage language community. This of course reduces languages and complexities to Spanish and English, and ignores more marginalized languages—such as the indigenous Mixtec—but at MANOS the power of English dictated the parental appreciation for English literacy as an avenue for educational success.

The language divide within some immigrant families could lead to limited parent involvement in the educational lives of children. Language can become a complicated issue for parents scrutinized for their accents by native English speakers, including their own children (Lippi-Green). At the MANOS center, mentees criticized the “illegitimate” Spanish accents of their mothers when the adults read aloud in English, and as a result the parents either laughed the joke off or silently retreated from participating. MANOS mentees also reported sometimes feeling embarrassed when their parents spoke with officials at their schools in English.

As I noted at the end of Chapter 2, instances of “parentification” at MANOS happened when children used their English fluencies as ways to either exclude or teach their monolingual family members. When I asked ten-year-old Nansi how it felt that her mother didn’t speak much English, she responded,

A little bit sad because I want them to speak more English. Because when somebody who speaks English, like my sister’s friend . . . she speaks only

English, then I had to *traduce* [translate] my mom and the person into Spanish, because she only speaks Spanish. Sometimes people get upset about this because they think my mom doesn't know English, so sometimes I want her to learn English. And my aunt too. Sometimes I tell them when they don't know the word to write it down and show me so I can teach them. (16 Jun. 2010)

Nansi used the Spanish verb for translate *traducir* in her explanation, demonstrating the ease with which she code-switched between languages for her audiences (Zentella). When language brokering in the instance she described, she had to speak to her mother and a child on like terms in English, and this seemed to bother her, and to a degree to overstep the bounds of what she considered her work around the home—though this was only because she was trying to watch a movie as she later told me. She was upset because her mother interrupted her while taking part in this activity to translate her younger sister's friend's words into Spanish. I asked why her mother didn't ask her seven-year-old sister Ana to translate. She said, "because I'm better at it than her, and also I think she wanted me to meet her to see if I liked her too so I could be her friend too." As her family's primary language broker, Nansi was called upon by her mother, though Nansi would have rather continued with what she was already doing. This was another reason why she advised her mother and her aunt to write their questions down, that way she could go over words later in more detail. Nansi said it would also help them to remember the word as well when they looked it up in the dictionary. She said she picked up this tip from MANOS mentors Pilar Lopez and Roberto Sanchez.

Fourth-grader Nansi had aspirations to be a teacher someday. She said she really loved school, and she wanted to help people learn to read. Her mother Jaclín wanted her to go to college, and Nansi agreed that this would be a good idea. Jaclín began to consider college as a

realistic avenue for her children after attending MANOS. Through MANOS, she had attended various cultural events at different colleges around New York City. She had also met educators and other professionals who mentored her children. Her concerns about financial feasibility of college were alleviated when she learned from different mentors about need-based scholarships and grants, in addition to the merit-based scholarships. As I detail in Chapter 4, several MANOS mentors came from first-generation college student backgrounds, so they emphasized the obstacles they faced on the road to college, and also the importance that going to college would have for Jaclín's children, as well as for her as their mother. They also emphasized that she should expect her children to go to college, and that she should remain involved in their educations, and always be on the look-out for opportunities. Jaclín was already, however, quite astute in finding support for her children, as I will detail in the next chapter. For her, as well as for most MANOS parents, MANOS was one of several social programs around Foraker Street that contributed to aligning aspirations and goals between this family's parents and children.

The constraining economic situations of most MANOS parents played a large part in structuring expectations and aspirations for their children. These same parents often aimed high, partly out of hopes for better lives for their children and future grandchildren, and also out of fear that the coming generations, too, might lead difficult lives. They were also realistic, however, and they understood their children would have a difficult road ahead. "Queremos más pa' nuestros hijos siempre, verdad?" (We always want the most for our children, right?) said Evelyn during a Christmas *posada* (Advent) celebration with MANOS parents and children. She was thanking the mentors and families of MANOS for helping her and her son Nico, for doing "lo más que pueden" (as much as possible), and also for being friends (18 Dec. 2009). She also thanked everyone at MANOS for practicing English with her. She was pleased with MANOS

because, she said, for parents it was important to know that along with their children learning homework, they too could learn English. “Sí podemos aprender el inglés con nuestros hijos— ¡Merry Christmas!” (We can learn English with our children—Merry Christmas!) she also said to friendly applause from MANOS parents, mentees, and mentors. With such eager enthusiasm for learning coming from the MANOS community, I wondered why the educational achievement statistics for Mexican youth in the United States were so low, especially in comparison to other high-achieving immigrant groups. My initial theories about Mexican immigrants and their educational statistics in New York City first interrogated how educational standardized testing served as an initial form of cultural exclusion. In addition, a theory for a “timeline” for Spanish dominant children to gain standard English fluency began to take root in my thinking, especially when examining how the homework demands for MANOS mentees’ English literacy skills increasingly became more difficult for their LM parents to keep pace with.

Of the 20 MANOS mentees beyond kindergarten surveyed in this study, 6 were A-level students, 10 were B/C-level students, and 4 were in the D/F range. Though randomly chosen, these numbers were not indicative of all the mentees at MANOS. Students’ experiences ranged from recent immigrant students, to the high achieving, to some students who were held back during different years, as well as some who had quit attending school altogether. Also, MANOS’s records of grade marks for students varied by semester, depending on which families on Foraker Street returned to the program after breaks, and which did not. As I point out in Chapter 5, though many families passed through MANOS, not all maintained regular membership. Some families were “regulars.” All the families in this study were of this “regulars” grouping. Some families were not as involved at MANOS, and some left and found different after-school programs that had better funding or more convenient hours, and some families

moved to different parts of the city or country, and some back to Mexico. Some continued to attend MANOS, or continued less frequently. Some families, it seemed to me, simply vanished, and they would never return to MANOS, or once in a blue moon. The two Ruiz brothers whose writings I include at this chapter's end were two of this latter grouping.

The answer to my inquiries about why immigrant-generation Mexican-origin students in New York weren't achieving as high as their immigrant classmates emerged when I considered the regularity of most MANOS families attending the program, and the length of involvement. Fundamentally at issue was the effect a small program like MANOS could make, and how community programs like it made differences that could be measured and verified, thereby reproduced or repeated. If MANOS could align the educational expectations and life aspirations of Jaclín Montez Ybarra and her daughters, then MANOS surely could and should work for others. Indeed there was that possibility.

Statistically, though, when examining immigrant origin, certain trends emerged. For example, there was increased probability for second-generation children to grow up immersed more in English than their parents' native language. There was also the greater probability that their bilingualism would by the third generation lead to English monolingualism (Montrul 294; Portes and Hao 270). This generational trend toward monolingualism asks us to consider how immigrant LM parents remain connected to their children's educational lives. How can they maintain high expectations, for example, if their command of English gets classified as "deficient" by educational standards? Lingxin Hao and Melissa Bonstead-Bruns examine the role of LM immigrant parent expectations in explaining the scholastic inequalities among Chinese and Mexican immigrant children and U.S. citizen children. In comparison, Chinese immigrant students excel at a greater rate into the mainstream than Mexican children earning the moniker of

“model” minority students despite the LM status of immigrant parents. Hao and Bonstead-Bruns study the educational achievement gap between Chinese and Mexican immigrant students using social capital to analyze what they call its “within-family” and “between-family” forms. Within-family capital is limited to immediate blood-linked contacts. Between-family capital links families to one another and forging communities sharing similar interests not limited by blood. Between-family relations grow because of family connections, there can be no doubt about that, but a wider pool of resources thus comes together to share views. Hao and Bonstead-Bruns argue that positive parental interactions develop relationships which reinforce school learning at home, in addition to opportunities for emotional support beyond home and school, and this increases expectations for both parents and children, while also enhancing academic achievement (176). The shared interactions within the community open discussion to educational possibilities and how to navigate schools and after-school programs, but also on the steps toward academic achievement and college attendance. For Hao and Bonstead-Bruns, “the concordance of parents’ and children’s educational goals is conceptualized to be the result of the family socialization process in which values are transmitted across generations” (175-176). Community socialization learned by new immigrants from established immigrants teaches that parent-child interactions in learning activities are a form of within-family social capital that strengthen the parent-child bond, increasing parents’ and children’s school performance and academic achievement.

In sample participants, Hao and Bonstead-Bruns closely scrutinize the likelihood of parents’ and children’s agreement on educational expectations to make a forceful claim on the differences between Chinese and Mexican immigrant youth. In Chinese-origin families, agreement on expectations is greater, primarily as a result of both the strengthening of the parent-child bond (which implies a higher level of communication and understanding between parents

and children) and increased educational support by both parents and children in academic communities of “between-family” support (177). According to Hao and Bonstead-Bruns this educational social support translates into the between-family capital and increased educational resources available for the Chinese immigrant community. The MANOS program both demonstrated and countered the claim that “Mexican parents and children tend to disagree more than do those of immigrant Chinese” and that “shared family expectations are low” leading to clashes in expectations and low academic achievement. In New York City, the contexts for determining this by family proved to be a difficult task, as different factors came into play. Social class and its effects on the educational support system within the immigrant community, however, seemed to point to the differences in cultural identity among generations and achievement in the two groups as the Chinese immigrant community had done more to generate and cultivate between-family social capital for family and youth educational support. Another huge fact that came to play in both groups but particularly so in Mexican communities was citizenship. Some MANOS youth spoke candidly about their undocumented status and their fears about not going to college. A few mentors who were undocumented college students—conversely—gave their own reasons for continuing with their educations. They offered themselves as evidence that education had made a difference intellectually and culturally, but in terms of work opportunities they often couldn’t offer wisdom beyond hopes for future immigration reform or other avenues for legalizing their status.

Within-family social capital may be understood as the steps socially disadvantaged immigrant parents take to develop their children through family interactions and organized activities. These were ways in which LM parents were able to play active parts in their children’s schooling to foster future advantages despite not having working fluency in the dominant

language. The possession of fluency in the dominant language was unbalanced in favor of LM parents' emerging and bilingual children. Within-family social capital did little to re-balance this condition through the interactions and language brokering of immediate and distant relatives. As I demonstrated early in Chapter 1, Gina Cruz was limited in the useful but distant tutoring assistance of her Uncle Pedro, who lived in a different borough of the City. Gina and her siblings were geographically limited in this network of family relations. I argue for the case through this dissertation, however, that despite linguistic differences from the mainstream, institutional language LM parents like those from MANOS generate "within-family social capital," produced from parent-child interactions in learning activities—"an important mechanism through which parents' educational expectations are transmitted and children's educational expectations are reinforced" (Hao and Bonstread-Bruns 192). As a community in the ethnic enclave, MANOS formed a group identity with common educational goals. At the same time, there were also significant individual-level aspects of parental involvement occurring in the biliteracy events and language brokering between mentees, mentors, and parents. One could think of parental involvement at MANOS as an inter-generational investment, an alternative sponsorship for literacy and a strategy deployed to reproduce generational success. Parents' hopes for their children were always based on assessment of past and current experiences, and they used their children's learning as ways to develop networks beyond their families, while also to develop the important connections within families for building for future possibilities in the English mainstream.

For MANOS, its mission was to offer mentoring to increase family involvement with academic achievement—building on the strengths of the families to contribute to the educations of its members within a community (González). In other words, enhancing what was already

there in the first place. Nevertheless, Hao and Bonstead-Bruns claim that in their cohort, immigrant Mexican parents demonstrated low levels of expectations, which do not match those of their children. This assumes that either children have established goals that exceed or do not exceed parental expectation, or that parents have not established “reasonable” expectations for their children based on cultural and civic knowledge of their communities. At any rate, the main implication, then, is that Mexican immigrant parents differ from Chinese immigrant parents in this regard, and possibly because of this Chinese immigrant students are outperforming Mexican immigrant students. While Hao and Bonstead-Bruns make cogent observations locating differences in the Mexican and Chinese-origin immigrant populations, their theory of the diversion between educational mobility among groups is misguided.

Again, the debate in the difference between these two immigrant groups in New York City was more complicated than that, of course. The sample of New York City Mexican immigrant parents in this dissertation did not completely follow Hao’s and Bonstead-Bruns’s observations about parental involvement. On the national scale, one significant aspect important to take into consideration was the significantly larger Mexican immigrant population in the United States. On the more local City level, I must also point to the less centrally located immigrant ethnic enclaves of New York’s *pequeños Mexicos* in comparison to those of more concentrated Chinese ethnic enclaves as Chinatown or Flushing, Queens. In addition, research into the educational practices of Chinese immigrant youth to New York City (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, and Waters) claims that the successful integration of these “model minority” youth in the school nexus is because of already existing social network programs that promote educational motivation, English and heritage language support (313-314). A program like MANOS addressed these needs for the burgeoning New York Mexican community.

Working-class and poor Mexican immigrant parents do not lack aspirations in my judgment, but act on them the same as middle class or Chinese parents. Rather, financial hardships, less flexible work schedules, and linguistic differences from the mainstream leave them fewer resources to work with (Corsaro 91). Then of course there are the differences among generations—a commonality to all families and ethnicities, but especially poignant in immigrant families. In “Leaving the Ethnic Economy: The Rapid Integration of Second-Generation Korean Americans in New York,” Dae Young Kim argues that “the primary difference between the first generation and the second is that the immigrant generation cites the glass ceiling and discrimination as major obstacles in the corporate world, while the second generation is primarily concerned with questions of identity and their place in America” (186). For the first generation, the focus on life chances centers on cultural and class restrictions, including language differences. For the children of these immigrants, an awareness of their parents’ viewpoints coupled with their own encourage them to see themselves as equally American as well as immigrant. The children of immigrants therefore are not as susceptible to immigrant constraints, but possibly up against a new set of constraints in their identity as ethnic minority. The glass ceiling, therefore, shifts, while second-generation youth try to identify where they fit within the socio-cultural structures of American society vis-à-vis their ethnic origins.

This resonates with Alejandro Portes’s and Min Zhou’s model of generational segmented assimilation, “based on the assumptions about how parental and second-generation labor market position shape second-generation identity” (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, and Waters 112). According to this model, “the mode of incorporation for the first generation gives the second generation access to different types of opportunities and social networks” (7). The second generation fares

better in the labor market because it is native-born, English-dominant, and further assimilated into mainstream cultural dispositions.

In either model of generational divergences, language difference between immigrant parents and their children at MANOS was inclusive. The first generation struggled with the language shift in ways their children both understood and misunderstood. When parents emphasized to their children that they wanted them to learn English for reasons of power in society, they often took that to mean speaking for oneself to institutions. Victoria Rico said to me that she wanted her son Marcos to know English so he could defend himself. When I asked her to clarify this, she said,

Principalmente es saber ese idioma porque [para] mi es tan difícil. Y para saber es defender. Y cual mañana cuando el sea grande, el tiene la oportunidad de poder. Está aquí en tiempo cualquiera, o de venir las veces que tenga la oportunidad, y yo no, porque no puedo.

Mainly it's to know this language because for me it's very difficult. And to know is to defend. And someday when he's older, he will have the opportunity to do something. He's here, and whenever the time comes, he will have the opportunity.

But not me, because I can't. (26 Jul. 2010)

Without needing to say so, she pointed out that she couldn't defend herself without English. By defend, she alluded more generally to fit into the rules and rituals of the English language mainstream. This put MANOS children in an intense position with regards to the languages used to participate in U.S. society as natives as they learn to fully integrate into the life-world around them. They saw themselves being equally languages which excluded their parents, those

individuals whose duty was to defend these children. Ana Celia Zentella describes this in *Growing Up Bilingual* when second-generation parents favor English in raising their children. What defending oneself means in the context of Puerto Rican East Harlem means “knowing a language [. . .] *Me defiendo* means ‘I speak it well enough to get along,’ which immigrants say in reference to their English skills” (244).

Victoria looked to Marcos, and she shook her head and said to me, “sí muchacho, es bien difícil cuando no tenga la lengua,” (Yes, my friend, it’s very difficult when you don’t have the language) (26 Jul. 2010).

During the interview conducted at Victoria’s apartment on the day of Marcos’s ninth birthday, her son watched cartoons in Spanish and sometimes added commentary to her answers. Victoria pointed to the greater difficulties she’d experienced with one of Marcos’s older sisters living in Mexico. Victoria was referring to her 21-year-old daughter Lena, who—along with her one-year-old daughter, her younger sister 15-year-old Marina, and her 11-year-old brother Rodrigo—lived with Victoria’s mother in rural Puebla, all of whom Victoria financially supported from abroad. Lena—according to Victoria—decided to forgo her studies in nursing in order to marry and begin a family. Victoria thought this a bad idea, but, as she put it, what could she do in New York? Her daughter was in Puebla living with Victoria’s mother. The money she sent to her mother financed her daughter’s tuition for her studies. She gave the example of what she said exactly to her daughter: “Porque ya yo he vivido la vida y no quiero que a ti te pase lo mismo” (Because I have lived, and I don’t want the same to happen to you) (26 Jul. 2010).

But Victoria relented, because of the distance between her growing daughters, and now her first grandchild, in Mexico. Victoria, playing the role of mother to daughter explained she told Lena, “Está bien, le digo. Te voy a apoyar en lo que yo pueda, y que voy a hacer?” (It’s

okay I tell her. I will support you how I can, what can I do?) (26 Jul. 2010). The physical distance left her helpless to establish firm expectations for her daughter's schooling. The pressure she put on her daughter to succeed and aspire high was not fully reinforced because of both physical and emotional separation between mother and daughter. The birth of this grandchild caused this crisis for Victoria, and it caused Lena to choose between getting married and completing nursing school. In Mexico, as in the United States, early out of wedlock childbearing was a factor complicating educational achievement. For Mexican young women, parental sexual regulation pressured daughters to marry if pregnant (González-López 99). Mexican immigrant parents limited daughters' "spatial mobility beyond home and school in the belief that girls require special protection to maintain virginity" (Estrada and Hondagneau-Sotelo 129). Because of the situation of Victoria's physical distance from her daughter, it would seem that expectations from either side of the equation were not meeting. Geography was the most present variable that delineated differences between aspirations between generations in this case.

Victoria felt helpless to fully enforce expectations on Lena. She blamed herself and her self-perceived lack of parental authority to prevent pregnancy among her daughters in Mexico, whom she hadn't seen in a decade. Her experience in distant surveillance of her daughters in Mexico was unlike the policing she could perform with her son Marcos who lived with her on Foraker Street. She pushed him to do well in school despite her LM status. She was able to communicate in Spanish the dominant language of Mexico, but was still unable to push her daughters in the way that she could with her direct contact with Marcos. For Victoria, there was also the sense that her daughters were teenagers, and that whatever she supposed best for them as a parent would not be what they wanted. For Victoria, Lena,

quiería otra cosa. Pues ni modo. Y yo a veces le digo que me siento culpable por haberla dejado pero mi mamá dice no porque la mala cabeza de ella fue que no supo pensar. Que hubiera estudiado. Ella no trabajaba, ella no, nada. Ella solamente estudiaba, estudiaba, pero pues a veces . . . me hace qué me quiero ir.

would want something else. But oh well. And sometimes I tell her that I feel responsible, and I told her to stop, but my mother told me no because her hard-headedness was because she didn't think. She would have been educated. She wasn't working, nothing. She only studied, studied, but, well, a little . . . it makes me want to go. (26 Jul. 2010)

Despite Victoria's good intentions of guiding her daughter with stories of her own difficulties and migration, however, her daughter decided to give up her studies. The children of immigrants perceived these narratives of past challenges as historical occurrences that led to the trying present conditions of their parents. The present, though, had challenges immigrant children faced as well, and that they carried the burdens of their families on their shoulders into the future. According to Stanton-Salazar and Spina, "Immigrant Latino parents in the United States are painfully aware of their limited ability to strategically mediate the challenges faced by their adolescent children, and try to compensate for this by exhorting them to aim high and make the most of their schooling. Yet loving exhortations are not the same as a diversified support system" (233).

The effects of such rhetoric from parents to children conveys mixed messages of when it comes to school, of "don't be like me," while at the same time, "be a little bit like me"—follow my work ethic and apply yourself. For Marcos, this became one way for him to think about how

his mother's hopes for him to be not like his sisters in Mexico drove him to the "favorite" spot for her affections. While he couldn't fathom what it meant not to be like his parents completely, he understood that his mother and father both wanted him to study, to continue schooling further than they did. As Marcos continued to grow, Victoria would have the same fear of young parenthood for him, hoping she would not lose him the way she felt she did her daughter.

2. Brokering the Immigrant Bargain: the Rhetorical Power of Immigrant Parents

For the Mexican American children of MANOS families, the process of becoming English-proficient largely happened via their schooling. Perhaps they became proficient in standard usage in schools, but they did become English-fluent in the dialects of their peers. They learned nonstandard English among their English-speaking peers. Likewise, their immigrant parents understood that living in the United States meant their children would be formally instructed by the nation's institutions to be *norte americanos*—or *gringados* (gringo-ized) as one MANOS mentor put it—as they became further acquainted with English. This "gringo-izing" is at two levels of language acquisition—standard in school and at MANOS and nonstandard in the streets or schoolyard among peers. The MANOS parents actively involved themselves in this project, despite language differences. They trusted in educational institutions to cultivate linguistic capital for their children, and they expected this to be exchanged later for economic advantage and greater chances for social mobility. The main value—aside from defending oneself as Victoria said—was ascribed as linguistic capital. English for the MANOS parents was a goal for moving upward toward the class they regarded as "*profesionales*" (professionals)—or middle class. According to sociologist Robert C. Smith, "about a third of Mexican girls and a fifth of boys are upwardly mobile in terms of education and work compared

to their parents” (qtd. in Alvarado). MANOS parents credited English with one of the underlying necessary attributes for mobility, and therefore as more essential than Spanish in the United States for professional careers, though they admitted that having Spanish in addition was an asset. At the same time, the bilingual MANOS youth felt the pressure in both English and Spanish as Americans and Mexicans.

The MANOS families by and large accepted the stereotyped notion of the immigrant work ethic—a cliché that also bespoke of an immigrant “American dream.” The immigrant American dream narrative promoted a story of refugee escapism and constructs an ideology of American patriotism and meritocracy—the familiar tale of fleeing the forsaken homeland, arriving to the U.S.A. with nothing, working hard, and eventually succeeding. Boot-strap tales validated an immigrant work ethic with promises of socio-economic rewards in the land of opportunity, typically overlooking the darker aspects of migration including exploitation, human trafficking and organized crime, racism, sexism, and xenophobia (attributed to that glass ceiling in the first generation and the racialized constraints which the second come to deal with). Often, though, the Mexican version of the immigrant dream was a narrative that equally promoted its own ideological versions of the utopic redemption and validation of folk nationalism but within a transnational frame (Smith).

For immigrant families, the American dream entails increased academic opportunities for future generations of family members. School success for future members of the family is credited as built on the sacrifices of the previous immigrant generation. As meritorious as it sounds to credit schools with completely shaping economic mobility and assimilation this only proves to legitimate schools as enforcers of social structure, enforcers that legitimize those who pass through them, and also as they prove that those who fail, or rather give up (because there are

multiple chances to rehabilitate failure) are failures. If one fails, one should blame oneself—never the institution. The American dream and schooling replicate this structure of inequality as it directly addresses the minds and bodies of recipients of the “soft denial” rhetoric. Students internalize institutionally established modes of opportunity and denial, which Burton Clark back in 1960 recognized as “culturally encouraged aspiration and institutionally provided means of achievement lead[ing] to the failure of many participants” (569). The significance of individuals’ self-understandings as children of immigrants is crucial to comprehending the role false beliefs or ideologies play in maintaining the powers and privileges of dominant groups in society. The immigrant American dream for increased academic credentials for future generations, then, acts not to push people up the social hierarchy, but mostly to maintain those already at the top. The culturally-emphasized influences of individual chance for academic success are problematized by democratic ideals generating ambitious aspirations and a free-enterprise capitalist economy which generates stratification and competitive anxieties—an economy of ambition and limited resources available that satisfy aspirations.

One running version of the Mexican immigrant American dream I found when interviewing MANOS parents was to return to a better life in Mexico. Nearly all the MANOS parents had hopes to reunite with family in Mexico whom they helped to financially support with remittances from wages earned in New York, all done through hard work, living through economically-straining conditions, and loving sacrifice for family. This too overlooked—just as in the above example of the more generalized version of the immigrant American dream—the darker aspects of migration in Mexico including human trafficking, neoliberal economic restructuring and free trade, low economic prospects, racism, sexism, and tremendous social inequalities. The Mexican immigrant American dream differed from the assimilation-based

dream because of transnational elements that were both realistic and necessary given the proximity of the homeland and the darker complexions of the immigrants which made them targets of U.S. racism. This was less a desire *not* to be American in the sense of citizenship, or even so much a call for dual citizenship in both states, but rather a way of conceiving of oneself as American in the sense of a citizen of the Americas, or a global citizenship with transnational rights that equal those of corporations and governments, equal in dignity from one nation to another (Kay; Smith).

For Juana Uribe Sanchez, as one MANOS example, the immigrant Mexican dream did not include assimilation. Juana preferred to remain distinct, to be a Mexican temporarily pursuing opportunities in the United States, making the best of the time abroad to make enough money so as to return “home” and live the Mexican dream, which, somewhat ironically, mirrored the American middle-class standards for public safety, health care, social security, safe working conditions, educational availability, and, of course, legitimate processes for immigration (Massey, Durand, and Malone; Smith). Juana and her husband Fermín planned on returning to Mexico once their youngest son, four-year-old Pablo, graduated high school. They had already purchased a plot of land in Tehuacán, Puebla. The Uribe parents planned to build their home over the next fifteen years. They considered Mexico as their home, and they wanted only to live temporarily in the United States until both their children had what they reasoned as a sufficient footing to get ahead. Since both children were U.S. citizens, they could also live transnational lives between Mexico and the United States.

Of course one alternative narrative to this “return” Mexican immigrant American dream was to settle permanently in the United States. Many MANOS parents did end up settling in the New York City. For example, 33-year-old Elizabeth Gonzalez planned on living the rest of her

life on Foraker Street. Her sister's family and her parents lived a few blocks away, and her three additional siblings lived on the eastern seaboard of the U.S. Elizabeth's version of the Mexican immigrant American dream was enabled in her case by her possession of U.S. citizenship. Her father applied for amnesty in 1986, after living in New York for several years away from his family. When amnesty was granted, he reunited with his family to Foraker Street in the course of several years. Elizabeth was happy to see her father again, and also to leave her *pueblo* where she said a good portion of people had emigrated, to either Mexico City or New York City.

One glaring difference in the Mexican version of the immigrant American dream, however, was that most immigrants wanted to maintain a connection with Mexico, either through owning a home there to stay in when vacationing from the United States, or retiring there, after their children finished their schooling in the United States, and after making sure their children were well on their own first (Smith). Elizabeth's family still owned their home in Puebla, and her parents returned back during the winter to escape the cold northern climate. Elizabeth traveled back periodically as well and each time she traveled back she said the town seemed to have been less and less populated. Many immigrant communities share this dream of return to the homeland, and many do return. Significant numbers of Irish, Italian, and Polish immigrants returned to their sending countries in droves after establishing firm economic lives in the United States (Almeida; Gabaccia; Lopata). In either case, the Mexican immigrant American dream and the more general immigrant American dream entail elements of class mobility and overcoming social determinants.

With or without citizenship documents, however, going to school, studying, and learning English were priorities MANOS parents enforced with their children. For Victoria Rico, who had undocumented status, however, her son's English learning abilities took precedence. Learning

English, she said, was her son Marcos's way of defending himself in case something should happen to his parents. When speaking of her reasons for being strong and continuing to work despite feeling tired or ill, Victoria turned to some of realities she faced as an undocumented immigrant, which she shared with her son. According to Victoria she continually reminded Marcos that,

le digo que el piensa, estudia. Dice quiere ser un buen estudiante. Va tener algo. Dice, una carrera. Que fuera yo a trabajar y tenga yo fuerza porque si fuera yo a trabajar, le digo, te diera las cosas que tu quieras, hijo. Sí estaré aquí, le digo. Hasta aquí le digo. Al menos que antes nos saque inmigración, pues nos vamos le digo.

I say to him that the one who thinks, studies. He says he wants to be a good student. That he will have something. A career, he says. I tell him that I have to go to work and have lots of strength because if I go to work, I say to him, then I can give you whichever things you want, my son. I will be here, I say to him. Even here I say to him. Unless immigration kicks us out, and in that case, we will leave. (26 Jul. 2010)

Marcos flipped through a Spider Man coloring book as his mother said this. In later interviews with Victoria and Marcos, I came to learn more about how Marcos and his family viewed education, and how his difference of legitimate citizenship from his parents was something he knew a great deal about. He had understood the outlines of immigration and also deportation years earlier, but over the years the details had become more familiar, and he had become increasingly more filled in to the potential consequences deportation would have on his family.

In situations like Marcos's the immigrant bargain took on a different guise, again between nations, but also distinct in a Mexican variety guised in "illegality" or permission to undertake the American dream in the first place.

Whichever version of the Mexican immigrant mentality, or which of the family narratives overrode the primary point of view in terms of thinking of citizenship and cultural identity, the MANOS parents by and large all subscribed to the immigrant dream of class mobility through "educational mobility." With their children, however, they had struck compromises for responsibly maintaining high motivation in their schoolwork and the carefree whims of youth. They persuaded their children to take their studies seriously by negotiating the immigrant bargain. While such a bargain occurred in most families—immigrant and nonimmigrant—the "life-defining sacrifices of migration convert it into an urgent tale of moral worth or failure" (Smith 8). Robert Smith claims second-generation success "validates" the first-generation's sacrifices, but that failure produces a "burden of shame": "The children understand the implication that their parents, who overcame long odds, would have done better, and they judge themselves harshly" (126).

Whether or not the MANOS mentees felt they owed their parents anything or not could be debatable among the children of each family. In general, however, all the MANOS youth wanted to make their parents proud of them, but not all agreed that education was the way to do this. Luis Uribe did not consider himself a good enough student to ever make his parents proud of his scholastic accomplishments. He did feel proud, however, when he language brokered for his mother Juana and when he helped her with tutoring his younger brother Pablo (10 Feb. 2011). In immigrant family situations, however, failure and success pressures rested on the second-generation's ability to excel academically, but failure and success also rested on a belief of

parents that education was necessary for an upward trajectory of economic mobility and economic security. At MANOS, I spotted the “immigrant bargain” in operation, especially with the gravity of the shame-burden, or *vergüenza*, used as a rhetorical threat to motivate children in their studies.

As one could well imagine, the looming family history narratives caused some MANOS mentees to feel the social pressures of their bilingualism and biculturalism. They sometimes felt like they couldn’t live up to the sacrifices their parents made for them, and that they disappointed them. This sometimes presented an option to choose a form of Mexican identity that compensated as a form of survival guilt from overcoming obstacles particular to the immigrant Mexican experience.

One particular student was led to tears by a mentor. Nineteen-year-old Leti Navarro, a second-generation Mexican American and a recent high school grad, now college student, reminded thirteen-year-old Jesús Fernandez, who was in danger of being held back in the sixth grade, how hard his parents worked and the hard lives they lived in Mexico and his duty to do well in school to repay his parents for their sacrifices. Jesús’s mother Linda asked the mentor to speak to her son about his performance. Linda felt she wasn’t reaching him. She knew Jesús looked up to Leti, so she, along with Leti, decided to perform an intervention. Linda also asked Carlos Portales, the organizer of MANOS, and me to stand-by. We had informed Linda that we would plan a study schedule for her son, to which she agreed. Leti asked Linda not to be involved in the discussion in order to give Jesús some space. She agreed. At the agreed time, she left the MANOS office.

After Jesús entered the room and situated himself, Leti, without wasting time, went straight to the rhetoric of the immigrant bargain in order to persuade Jesús to motivate himself for his own good and for that of his parents.

She reviewed with him his grades, his reports from his teachers, and his practice test results. Then she asked Jesús if he thought about how much stress he was causing his mother. He didn't respond, and she mentioned to Jesús how "they came here so you could have a better life and not have to grow up like they did." She proceeded on this line reminding him how they couldn't go to school when young, how they came to the United States only to be treated as immigrants, and how many hours they worked to provide for Jesús and his siblings.

At each turn Leti made, poor Jesús held his head down just a little further, until his chin nearly touched his chest, and tears rolled down his cheeks. Leti, a college freshman attending one of New York's public colleges, was a former MANOS mentee, and now seasoned mentor. She gave her own example about how easy it would have been to give up, but that she owed it to her parents to keep on, and to work hard and always think of family struggles as motivation, and also as source of strength. This resonated with him, it seemed, as he nodded. Portales also observed the interaction. Neither of us stepped in until after a brief dramatic silence ensued, and then we all sat down as a group and drew up a study schedule and plan, and Jesús volunteered to be tutored one-on-one with Leti one extra Saturday afternoon a month. Jesús did not get held back, but afterward he was by no means a completely changed student, as his grades had always been a problem, partly attributed by his mother Linda as attention deficit, partly as his teenage mentality, and partly as lack of her own support for him in English.

The immigrant bargain loomed in the imaginings of education's cultural importance for the MANOS parents. What Leti told Jesús about immigrant parents' life experiences and

schooling constraints, in fact, was quite often true. María Cruz, another MANOS mother, mentioned to me that she wished she would have had the opportunity to go to school like her children, but she had to work at an early age to help support her widowed mother. As a child, her family lived as migrant farm workers in Mexico for several years, before María and her sister and brother migrated to the United States. She recounted, with tears in her eyes in front of all her children during an interview that “mis propios paisanos se burlan de mi por el simple hecho de no saber escribir mi nombre, pero yo no tuve la oportunidad de ir a la escuela, y solamente hablo un dialecto” (“My own Mexican people look down on me for the simple fact that I don’t know how to write my own name, but I never had the opportunity to go to school, and I speak only a dialect”) (23 May 2010). The *dialecto* she described was her heritage language Mixtec.

For María, it seemed natural that she would be discriminated against by Americans for her illiteracy, but it made no sense to her to receive similar treatment from Mexicans experiencing similar discrimination from the mainstream. Her Mixtec roots had no place in the linguistic marketplace of Spanish in Mexico, and her family’s economic conditions limited opportunities to study, despite her intense desire to attend school. Her children—also in tears—had heard this story before. All were mindful of the hardships their mother lived as a girl, her educational history, and the social and language challenges she still faced. María’s children, like most MANOS mentees, were sensitive to the narratives of their parents’ educational hardships. They also understood that their parents rhetorically used their personal history narratives in order to teach their children important lessons about living responsibly and studying hard. They used the immigrant bargain from their viewpoint to teach their children about the difficulties of life and migration, as a means to pressure them. The pressure was certainly effective, as Jesús’ tears proved.

The immigrant bargain was thus foundational to family stories and to parental authority to guide their children into what they deemed smart life decisions. These immigrant parents would use these stories to maintain traditional family power dynamics. MANOS mentees Gina and David Cruz conducted an interview with me a few weeks after speaking to them with their mother María about her literacy and her experiences learning English and Spanish. In this follow-up with these two youth, I was curious as to how the story of their mother's migration from Mexico and her struggles with languages had affected their outlooks on schooling.

SA: What do your parents tell you about going to school?

Gina Cruz: They tell us to like take the opportunity because they didn't take it. Since my parents didn't get a higher education, they said to go for it, because they lived through a bad situation, and [. . .] I have to be something bigger than what they imagined.

David Cruz: They tell me to study hard . . .

SA: Is that a lot of pressure for you?

GC: Um . . . sometimes. Sometimes the pressure's on me because—you know—I want to do good, and I want to make them proud.

SA: And David?

DC: My mom and dad tell me to work hard in school because that way I can get good grades. Then I could get a good college and a good job and make them proud. (2 Jun. 2010)

Gina mentioned that her parents lived through a “bad situation,” that they didn't have the resources she had, which proved a tremendous constraint from permitting them to continue their schoolings in Mexico. The social condition of her family's poverty reared its head to Gina, and

poverty served a narrative reminder of the threat of not-achieving educational credentials, which, when weighed against alternative narratives, bespoke of “blame the victim” responses for not getting ahead. Poverty was after all what compelled the hard journey north in the first case for the majority of MANOS parents. They sought to overcome the constraints of poverty by migrating to the United States, most of the time seeing their migration as a sacrifice for the next generation. Gina wanted to make her parents proud, she said, and the pressure was put on her by herself and not from her parents. This made her goals seem more like a way to repay them out of gratefulness rather than something she owed them. Likewise David equated good grades and college graduation as increasing future prospects of a good job. This, he said, would make his parents proud. Both youths took on aspects of their parents’ visions and cultural values which combined and added to learned experiences in the United States.

Carola and Marcelo Suárez-Orozco describe the immigrant bargain as having a “dual-frame of reference” because students from immigrant families integrate experiences of parents and values from native countries to their U.S. experiences. MANOS youth situated this dual-frame of reference for life in Mexico and the United States within terms of class and community identity, but also in terms of citizenship or living as a divided family—with close and distant relatives on both sides of the Mexico-United States border. During an interview with 11-year-old Luis and his mother Juana, I asked him some questions about what schooling in his family was like.

SA: What does your mom tell you about school?

Luis Uribe: She said that it’s important, that it will teach me all kinds of stuff and things like that.

SA: What does your mom tell you school was like when she was a little

girl?

LU: My mom said it was pretty much difficult because the school was far and she had to walk a lot, and in those times there wasn't that good of transportation. She didn't really like it because it was real far from home. And she had to do her homework really quickly because there was almost no technology in that place where she lived.

SA: What does she tell you about why school is important now?

LU: It's important because—because I want my mom to live in Mexico again. But I have to work hard to get it. To get the passport. But first I have to study and be something important. Like a lawyer, or a doctor, or someone important like that. I want to help my mom.

SA: What do you think you want to be?

LU: . . . It's not my time to decide. (10 Feb. 2011)

Luis had the goal of seeing his mother back in Mexico, where he knew she would be happier because of the presence of family there. Even though the living conditions which drove her to migrate (her schooling in particular) were accounted for in Luis's understanding of his mother's migration narrative to the United States, he understood that life for her in the U.S. had been a struggle, one which isolated her from her family, and which she suffered from because of this. Juana was the eldest sibling in her family, and her remittances to Mexico helped to send her younger siblings to school, two eventually to college. Luis's turn to citizenship pointed to the dual-frame of reference that operated in conjunction with the immigrant bargain and its calls to motivation. For Luis, it meant being "something important" like a "lawyer, or a doctor, or someone important like that." Luis had made promises to his mother that he would eventually

succeed in doing well for her. During the course of our interview, this led to a round of hugs between mother and son. It was touching to witness the humble gesture coming from 11-year-old Luis.

MANOS youth reacted to their parents' dreams in different ways, but parents did their best to persuade their children to aim high once they were informed about the different opportunities available. The youth sometimes felt crowded when the parents became—according to them—too involved, or when they received what they considered as too much educational attention. MANOS mother Lupe Rubio put it this way, “padres tenemos un gran compromiso con nuestros hijos a mi me gusta mucho involuntarme en la educación de ellos, ya que de mi dependen que ellos sobresalgan y logren sus metas, o se vayan al vacío” (we parents have a great obligation to our children, and I like to feel involved in their education, they depend on me to help them reach their goals, or to give them space” (19 Jun. 2010). Lupe sensed when she was intruding too much into the decisions her children made, but she also drew a line of giving space and staying involved actively. According to Lupe, she would make sure her children always did their homework, and she would ask them questions about what they learned. In terms of setting goals, she wanted her children—as so many MANOS parents also said—to become “*profesionales*” (professionals).

During an interview with Sarita and Felipe Rubio, Lupe's two oldest children, they spoke about their mother's messages of achievement:

SA: Your mother, how much education does she have?

SR: A little bit.

FR: Almost none.

SA: What do you mean?

SR: She never went to school that much—

FR: Only until before middle school.

SA: When she was a little girl.

SR: She had to work . . . take care of the family.

SA: How old was she when she started working?

SR: She was really young.

FR: Like twelve she says.

SR: She would work in a place where they make tortillas.

SA: She told you both about this?

FR: Yeah—

SR: Oh yeah.

SA: How old were you when you first learned this?

SR: I was about twelve.

FR: She was always telling me since I was even littler.

SA: Why did she tell you?

FR: Because . . . I don't know.

SR: She probably wanted us to know.

SA: Why did she want you to know?

SR: I think because she wanted us to get an education, and that she wanted to show us why she came here, and why we should do good in school. I mean, she had to work, and no education, she had to support her family and her siblings. She's one of the older kids in her family, so she had to help her mom and dad out to help the younger ones.

SA: What kinds of things do your parents tell you about going to school?

FR: That it's important . . . to get a job, and get educated . . .

SR: They tell us that we need it—that we need it for life. Something that no one can take away.

SA: Is there a lot of pressure for you since you're going to start college in a few years?

SR: Yeah, oh yeah, there's a lot of pressure. Because I'll be the first one. I'll be the only one. (21 Feb. 2011)

The two siblings were familiar with their mother's migration narrative and the sacrifices she made for her family, for her children in particular, to receive a quality education which was to a large extent denied her in Mexico. According to Sarita, her father had a similar story. The elder Rubios treated education as the safest investment for their children's futures—something which Sarita said “no one can take away.” Despite this, it was something which could alienate family members moving beyond their class and ethnic identity into the mainstream. Sarita said she'd be the only one in college when she began, meaning the first in her family to attend college, and that this would cause some pressure for her, and perhaps also her family identity.

The pressure Sarita felt about moving on to college laid emphasis that contact zones happened not only with MANOS families and public encounters, but also that “contact zones exist within families as well as between families and the outside world” (Orellana 21). The contact zone in the case of such upwardly mobile students as Sarita gets enacted as language brokering for her family with the English mainstream. In such contexts, youths are at the site of contact between asymmetrical power relations networked among cultures, languages, and identities. In this case, however, the contact zone within the immigrant family means future

generations becoming increasingly proficient in the dominant language. In addition, family members attuned to the class habits of the U.S. mainstream also enact power differentials among bilingual children and monolingual parents.

Working from Mary Louise Pratt's insightful definition, contact zones emphasize power inequalities in the social relations in the activities and interactions of individuals during the Spanish imperial colonial context ("Arts of the Contact Zone"). The institutional asymmetries between colonial language and indigenous ones came to the fore in the contact between groups and the establishment of power relations between languages and literacies. In the modern case of gradually acculturated bilingual children, the institutional power of the dominant Anglo language and culture enter into the family through subordinate the heritage language. The children in such cases become carriers of superior cultural prestige which structures asymmetry in the family. In this analysis of power differential structured on the dominant language in the family, we must also bear in mind how networks affect power relations in the linguistic marketplace.

Once outside the family contact zones where they dominate their parents in English, L2 youth become subordinated in the contact zones of schools they attend where their English is inferior to the usage practiced by teachers and institutional figures. In schools, the power differentials shift, and these set the context for a different range of conflict which affect discourse relations for L2 youth like Sarita, and all the MANOS mentees.

What this might mean for some immigrant youth is confirmation that in order to be successful, children must not be like their parents, a pressure for assimilation and mobility which encourages them to dis-identify with parents and their families. Cultural theorists term this "survivor guilt." Francisco Gaytán defines this predicament of survivor guilt and how

To some degree it may appear clear to an outside observer that one can be hard working, respectful to one's parents' work, and have aspirations to go beyond the achievements of family members, however, the pervasiveness of the message to "not be like me," or "not be like them," especially when referring to individuals with strong familial and cultural ties, may have sent a message that a Mexican-descent student would necessarily have to distance him or herself from family and culture to be academically successful. (104)

Marjorie Faulstich Orellana likewise theorizes that tensions for language brokering youth occur less from role reversals through mastery of the dominant language, but rather from "living between two cultural worlds—those of their homes and their new expanding public lives—where there are different expectations and beliefs regarding responsibility, independence, and interdependence" (116). This results in youth who see their parents perceived by the public as "immigrants," and ascribing to this perception and choosing to differentiate oneself from one's parents, and to see oneself as part of mainstream society, abandoning the strengths of the family to *vaya sola* (walk alone).

3. Writing About Opportunity: Immigrant Youths' Perceptions of Social Class and Education

In order to practice their writing, a small group of MANOS mentees ranging from ages 9-15 led by founding director Carlos Portales responded to an image from the newspaper *El Diario de México* about children at school in Veracruz, Mexico, Figure 3.1 below. He cut out the photo, pasted it on a piece of paper with the message "A Role Model School" above the photo, and added a subtext below it asking for "Reflections," with the question, "What would you do to

become a better student?" He made copies and distributed them to various students at MANOS one evening. As a writing practice activity, he asked students who finished their homework early to write their responses to the text.

Since I had finished tutoring a few mentees, I volunteered to organize a group of five students into a corner of the center to work on writing about the image. Three of the students I knew well, fifth grader Marisol Fernandez, age 11, and fourth graders Nansi Montez, and David Cruz, ages 10 and 9. They had been taking part in my larger MANOS study. The two older students in the group who completed the writing exercise used to attend MANOS somewhat regularly. The Ruiz brothers, tenth grader José and eighth grader Pablo, ages 15 and 13, stopped attending MANOS for about a year, then came back sporadically. They occasionally stopped by to say hello or ask about homework. As of July 2011, I had not seen them for just over one year. The last I heard, José had dropped out of school and was working at a grocery store, and Pablo was failing. Both brothers, allegedly, were also associating with Mexican *pandilleros* or gang members along Foraker Street.

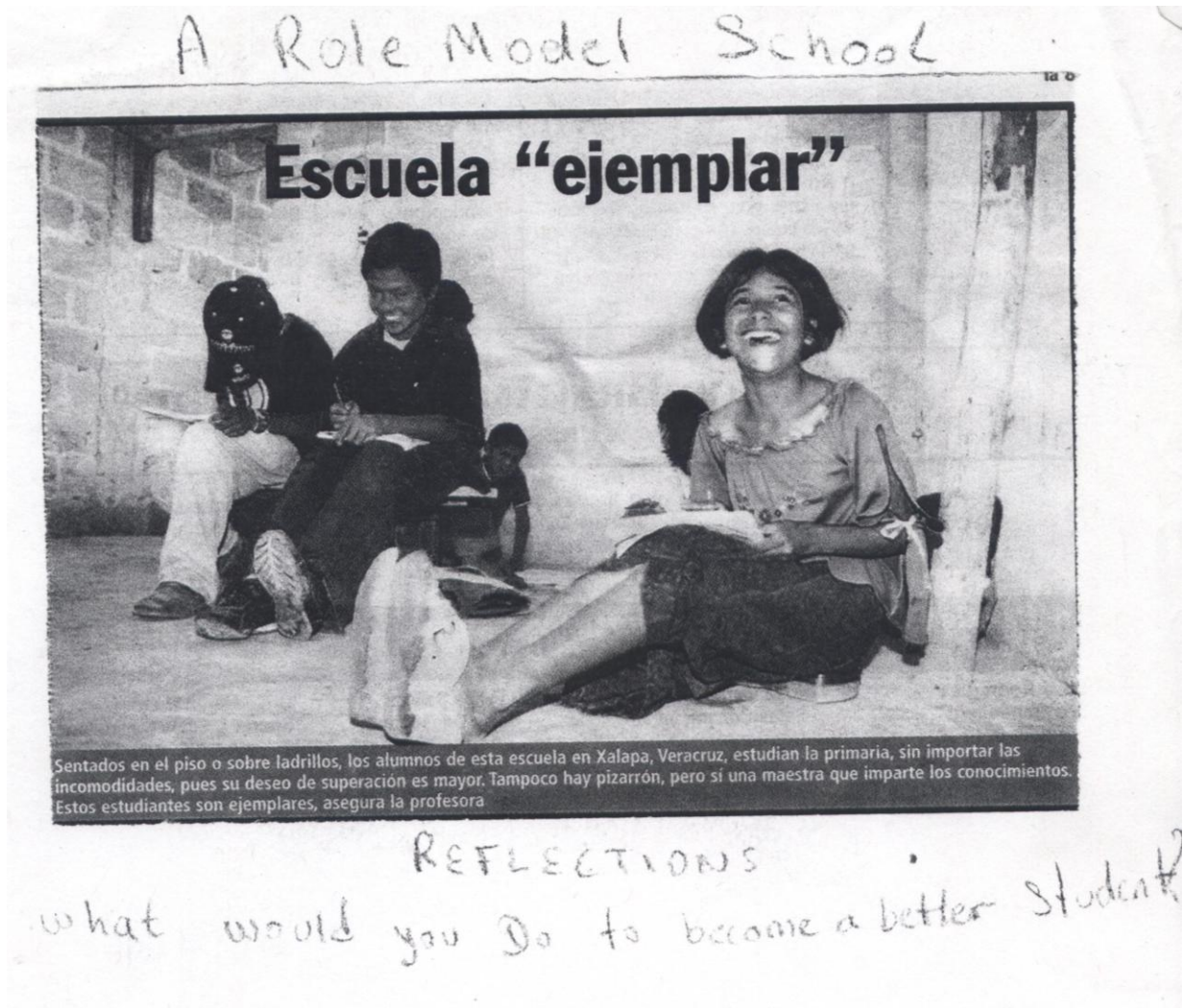


Figure 3.1: Image from the writing assignment asking several MANOS students what they would do to be better students. The image came from the Spanish newspaper *El Diario de México* (24 Oct. 2009). There was no accompanying article for the image, and it was quickly inserted to be a message of hope, or to project a sense of thankfulness for schooling in the United States. Portales maintained the original caption written by the newspaper on his improvised assignment. The caption for the photo reads:

Sentados en el piso a sobre ladrillos, los alumnus de esta escuela en Xalapa, Veracruz, estudian la primaria, sin importar las incomodidades, pues su deseo de

superación es mayor. Tampoco hay pizarrón, pero sí una maestra que imparte los conocimientos. Estos estudiantes son ejemplares, asegura la profesora.

Sitting with their knees on the floor, the students at this elementary school in Xalapa, Veracruz study despite the uncomfortable conditions because their desire for achievement is greater. They don't have a chalkboard, but they do have a teacher to impart knowledge. These students are exemplary assures the teacher.

When the group of MANOS mentees thought about how to respond to the image of students in Xalapa, they weren't exactly sure what to write about. They asked if they had to answer the question that Portales wrote. As I didn't want to limit students to that question, I told them to write and just let the picture tell them what to write. Nansi asked if this had to be an essay.

The students all groaned.

The two Ruiz brothers said something to one another in Spanish, and Nansi laughed.

"It's going to be hard for them because they don't speak English," she said.

I hadn't known José and Pablo for very long around this time—only a couple of days really—but I assured them they could write in Spanish, and they assented. The two brothers were still learning English—at school and with peers around Foraker Street. They were reluctant to participate in an activity that would highlight their English "deficiencies," and also mark them as immigrants. MANOS, though, was a safe space, and I wanted the Ruiz brothers to rest assured that for this activity and its improvised pedagogy, they would not have to adapt, but that the assignment would adapt for them. I told all the mentees they could write how they wanted, but

just to write their ideas about the photo, and write it as nice or as bad as they wanted, it was only practice. The only catch, I told them, was that they would have to read what they wrote aloud.

“In English?” asked David.

“English or Spanish,” I said. And to the Ruiz brothers, “inglés o español.”

“Vamos a leer después de terminar,” (We will read after finishing) said Marisol.

José looked at me, and I repeated “inglés o español.”

The following figures were the results produced by the students, and which they read aloud after writing for approximately twelve minutes (MANOS was soon closing that night and we needed time to hear each version). Nearly all of the students wrote personal responses to the photo which delved into the rhetoric of the immigrant bargain and social mobility and education. The juxtapositions of Mexico and the United States illustrated and reaffirmed the duality-frame of reference for immigrant youth.

This picture affects me by
 getting educated the ~~#~~ right way.
 I am glad that I go to a
 good school. If I was rich or
 had money I would change
 everything. I would bring
 chairs and tables books and
 a lot of different supplies so
 they get educated more. They
 happy that they getting educated
 because some people don't get
 educated. ~~I feel like if I~~
 I feel like we got opportunities
 because we in the USA. ~~I~~ and
 we don't care about school
 and the kids in the picture
 are happy and they sitting
 on the floor getting educated.
~~Ellos~~ ellos les estan echando
 ganas y nosotros le estamos
 dahi no le echamos ganas.

Figure 3.2: Text composed by MANOS mentee Marisol Fernandez, age 11. The transcription reads: “This picture affects me by getting educated the right way. I am glad that I go to a good school. If I was rich or had money I would change everything. I would bring chairs and tables books and a lot of supplies so they get educated more. There happy that they getting educated because some people don’t get educated. I feel like we got opportunities because we’re in the USA, and we don’t care about school and the kids in the picture are happy and there sitting on the floor getting educated. Ellos les estan echando ganas y nosotros si estamos ahi no le echamos ganas.” (“They are making the effort and if we were there we wouldn’t make the effort.”)

What struck me about Marisol’s text was the use of Spanish as coda at the end of the writing. At the end of her text, she code-switched (Zentella 41, 81) producing a multilingual text. This variety of multilingualism did not happen for her as a language broker when she switched between languages between monolingual audiences of her parents and English-dominant groups or individuals. She clearly took bilingualistic liberties with her awareness of audience for this composition.

Marisol also demonstrated the larger conversation of the immigrant bargain presented earlier in this chapter. First Marisol wrote that “I feel like we got opportunities because we’re in the USA, and we don’t care about school,” making a forthright comparison between the youth in the photo and youth in the United States. For her, the youth in the photo seemed happy with their meager schooling conditions. She reverted to Spanish to further clarify and summarize her point: “Ellos les estan echando ganas y nosotros si estamos ahi no le echamos ganas” (They are making the effort and if we were there we wouldn’t make the effort). The comparison between “there” and “here” and the resources that provoked a sense of appreciation for what one had was another

common hallmark of how the immigrant bargain was legitimated by parents to their children, and how it figured in social class dynamics in conjunction with nation status. Her final sentence in Spanish more or less summed up the idea that “we”—those born here—don’t appreciate what we have, and we should work harder, like these students who have little. This was the parental message of the MANOS mothers. Her audience in Spanish would get the overall point of what she had interpreted in more detailed English: class comforts deaden one’s sense of appreciation. Though the public school she attended on Foraker Street was by far not one of the best schools in New York City, Marisol felt she couldn’t complain when examining the school in Xalapa from the image.

“If they came to MANOS, they would be happy too,” she said. “Because here we have desks too and teachers to help us.”

MANOS mentees often referred to mentors as “teachers,” and here was one instance when Marisol saw their pedagogical assistance as institution-like, at least with what she recognized as a lack of infrastructure with the Xalapa school.

When she read her text aloud, she stopped to courteously translate a few additional phrases for the Ruiz brothers, who thanked her. She was tutoring them spontaneously. When she arrived at the last sentence of her composition and her use of Spanish, Nansi asked for clarification as to whether what she just read was a translation or written. Marisol showed Nansi her written text, and Nansi was impressed that Marisol knew how to write Spanish so well.

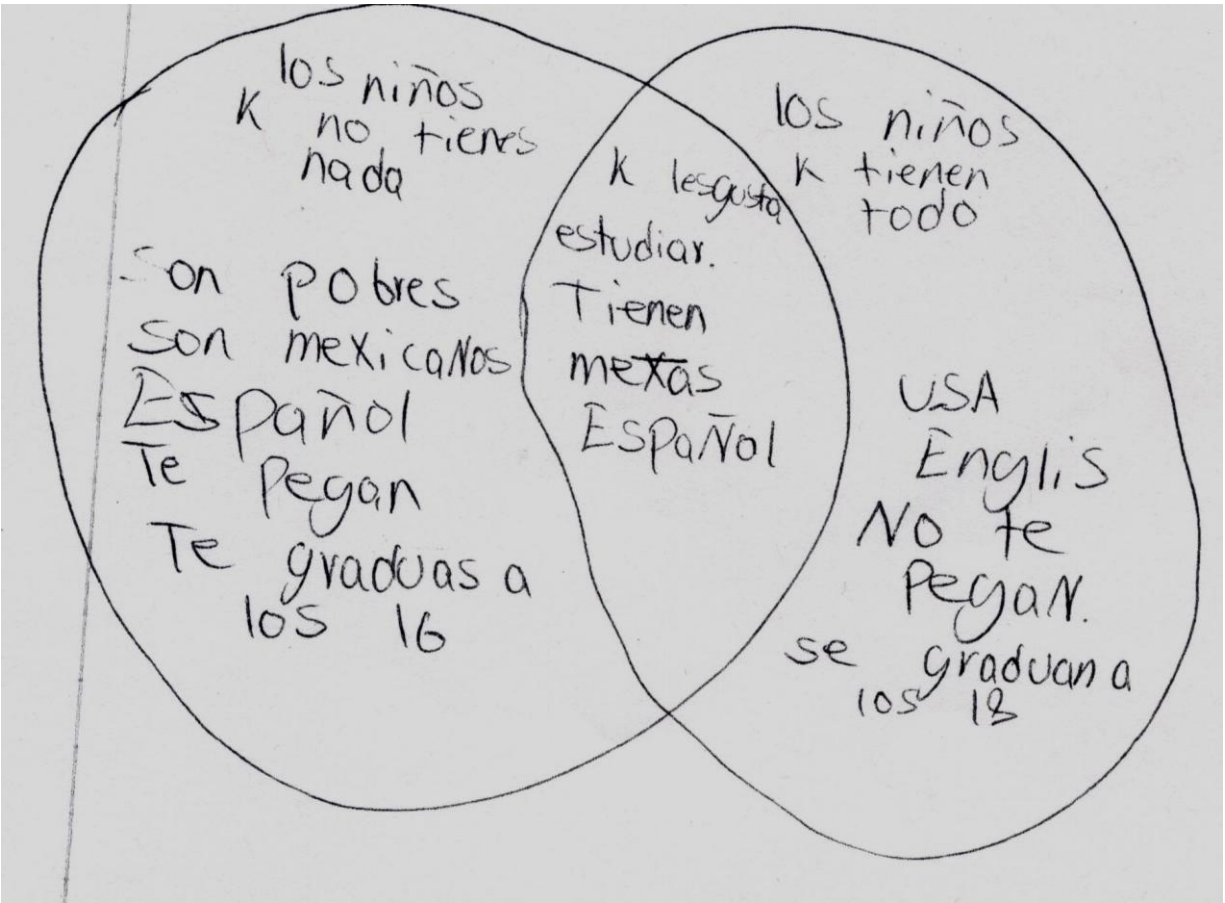


Figure 3.3: The diagram composed by MANOS mentee José Ruiz, 15. At the time, José had been living in the United States for roughly three months. The transcription and translation is as follows:

los niños		los niños
k no tienen	k les gusta	k tienen
nada	estudiar	todo
Son pobres	tienen	
Son Mexicanos	metas	USA
Español	Español	Englis
te pegan		no te
te graduas a		pegan

los 16		se graduan a
		los 18
the children		kids
that have	that it's good	that have
nothing	for them to study	everything
are poor	they have goals	USA
are Mexican	Spanish	they don't
they hit you		hit you
you graduate		you graduate
at 16		at 18

My experience teaching composition to college students stressed the importance of using invention devices which enabled students to organize their knowledge of about topics. José didn't know where to begin with the writing prompt. He couldn't think of anything to write in English, "es porque yo no sé qué escribir en inglés" he said.

"Yo también," said Pablo.

"He doesn't know what to write in English, and neither does Pablo," Marisol said to me. She turned to Pablo, "El le dijo está bien para escribir en español." ("He said it's fine to write in Spanish.") Marisol was the oldest of the bilingual mentees, and she took charge as language broker.

"Okay," said Pablo. He began to write.

I approached José and told him in English not to worry about writing anything in English. He looked at the photo and didn't say anything but shook his head. I drew a picture of a Venn diagram on a piece of paper, and showed it to him. I wrote U.S.A. above one circle and Mexico over the other, then I said to him, “escuelas” (schools).

He nodded. He was familiar with Venn diagrams, and with the prompt for brainstorming. José made his own chart and filled it in with some of his ideas about social class and schools and how these compared across nations. The diagram turned away from exclusively commenting on the photo, but did give an idea of the same sort of mental framework the MANOS mentees applied to thinking of the differences of social class between Mexico and the United States. Had I more time to develop the assignment beyond the informal and impromptu stages of this activity with these MANOS mentees, I would have then generated lists among the students' brainstorms of commonalities and differences between schools in New York City and Xalapa. These lists would then have been debated and turned into sentences, and later into paragraphs with embedded evidence making arguments from experience about the newspaper text.

I realized as José worked diligently on his diagram that this informal learning assignment was one of his first writing assignments in the United States. The Ruiz brothers had only recently been reunited with their father Reynaldo in New York. They hadn't seen one another for just over a decade as Reynaldo supported his first family in Puebla from abroad. Within a few years living in New York, Reynaldo met and married his second wife, Diana, a U.S. citizen. After years of customs red-tape, he finally brought his two sons to Foraker Street. I had never learned much information about José's and Pablo's mother in Mexico, much less her name.

15-year-old José was on the brink of dropping out of school. He attended school less frequently within just a few weeks of arriving from Mexico. He had more or less given up on

learning English and graduating high school within two years. In Mexico, he would have completed his studies already, and he wanted to work. His Foraker Street high school bilingual program had claimed success with reaching older students, but José had recently begun to skip school to work odd jobs and to hang out with friends on the street. He came to MANOS with his brother mostly as a way to kill time it seemed, and neither his father nor stepmother ever accompanied them.

With José's response we notice that in his view, students in Mexico "no tienen nada" (have nothing) and in the U.S.A., students "tienen todo" (have everything). The dichotomy was a quick division between have and have-not across national lines. When he wrote next that English also divided the two, he made a clear observation about the linguistic markets of each nation. He wrote Spanish, however, as something in common between nations, but he didn't write English. Why was this? Because, he explained to me through Marisol and Nansi as brokers, there were no classes in Mexico to help English-speaking immigrant students to learn Spanish like there were for Spanish-speaking immigrant students to learn English.

When it came time to read his composition, José had nothing much to read, but he did read the columns for each category, and where they intersected. This produced some dialogue between students born in the United States and Mexico, in English and Spanish. Marisol said she didn't know how schools operated in Mexico, but she had heard from her father that the teachers would hit students. She translated this into Spanish and José smiled and nodded. He responded with something in Spanish, and I asked Marisol to translate for me.

"He said that only some teachers hit kids in little places." Marisol meant in small towns.

David added in English—then Spanish—that his parents told him schools in Mexico were not as nice, to which José and Pablo each agreed. Nansi asked if it was true that the schools in Mexico also had farms. José and Pablo had never heard of such a thing and chuckled.

Pos yo pienso que los niños
 de otros ~~países~~ países no pueden
 estudiar pero hay muchas personas
 que tiene los estudio y los desperdician
 en no ir a la escuela por eso
 le aconsejo que los niños k
 tienen oportunidad y ke la tomen
 y no la pierdan. y ke sean
 algo en la vida.

~~yo~~ so yo tubiera todo el
 mundo en el mundo yo ayudaria a
 los niños y notiene libro
 lapises para mejorar su educacion
 y ~~sea~~ sean algo en la vida.

Figure 3.4: Text composed by MANOS mentee Pablo Ruiz, age 13. Like his brother, he chose to compose in Spanish as he was still learning English. The transcription and translation follow:

Pos yo pienso que los niños de otros países no pueden estudiar pero hay muchas personas que tiene los estudio y los desperdisian en no ir a la escuela. Pos eso le aconsejo que los niños k tienen oportindad y ke la tener y no lo pierdan y ke sean algo en la vida. Si yo tubiero todo el mudo en el mundo yo ayudaria a los niños no tiene libro lapices para mejorar su educasion y sean algo en la vida.

Well I think that children in other countries aren't able to study, but they are many people who want to study but who are lost because they can't go to school. For this, I advise youth who have the opportunity to take it and not waste it so they can be something in life. I would give everything in the world to help the children without books and paper to improve their education and be something in life.

Eighth grader Pablo Ruiz had no problem responding to the prompt once he understood he could write in Spanish. He had much to express on the topic and his recent migration to New York City. In his composition, Pablo pointed to the students in the photo as youth who wanted to study, and—like Marisol—he considered schools as privileges and not as entitlements. As previously mentioned, that was an important idea for several MANOS students. The photo illustrated the narratives passed through families that the opportunity to advance forward in life was not something everyone was entitled to. To be “*algo en la vida*” (something in life) required not only seizing opportunities, though, but also a leveling of material conditions in the form of school supplies. For Pablo, there was also the sense of selflessness that came from helping others to alleviate situations that appeared unjust. There was the gesture at least. Like his brother, the

distinction in class became apparent in Pablo's composition, and like Marisol he advanced his desire to equalize class differences.

Pablo's advice for students who had the opportunities to receive a quality education was not to waste the chance. He saw going to school as finding one's way in life, and not going to school as a form of being lost. Finding one's way meant being able to recognize and seize opportunities. When he read this aloud, the MANOS students each reacted differently. Nansi—the most inquisitive of students during this activity—asked Pablo if it was true that this was what his school looked like in Mexico. Pablo laughed and said his school was “malo, pero como esa, no” (bad, but like that one, no). But he said he had heard from different cousins of schools in smaller towns that probably resembled those in the photo. Anthropological research into the urban schools in Mexico report the similarities of public schools drenched in inequity (Jensen and Fulton 3.2; see also Martinez-Rizo). In both countries, public schools wrestle with insufficient funding and drop-out rates. The image of school poverty in Xalapa displaces attention from larger social inequities which permit such poverty to exist at all levels of public schooling across the globe.

What I didn't translate from Spanish to English in Pablo's composition was his use of the abbreviated form of *qué*, “k”. We can recognize such abbreviations in English represented in the language of texting or electronic writing for mass communication audiences, such as text messages, tweets, or social media platforms (Plester, Wood, and Joshi 146). Pablo clearly demonstrated his awareness of such a code in Spanish, but of course when read aloud the “errors” of such notational usage could not be noticed. It was only when I read his text, that I saw the usage. I appreciated the ingenuity, and in fact it has served as a way for me to remember that word in Spanish.

They are happy because
 they are learning something and
 they want to be something on their
 life and i feel like if i wase
 the president i will send
 money to Mexico so that they
 could buy tables and chairs and
 books so the kids could learn
 something new and be smarter
 and they will be happy
 that they will be something
 on their life. I think
 some kids don't have the
 money to buy clothes and
~~they~~ feel sad that in New York
 they have alot of things
 and they think that they
 got everyt FUCKING MONEY
 in the world and i hate
 when they are making
 fun of ~~other~~ other kids
 that they don't have
 money.

Figure 3.5: Text produced by MANOS mentee David Cruz, age 9. The partially-damaged text

reads:

They are happy because they are learning somting and they want to be somting on ther life and i feel like if i was the president i will send mony to Mexico so tha they could buy tables and chair and books so the kids could learn somting on there life. I think some kids don't have the mony to buy clothes and feel sad that in New York they have olat of things and they think that got every fucking money in the world and i hate when they are making fun of other kids that don't hafe money [damaged portion of page missing]

Fourth-grader David Cruz's response drew some linguistic controversy to the study group. David's composition provoked the greatest response from his audience because of his use of the swearword "fuck." He first read his response in English, watching to see how I would react when he arrived at the expletive. Four additional sets of eyes did the same after he said it. I nodded and asked him to continue. He did so.

After he finished it in English, David read it over and translated sentence-by-sentence into Spanish, with some help from Marisol and Nansi. When he translated his composition for the Ruiz brothers, he didn't use a Spanish equivalent for "fuck." He used the English expletive, because the brothers already knew what the word meant anyway. They both had known that word long ago in Mexico it seemed. They laughed as he said it, and immediately looked to see how I would respond again, perhaps in disbelief I didn't censor David.

I let the mentees know that I understand that word was used around them, and that they would use that word amongst themselves. They also had to understand though that using it at the improper time could be offensive to some audiences.

David nodded, and said, “But I get mad about this stuff.” He justified his use as natural during the informal stage of writing, but also as an emotional response to the content of his composition.

I assured the MANOS mentees I wasn’t going to get anyone in trouble, and I would permit the word in this composition because it wasn’t a school assignment. For school, this would not be permissible I said.

“Well I know that,” said David.

The use of “fuck” in the nine-year-old’s composition effectively utilized the informality of the writing exercise. And as a rhetorical move, he aligned it with the pathos of arguments behind the severe class antagonisms found most distasteful in the social relations between the wealthy and poor in the United States. Again, he offered a solution to the issue when he hypothetically positioned himself as a politician, or an individual endowed with the institutional power to make social changes. But when he reached the point of class antagonism, the final sentence resonated with a burst of pathos: of a young person who couldn’t stand to witness social inequalities between two people who were—by all measures—equal. He chose to use New York as one example of wealth, and he contrasted this with what he saw in the image. To take this informal writing an additional step—again beyond the informal and the impromptu—I would have questioned David about why real politicians now allow such schools to exist for poor children.

The phonetic spelling David used throughout was readable insofar as the spelling deviations did not confuse meaning—meaning communicates even in nonstandard form. He heard the voiceless fricative [f] in have, and that was what he wrote. Chicano English variants in the Southwest present similar pronunciations. I had heard the same phoneme in Arizona and

New Mexico. He also had a tendency to substitute phonemes, such as [t] “t” for [θ] (“th”) in the construction “somting.” The urban working-class pronunciation was also common throughout NYC. In his spelling the silent “e” was also omitted. MANOS students substituted different sounds in English like [θ] that were difficult to compose from sound to page. Other consonantal differences that commonly surfaced in their writings included confusion of [b] and [v], and also between [č] and [š], or “ch” and “sh.” These were markers of their urban inner-city Spanish-English pronunciation which stood out only in formal settings like school where standard pronunciation was the model.

When David finished reading his composition, and after he demonstrated the freedom in the informality of the assignment by finding room to swear with impunity, he aired his grievance a bit further when I asked what rich students he was referring to.

“The ones that have a lot of things and they show off and make kids feel bad.”

“They bring nice cell phones to school,” said Marisol.

Cell phones and clothing signified wealth and status among the MANOS mentees at their schools around Foraker Street. Though expensive electronics were not permitted at any of their schools, the mentees reported that students brought them to school anyway, mostly to show, especially just off school grounds before and after school.

When David finished, he explained that he had recently seen a few older male students bullying his male classmates outside his school. The image touched a nerve. I asked if he thought students at that school also had their own ways of making students feel bad.

“No, I don’t think so because they don’t have books or paper.”

Social status was only operational in the United States then, or in ways particular to a society with consumer goods like cell phones or name-brand clothes and shoes owned by some

and not by others. Poverty was an equalizer in this sense, but it must be remembered that a photo juxtaposing one of the elite educational classrooms of a private school in the Lomas de Chapultepec neighborhood of Mexico City would have possibly reframed things in an interesting way for the mentees. Among the Foraker Street public schools they didn't report feeling significantly poorer than their peers, but they knew their families were not as wealthy as some of their classmates.

That they wish they could have tables and then that they wish that they could have a school to learn of to have better grade or notebook as well. The students wish they could have a school like we go on right now. The ~~girls~~ kids are laugh and sitting on the floor and it might be cold and they are happy to be on school and than like some people got to sit on the floor like if there poor and can afford a better school that that's where imagination is and how they real want to change.

If I was a government of Mexico and I would put tables, chairs more teachers so they could learn more about reading, math, science, and computer as well. How they...

because they can't afford for
 a real great school or uniform
 can't afford shoes or sneakers as
 well. They talk about their
 life and maybe they want
 to speak english as well. I really
 feel bad ~~z~~ for people like they
 real let you study or not they
 hate you with something.

Figure 3.6: Text composed by MANOS mentee Nansi Montez, age 10. The partially-damaged transcript reads:

That they wish they could have tables and then that they wish that they could have a school to learn or to have better grade or notebook as well. The students wish they could have a school like we go on right know. The kids are laugh and sitting on the floor and it might be cold and they are happy to be on skool and than like some people go tosit on the floor like if there poor and can oford a better skool that thats where imagination is and how they real want to change. If I was a govermant of Mexico and I would put tables chairs more teachers so they could learn more about reading, math, science, and computer as well. How [damaged portion of page missing] because they can't oford for a real great skool or uniform or can't afored shoos or sneakers as well. They talk about there life and maybe they want to speak english as well. I really feel bad for people like they let you study or not they hite you with something.

Like her MANOS fellow mentees, fourth grader Nansi's text entertained the idea of social change, and also how redistribution of resources for schools should be more equitable. She had a vision for what school for the youth in the photo should or could be like, and how she would contribute if she were able to first succeed herself. She also turned the tables on the governments that allowed youth to attend schools in such decrepit conditions. That was something the caption of the actual photo didn't question. That caption pointed to the heroism of the youth to suffer and strive to move ahead despite constraints. Nansi didn't look to the victims, but rather she looked to causes, and she looked to institutions. She also said the students there wished they were in the positions of students in the United States receiving an education with more resources. Turning toward the immigrant bargain, we can see the logic at work where those Mexicans living in poverty worked harder than those who live comparatively wealthier. The led to either a sense of debt to be paid for parents' sacrifices or a re-evaluation of one's work ethic in a comparative framework.

After Nansi read her composition, Marisol began a round of applause, followed by all the students, and myself. I asked why she started clapping and cheered the rest of us on.

"Because she was the last one and we all said good things."

I had to agree. Marisol was also Nansi's good friend, and I think she wanted to show support for her friend whom she noticed was a little nervous reading to the group.

I asked Nansi why she thought the children would want to learn English.

"So they could get good jobs and go to college," she said.

I reminded her that the children in the photo were in Mexico.

"But in Mexico you have to know English too, my dad and my uncle told me that."

She confirmed this with Pablo who sat next to her.

“Sí claro, mejor” (yes of course, it’s better) he said. His brother also nodded. He added that being *bilingüe* (bilingual) was an asset there.

From that exchange I gathered that the English in Mexico was cultural capital that may be exchanged for higher-wage jobs (economic capital) or for social status (symbolic capital) but its primary form was that of cultural capital. Symbolic power of English moved across borders, and had value for mobility in Mexico and the United States. According to the mentees, between Mexico and the United States, bilingual speakers of English and Spanish had linguistic capital in each direction, but English especially its connections to the dominant institutional character of the United States had more value across borders.

Nansi performed an interesting substitution of “oford” and “afored” for afford. In her writing we encounter an alternative spelling for vowels of lax [ə] for the tense [o]. When hearing her speak this word aloud, it was true that her accent in English, a New York variety inflected by contact with Puerto Rican and African American speakers around and near Foraker Street, influenced this substitution, which also influenced how she sounded the vowel when she composed it. Her primary English speech was thus an inner-city urban product while the formal code of standard usage in schools was practiced only in schools, indicating the absence of the standard in the everyday lives of the students.

Conclusion: From Bargaining to Brokering

The compositions from the group of MANOS mentees broke down the dual-frame of reference that immigrant youth imagined as class differences between Mexico and the United States. In all instances of the texts produced, these mentees’ projections of poverty in the rural

areas mixed with projections of advantage through the markers of U.S.-style schooling. Understanding the emotional and linguistic levels involved in the immigrant bargain and survivor guilt deepened still the complexity of the responsibilities and functions of youth language brokers and how they understood their family narrative of migration. Children used the immigrant bargain as a way to either motivate themselves to try harder, or as an additional way to distance themselves from their immigrant identities when plagued with survivor guilt. This historical remnant of an American dream of melting pot assimilation assumed that family connections and home languages would evolve or progress toward English as the generations became more and more Americanized. While inevitably this may be the case, the social pressure to deny the strengths of family happens down at the level of accent. The next chapter delves deeper into the linguistic power behind accents.

In this chapter, I argued that in the spheres of the families under study here, MANOS reinforced the sponsorship of Anglo-language institutions whose formal discourse status raised cultural barriers limiting immigrant access to them. MANOS offered a welcoming space where languages freely mixed and where bilingual exchanges between individuals openly encouraged, nurtured, critiqued and defended the distinctive, monolingual standard English language of schooling—sometimes in Spanish, sometimes English, and sometimes Spanglish. Needless to say, the MANOS youths' abilities to use their bilingualism to their advantages when dealing with their parents found support through formal schooling. The increase of formal schooling in their children's lives further increased their educations in English, and alienated parents from participating as much as they would like. This presented challenges to monolingual Mexican parents, especially as children aged. Marcia Farr and Elías Domínguez Barajas argue in "*Mexicanos in Chicago: Language Ideology and Identity*" that "[. . .] the mastery of English and

Spanish is seen as an essential step toward economic integration and upward social mobility, but given the predominance of English as the language of authority and power, Spanish, by virtue of remaining tied to circles of intimacy, is at risk of not being maintained beyond the third generation” (54-55). The MANOS parents took it upon themselves to make sure their children did well in school and made up for less linguistic power by wielding their positions as literacy sponsors in order to drive the “immigrant bargain” into the consciousness of their children. The parents at the center had gained the legitimate ability to shame the children for not trying hard enough at school. Margaret Gibson’s study “The School Performance of Immigrant Minorities” similarly describes how the immigrant bargain functions as a power-play for Punjabi parents: “Students are encouraged to excel academically [. . .] Parents remind their offspring that they have made great sacrifices for them and that the parents’ lives will have been wasted if their children are not successful” (269). According to Gibson, parents use their narratives to harness one form of power over their children, and also as reminders of their precarious immigrant positioning in the social structure. As the MANOS youth moved further into their public lives conducted in English, they would come to engage and clarify linguistic differences between the dominant English of their schooling with that of the Spanish they practiced in their home lives. They mediated between the two day-to-day. This provided rich insight into the lives of a marginalized population and its linguistic and literacy practices.

Without a doubt, immigrant families face educational predicaments, largely stemming from the negotiations between home minority languages and that of the dominant institutional language. The sponsorship and cultivation of language brokers through the MANOS program emphasized the community’s efforts to engage with the dominant institutional language while maintaining the integrity of the language they used to communicate in personal relations. One

element that translated among all the MANOS community's stories of migration and individual educational travails was a common narrative of family survival and perseverance. In English and Spanish, MANOS students were familiar with these tales. The compositions of MANOS mentees in this chapter demonstrated that, as well as how social class and language were deeply intertwined. In the next chapter, I will move to how MANOS and its mentors brokered English literacy and language acquisition for the program's mentees while culturally and linguistically accommodating LM parents. Mentors were in many cases also language brokers, and they understood how bilingualism affected the relationships between parents and children who sometimes spoke different languages, both literally and figuratively. I end this chapter with a poem by student Felipe Rubio about parents and children, written as a homework assignment.

We kids do
 much but not
 as much as
 Parents do.
 but when these
 old they are lazy
 as you.
 And snore exactly like
 Piggys do!!

Kids are
 dumb and
 fun
 but
 some
 look
 like
 King Kong's,
 but
 but to
 me they
 look the
 same.

Figure 3.7: Poem composed by Felipe Rubio, untitled. A transcription of the poem reads:

we kids do

much but not

as much as
parants do
but when there
old they are lazy
as you
and snore axactly like
piggys do!!
Kids are
dum and
fun
but
some
look
like
King Kongs
but
but to
me they
look the
same

Chapter 4:

Brokering Dominant Literacy Sponsorship:

Culturally Accommodating Linguistic Differences in Immigrant Families

MANOS parents found themselves in difficult positions to cultivate English literacy for their children and themselves, and they were unable to offer as much assistance as they would have liked to their children with English reading and writing homework. This chapter examines how they secured the cultural capital they themselves could not provide: English-language mentorship for their children's educational and literacy development. In this chapter I argue language constraints, cultural unfamiliarity, and work commitments rendered MANOS language minority (LM) parent-child educational involvement inconsistent with teachers' expectations. In light of this much observed dilemma of second-language (L2) families, I examine how the MANOS parents did their best with their Spanish skills to assist their children with homework. Typically, the public schools demand increasingly higher levels of academic and text-based literate practices as the grade level rises especially in text-based academic literacy in English which schooling typically assigned in rapidly increasing increments from early elementary grades and on. Rather than passively accepting their own literacy "deficiencies," MANOS parents applied their social capital and Spanish literacy by turning to extended support networks for knowledge of free English educational services around Foraker Street.

While MANOS met Foraker Street's Mexican-origin community's need for English support for youth education, it also brought together monolinguals and bilinguals in a context rich for language brokering. MANOS's primary goal was to bring the families of Foraker Street's *pequeño Mexico* into contact with volunteer mentors from around New York City

willing to help students with all things related to school, ranging from homework help, to tutoring in individual subjects, chaperoning field trips to museums, offering advice, filling out applications, and more. MANOS mentors cultivated a sense of community and academic participation and positive ethnic identity, in addition to promoting a sense of value for bilingualism as a political tool and reality for immigrant children and youth. The MANOS mentors brought missing educational experience and cultural capital to the families and thus served as another layer of social capital for these immigrant families.

Though officially a children's after-school tutoring program, MANOS unofficially served multiple purposes—mentoring, adult education, childhood education, parent education, and, most importantly, interactive parent/child activities. Such activities centered on mentees' homework and completing their formal homework with the assistance of parents. The program's emphasis was on jointly tutoring schoolwork, in either English or Spanish, among families and mentors. Language during the interactions met the students' language needs as the work was assigned by their schools. This inclusive family literacy approach did not separate parents from children by targeting only youth for English assimilation. One unique element of MANOS, then, was its avoidance of generational segregation. To do so would have unilaterally pushed assimilation onto the children without parental accompaniment. In this chapter, then, I will focus on MANOS as a transgenerational "free-space." Calling MANOS a "free-space" may not do the job of explaining the learning activities that occurred there insofar as it's not freedom per se that is at stake but rather the terms of assimilation—either dissociation of children from parents or integrating the generations into a common project where such linguistic divisions did not occur. MANOS identified itself as a grassroots ethnic social welfare organization. Its primary response to the Foraker Street *Mexicano* community was in the mentorship aspect of family literacy. The

MANOS volunteer staff of mentors brokered the sponsorship of dominant forms of standard English literacy.

Eight of the twenty-two children (36%) of focus in this study were bilingual readers and writers. Of these eight, their written compositions in Spanish were not as proficient as in English as they moved further into their schooling. The turn to English dominance in these mentees' literacy development pointed to schools as sponsoring a certain structured assimilation which could be described as permitting oral bilingualism while promoting written monolingualism. To broker this, MANOS accommodated the Spanish speech of immigrant families while tilting towards English not Spanish fluency in writing. MANOS, unlike schools, however, valued parents as a resource for this structured assimilation. MANOS took a transgenerational approach to tutoring which allowed bilingual speech habits but tilted towards English in writing. The encouragement of parent participation in schoolwork and in establishing learning goals met the needs of the community, and it also brought together mentors interested in volunteering time to a struggling—but surviving—community program which sought to make change at the family/community level. The power of English, though, was inescapable and despite being open to Spanish, English dominance was reinforced in notions of its necessity for a positive educational trajectory and a college education for children of immigrant parents. It was obvious Mexican immigrants needed English fluency in U.S. society. The tilt towards English was inevitable, and for some encouraged and for others resisted. The question about MANOS, however, was whether the program invited mentees and parents to think critically about their position in U.S. society.

For the MANOS mentees, their everyday school experiences particularly challenged attitudes about their senses of belonging within the cultural mainstream's linguistic marketplace.

Further, they sometimes perceived their parents' "lack" of English inside a deficit model internalized from schooling experiences. Witnessing their parents when struggling to conduct themselves in English further contributed to this (Zentella, *Growing Up Bilingual* 273, 278). MANOS mentors compensated for the problematic inability of schools to recognize the diverse contributions of families for informal teaching and learning. All MANOS parents contributed to language development and bilingualism.

The MANOS community recognized and valued that children came to schools with complex sets of histories, and as members of diverse families and communities in which they acquired and practiced complex skills and that these could be tapped for learning. Among these skills were the linguistic interfaces between homes and schools, especially the rhetorics of translation for composing meaning suitable for diverse audiences and genres. The MANOS community of mentors often drew on their own experiences of linguistic imbalances where the institutional English of schooling was opaque to immigrant parents (Valdés; Zentella). MANOS mentors addressed this dilemma by conversations with parents about their children's homework and schooling, in Spanish and English, and sometimes with mentees as language brokers. The tutors were obliged, then, to serve as multiple mediators, between parents and children, between parents and schools, and between children and schools. In Part 1 of this chapter, I document the importance of MANOS mentors in the sponsorship of dominant literacy through the homework of MANOS mentees. I also explore mentors' reflections of their participation in the community, and also of MANOS families. I contend that the "free-space" of MANOS opened the door for LM parents to participate in their children's schooling with the assistance of mentors. In Part 2, I offer several biliteracy events as examples of mentors helping mentees and their parents with

homework, as well as actual examples of texts composed by students. Each event documents how mentorship reinforced the standard English of schooling sponsorship.

1. The Sponsorship of Literacy in the “Free-Space”: MANOS Mentors, Mentorship, and Schooling

The remainder of this chapter and the next focus on MANOS’s staff of mentors in observed interactions with the Foraker Street families. The MANOS volunteers were indispensable as brokers sponsoring literacy for MANOS mentees. They constructed the MANOS program as a “free space” (Fine et al.), or a “safe house” (Pratt) where a “disconnected” population could provide itself with educational support independent of a school-institutional context. The free space/safe house of MANOS was a contact zone serving the needs of the clients rather than the needs of the authorities. Initially, my ethnographic project at MANOS focused attention on critically examining how English fluency in immigrant families disrupted, re-shaped, or leveled “traditional” hierarchical Mexican familial relations between children and parents. I narrow-mindedly wanted only to consider how language-minority parents under linguistic constraints found the means to participate in their children’s educations in the dominant language. Indeed this proved useful in gathering information into this dissertation’s main conclusions. But what I found equally interesting were the varieties of brokered relations I observed from different adult and child agents communicating in two languages.

I eventually realized that opening up the study to the MANOS organization and its staff would give a better picture of how one discourse community established communication between its members, and how that community included monolinguals and bilinguals communicating with one another. MANOS was its own discourse community—a safe house

whose power relations were client-centered rather than institution-centered as they were in a mainstream school. Parents reported that other such centers near Foraker Street had untrained teenagers tutoring children in comparison to their perception of MANOS tutors' competence. Jaclín Montez Ybarra expressed to me through her daughter Nansi as translator that tutors at some after-school programs spent more time on their phones than on helping students. According to the accounts from parents, children, and confirmed by onsite observations, tutors at other centers around Foraker Street were predominantly high school or middle school student volunteers organized by professional staff, typically of four or five individuals. All MANOS staff were volunteers. The majority of MANOS mentors were over 18, often in their 20s or 30s. Carlos Portales, the founder of MANOS, estimated that over 1,000 individuals had volunteered for MANOS over its ten years of operation, and that the majority of those who had volunteered were either going to college, attended college, or were planning to attend college.

As one of these 1,000, I mentored at MANOS three years prior to—and during—research work. I helped several children learn how to read and write, and I have taught some of their parents how to encourage and participate in learning and reading with their children. Though language barriers between parents and me often permitted only limited communication (mostly conducted in Spanglish), I was able to have fluent communication with students and parents who spoke English. My connections to the children, my patience in working out sentences or writing compositions especially gained special trust. The more adult and educated staff at MANOS was better able to build *confianza*, or trust as I explained in Chapter 1. *Confianza* as a social bond is a relation of reciprocal respect—of language, gestures, politeness, and play. It is a value deeply instilled within Mexican culture, and it knits together social networks that extend from Mexico and *México afuera* (outside Mexico). As a “fund of knowledge” (Moll; Velez-Ibanez and

Greenberg) it “provide[s] children with contexts for learning that are dynamic and build around multifaceted relationships” (Monzo and Rueda 74). MANOS mentors gained rapport with families by volunteering their time to help with the schoolwork of children who were adults and of no familial relation. This made MANOS parents even more grateful for their mentorship. Developing the friendship, however, took some months at least, though over the course of time—as in any relationship of *confianza*—emotional connections grew. MANOS families invited mentors to different events, such as baptisms, first holy communions, *quinceañera* (sweet 15) parties, and small birthday celebrations at MANOS with treats and songs in both English and Spanish. Building such *confianza* characterizes the eleven mentors described in this chapter. All were immigrants, children of immigrants, or closely involved in immigrant affairs. This connection within the Foraker Street *Mexicano* community was based on identification by and large, and also on mutual respect, or *respeto*.

In *Con Respeto: Bridging the Distances Between Culturally Diverse Families and Schools* Guadalupe Valdés theorizes that programs for Mexican-origin families “must be based on an understanding, appreciation and respect for the internal dynamics of families and for the legitimacy of their values and beliefs” (203). The connections between parents and mentors as guides for youth connected the adults in *respeto*, though even sometimes differences in language could become an issue. Another issue, of course, was the educational and cultural exposure to mainstream culture experienced by mentors and parents which undermined traditions of respect toward parents and elders.

Such reciprocal social relations—*confianza* and *respeto*—enabled MANOS to function with relatively no budget. What it ran on was the center’s wealth of personal commitment and the immigrant families investment in scholastic achievement as a means of upward social

mobility. The minimal budget and the decrepit conditions of the donated space itself were overcome by mentors who regularly volunteered and provided mentees with “highly supportive relationships with non-familial adults in the community [. . .] free from the organizational constraints found in schools” (Stanton-Salazar and Spina 234).

Common stereotypes portray poor and immigrant parents as “deficient.” Problems of low-status youth are often blamed on presumed deficits within the family unit (Villenas). My fieldwork at MANOS demonstrated something different however. Rather than parents acting indifferently to homework, they were singularly preoccupied with overcoming obstacles that prevented them from doing more for their children. Parents extended themselves at MANOS in ways largely invisible to school authorities—because the social relations of discourse at MANOS included them as stakeholders in the process. Of course they were driven by fear of perpetuating economic hardship for their children, but they were equally fearful of such an outcome from their children’s school experiences. Yet their children’s schools limited MANOS parents from exercising the agencies they exhibited at MANOS, shuttling children from one after-school program to another around Foraker Street. Their busy agenda on behalf of their children constituted their low-income, working-class, immigrant version of their middle-class and upper-class “concerted cultivation” which Annette Lareau observed in affluent households in her ethnography *Unequal Childhoods* (2-4, 24-28, 253). The Spanish-friendly setting at MANOS was the opening to their agencies.

The fears for academic failure drove MANOS parents to sponsor their children’s literacy in English. Jocelyn Solís argues in her published dissertation “The (Trans)formation of Illegality as an Identity: A Study of the Organization of Undocumented Mexican Immigrants and Their Children in New York City” that “few [Mexican immigrants] are prepared for the social barriers

and personal hardships they face after arriving in the U.S., and rely on virtually no resources personal nor institutional, to help them understand, confront, and surpass them” (99). When their children encountered language problems at school, MANOS parents’ fears that children might not complete school increased. Not all MANOS mentors were equipped to deal with counseling students and parents from either over-reacting to small failures that were not always symptomatic of educational failure or for under-reacting to severe issues. The advice given by most mentors came from personal schooling experience. The suggested advice offered for mentoring such a situation as offered by MANOS founder Carlos Portales was to optimistically look to further opportunities to succeed in the future. This temporarily eased the tension for some parents, but for the parents who regularly came to the center, this did not solve their worries. I offer the words and examples from some of the MANOS parents in Part 2 of this chapter.

Institutionalized standard English produced both worries and aspirations for MANOS parents and mentors as they reacted to the sponsorship of the dominant literacy for the Foraker Street community. MANOS parents and mentors emphasized the importance of U.S. English in the educations of mentees. Without it, according to MANOS mentor Cristina Trujillo, “you really can’t do much besides get by—not in school or for a job. You need it” (16 Aug. 2011). In *Literacy in American Lives* Deborah Brandt historically examines the investment of cultural and educational capital in American culture, examining literacy and upward mobility in conjunction with roles and scenes of literacy learning, availability of literate materials, explicit teaching, institutional aegis, community practices, and institutional access. Brandt’s conception of sponsorship takes into account the interfaces of macro-historico processes and local practices, and how the ranges of “sponsors” explicitly inculcate a political economy of literacy for their charges, in particular inculcating cultural attitudes for dominant forms of writing, reading, and

speaking. In Part 2 of this chapter, I argue that school homework polices standard English, and it also finds reinforcement of its sponsorship through programs like MANOS that tutor language minority (LM) youth.

Because the MANOS parents feared limited involvement in their children's academic lives in English, they extended to the local community of Foraker Street to come together around the central cause of academic motivation. Language differences may have been problems at school, but the MANOS parents did not have to worry about conducting themselves freely in Spanish, and with bilinguals present to help with translating any language when necessary. Occasionally one also heard Mandarin, Russian, Portuguese, German, or French from the mentors. The mentees of MANOS were able to absorb many languages and accents at the program, and their curiosities about language were encouraged. Peer cultures composed of MANOS youth dealing with similar pressures of educational success collaborated with young adult mentors who had lived through similar pressures relatively recently. This established MANOS as a setting where youth and parents could set goals, where mentees, mentors, and parents visualized success through school and life with the freedom of moving between languages. When examining literacy sponsorship and homework support, we can appreciate how language brokering seamlessly moves between this within-family and outside-family dyad.

Spanish-speaking, monolingual parents were not alone in feeling marginalized by the English-centered setting at their children's schools. The standard English and correct usage paradigms at school marginalized the children's literacies also. Yet the children's home language was vitally important to their identities and their functioning in their families and around Foraker Street. The problem was that these vital language tools did not transfer as school assets for MANOS youth. According to Francisco Gaytán "[. . .] there is a strong reliance on the academic

support provided by family, this support is not sufficient for generating social capital or providing the concrete information needed by immigrant youth to do well in school” (142). Though Gaytán’s study of the young Mexican-origin population of New York points to the impacts of adult mentorship for immigrant youth and positive attitudes to schooling, he doesn’t document mentorship in practice, or as it happened. He admits that this would be a “ripe area for intervention and work with Mexican immigrant youth” which provided impetus for this dissertation.

As brokers of sponsorship, the MANOS mentees demonstrated examples of English empowerment for MANOS mentees and parents. They used their sponsored literacy to assist families in increasing their own. Empowerment is an ongoing intentional process centered in the local community involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring and group participation through which people lacking an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to and control over those resources (Delgado-Gaitan 23).

The shared power relations between voiced and written words at MANOS were likewise instances of social interaction, where unequal triads of power relations fluxed between cooperation and disassociation. Cooperation happened when language brokers collaborated in their translations among monolinguals, when all parties in the triad shared in the communicative endeavor. Disassociation, on the other hand, excluded some participants from collaborating in meaning and sharing with one another during communication. Triads of shared power collaborations were contexts where players had access to collaboration through a brokered relation, and where divisions were tactically enacted and debated. The discourse structure evinced linguistic triads formed by agents operating in two different languages, with greater social distinction accorded of course to the dominant language. Below, Table 3 charts linguistic

exchanges between mentors, mentees, and parents as reported by MANOS mentors. Following this, I provide brief profiles of nine MANOS mentors, offering some context for their involvement and also their level of interaction with MANOS families.

Table 3: Triad Configurations Among MANOS Mentors, Mentees, and Parents*

Mentor	Mentor to mentor	Mentor to mentee	Mentor to parent
M.A.	English	English/Spanish	Spanish
L.A.	English/Spanish	English/Spanish	Spanish
S.A.	English	English	English/Spanish
A.C.	English/Spanish	English/Spanish	Spanish
L.K.	English	English	Spanish/English
P.L.	English/Spanish	English/Spanish	Spanish/English
L.N.	English	English/Spanish	Spanish
C.P.	Spanish/English	Spanish/English	Spanish
R.S.	English	English/Spanish	Spanish/English
J.T.	English	English	English/Spanish
C.V.	English	English/Spanish	Spanish/English

*Triad configurations of language use by eleven MANOS mentors. Another column configuring mentees to parents would reveal that all families in the study spoke Spanish primarily, as noted by the interviews from previous chapters.

Monica Abalos

Monica Abalos, from a neighborhood several blocks north of Foraker Street, became interested in MANOS through her cousin Leti Navarro, who learned of the program through another friend who volunteered. This intense “word-of-mouth” networking was common in a local center like MANOS. Monica began volunteering at MANOS at 17 and continued to mentor two years after she graduated high school. She hadn’t enrolled in college yet, but she planned to do so in the future, leaning toward art and education. She had two younger siblings, ages 12 and 10, who occasionally accompanied her when MANOS hosted special events or took field trips.

Monica’s parents emigrated from the state of Puebla during the early 1990s. Both of her parents completed eighth grade in Mexico. She was the first in her family to graduate high school, but she still was unsure of going on to college, another common circumstance among Mexican young people in New York City and the Foraker Street community. For Monica, MANOS was more than simply an after-school program. MANOS “touched home” she said because “it is underprivileged Mexican students . . . I can relate to them and the struggles they have to go through in school” (12 Nov. 2010). For Monica, learning English was the biggest obstacle she faced in her schooling. Her only help growing up, she said during the same interview, was her mother:

I know how hard it is to try to do homework and not have parents to help out because they don’t know the language. My mom and dad came here from Puebla so that I could be born in this country to allow me to have more benefits. My Mom still only knows a few words in English, so there was never any way for me to get help from her when it came to school. If these kids had [a] mentor who could relate to them then I think it’s a big help and step forward in their education

because they are less reluctant to give up and instead know that it can be done because all of us have.

Monica's perseverance inspired mentees, mentors, and parents alike. Her goodwill and humor also made her dedication to MANOS an asset. As the designated language broker for her family, she could identify with the ways mentees moved between audiences and languages with their command of English. She noted, however, that she only used her Spanish at MANOS with mentees who were in kindergarten or younger, and with parents. She shared a common sentiment among mentors: "The kids who don't know English speak to me in Spanish, and the ones who know English speak English" (12 Nov. 2010).

The MANOS community also admired her artistic skills. Monica's artwork connected with MANOS students; she continually explored how drawing could be used in homework. She was a talented artist, and she often performed the role of decorator during different MANOS events. The altar she constructed for *Día de los muertos* (Day of the Dead) had spectacularly painted *calaveras* (skeletons) and *lotería* (Mexican bingo) images. She also helped to lead the MANOS art program which incorporated Mexican imagery and symbols with New York urbanity, as illustrated in Figure 4.1 and 4.2.



Figures 4.1 and 4.2: MANOS Day of the Dead altar, 1 November 2010, and “Frida Diva” (watercolor on cardboard) both by Monica Abalos. Monica and four MANOS families collaborated on the project and arrived before the regular hours in order to complete construction before volunteers and families arrived. “Frida Diva” was inspired by Monica’s passion for Kahlo as both artist, inspiration, and Mexican symbol. She admitted an interest in art education as a potential avenue for study.

Liana Abarca

22-year-old Liana Abarca became involved in MANOS through a Chicano student organization at her university. She mentored for MANOS over the course of her undergraduate career. Her parents emigrated from northern Mexico a few years before she was born. Originally born in Maryland and raised just outside of Chicago, she came to New York for undergraduate studies in Psychology. Her drive to mentor for MANOS, she said, came from a desire to get involved in New York’s Mexican community, and also to share her experience. According to Liana,

As a first generation college student I feel that I have the responsibility to show young students that it is possible to go to college even if you were not born in the United States. I was able to achieve what my parents dreamt of doing: going to a college. Now, I am proud to say that I go to one of the best colleges in the world. The story of how I got here is very interesting and I hope to share it with other Mexican students, who may not believe it is possible for them to go to college.
(22 Aug. 2011)

Indeed Liana did share her story with MANOS parents and mentees, and she also informed them of some of the financial realities of attending a world-class university, as well as how she was able to attend on scholarship. Liana also organized field outings with MANOS families to her university. During the summer of 2011, she organized a summer science program for MANOS families. A group from MANOS toured a laboratory at her university, and also visited different museums, and conducted experiments at MANOS headquarters on Foraker Street. Mentors like Liana serve as bi-cultural mediators or guides who showed others how to make their way in navigating to the educational mainstream. She was a living example who used conversation/orality to make the lessons of her mobility available to MANOS mentees and parents.

Liana said she had no prior teaching experience before volunteering at MANOS, but that her mentoring had improved her approaches to dealing with children and learning. Her acute observations of the learning patterns of MANOS youth came from recognizing patterns she herself experienced. She made the following field observation regarding twelve-year-old Susan Cruz: “Math—Susan still needs some practice with problem solving—she’s too eager to answer and misses relevant facts in order to answer the questions. ELA—she’s an excellent reader—quick-paced, however she’s again too quick to answer questions in reading comprehension” (15 Mar 2010). When I asked her about this written observation, she said that she made the same mistakes, and that slowing down was something that took practice. According to Liana, a tutor in middle school gave her the same advice. She admitted that she used her experiences as tutee to help with MANOS students’ homework.

Amy Chen

22-year-old Amy Chen had volunteered at MANOS for nearly three years. She was born in Mexico City to Chinese immigrant parents. Her parents still lived in Mexico while she lived with her sister in Queens. Amy had recently graduated college with a degree in Economics and International Finance, while her sister was completing her undergraduate degree in Engineering. She attended schools in Mexico City up to high school, after which she immigrated to Queens.

Initially, Amy's Chinese physical features left several MANOS families skeptical that she was Mexican—which Amy claimed. When she spoke Spanish like a real *chilanga* (Mexico City resident) however, she was able to silence that. MANOS mentees were fascinated that Amy was able to speak Cantonese, Spanish, and English. They would often ask her how to say different words in “Chinese” to which she would correct them to “Cantonese.” Amy felt that she used more English than Spanish with youths at MANOS, “even if I speak to them [mentees] in Spanish, they answer me in English.”

Amy's insistence on her will to succeed, despite being a “minority Mexican in both Mexico and the United States” was in an inspiration for MANOS mentees and parents. Her deep identification as Mexican, however, brought her to MANOS. “I thought it was very interesting to find a program that helped kids with a Mexican background in particular. I enjoy helping people out, but MANOS attracted me since I thought I could relate to the community” (25 Jun. 2011). Volunteering at MANOS was also her way to assist parents like her own who had trouble helping their children. “No one really helped me with my homework. If I needed help I would have to call a friend or skip the homework overall.” She described the MANOS parents as “extremely caring and devoted. They all have a unique personality and story, yet they all come together to this program with one single goal: to better their children and themselves. One can

clearly observe their commitment to this program and their children. The families at MANOS are people who can easily be admired by others.”

Laura Kruchenko

Laura Kruchenko was born in the Ukraine and raised in the United States. She had recently completed her undergraduate studies in history. Laura volunteered at MANOS for over three years, and she had come to grow very close with several MANOS mothers. Laura gave birth to a son just before graduating from college, and for the nine months she carried her son Rafael, she continued to volunteer at MANOS. Mothers gave her lots of advice, which according to Laura she took very close to heart as she considered the MANOS mothers as highly credible sources. When she could, she brought her infant son to MANOS. Little Rafael was always a hit with the MANOS families—he was passed around from mother to mother with mentees of all ages showering attention. Mentors also of course enjoyed Rafael’s presence. As MANOS founder Carlos Portales expressed of Laura, “we’ve seen her mature from college student to mother and professional.”

Laura’s first language was Ukrainian, but she was also fluent in English and Russian, and able to communicate in Hebrew and Spanish. Laura studied Spanish in Spain as an exchange student in 2009. Her fiancé was a Spanish-dominant bilingual, and so her sensitivity to multilingualism was particularly acute. She lived a short train ride away from MANOS. Laura considered her Spanish as still developing, as the most recent language she had learned. She said, “although I don’t speak Spanish perfectly, I understand it and speak it well enough to help parents and students who don’t know English that well” (14 Aug. 2011). For Laura, the best way to improve her Spanish was to practice it, and she found that using it to help with homework was

one way for her to do this: “I tutored some kids in Spanish at MANOS a few times, and I found myself to be a fairly good teacher. I’m good at explaining things, but I still stumble here and there.” Laura admitted that she spoke English almost exclusively with MANOS mentees and Spanish with MANOS parents. The only exception she said was when speaking to toddlers or pre-K children or youth who didn’t know English.

During the fall of 2010, Laura and I co-taught MANOS parents an adult English language program sponsored by the New York City Mayor’s Office of Adult Education. The program focused on speaking and developing confidence using conversational English. The topics of conversation centered around issues affecting immigrants in New York City, including speaking to doctors, teachers, banks, in addition to subjects relating to public health such as smoking, diabetes, and asthma, and social issues such as domestic violence, worker rights, and rights for translation. Laura conducted herself well in the class, and I noticed how she would use her Spanish with English to meet students halfway when there was confusion. I learned a great deal about how to conduct myself in similar ways as my Spanish increased. For Laura, “it makes sense to say something we both know than pretend to understand you know what the other person’s saying” (14 Aug. 2011).

Pilar Lopez

Twenty-four-year-old Pilar Lopez had been a MANOS mentor for nearly two years. She immigrated to Queens from Bogotá, Colombia when she was thirteen. She had recently graduated college with a Bachelor’s degree in English literature and adolescent education. Schooling in the United States had presented her formidable challenges when she first arrived, particularly linguistic ones because she was a Spanish monolingual. She struggled, she said,

learning the language and also brokering for her parents who still struggled with English. She recalled being a language broker for her parents when dealing with hospitals, bills, and searching for apartments. Pilar's English quickly developed, and in addition to English, she also picked up Portuguese. She learned English when her family migrated. She learned Portuguese in high school and continued into college.

Pilar's interests in education were what sparked her interests in volunteering with MANOS: "Well, at first I was very curious about the area. I had read about places like Foraker Street, and all the disadvantages they have compared to richer areas of the City. That's what interested me first, because I wanted to know the students there" (25 Jun. 2011). Pilar said she had read "all the books by Jonathan Kozol"—first introduced to her in college, then later explored independently as her own reading. She was an avid reader in both English and Spanish, and she often made gifts of books in both languages to MANOS youth and also to the program's small library. Pilar ended up designing a tutoring manual for MANOS mentors, and she also led tutor-training sessions. She claimed that mentoring at MANOS was good practice for anyone considering teaching because it was a way to get to know students with their families. According to Pilar, her experience mentoring at MANOS "helps me in becoming a better teacher. At MANOS I notice things that many times the children's teachers miss. Not because they do not care but simply because they do not understand the families, their efforts and their mentalities."

Upon graduating college, Pilar was awarded "Outstanding Senior" by the Education Department. She reluctantly turned down several offers for teaching positions throughout the City. Pilar was not teaching and hadn't pursued state certification. She was undocumented, but had recently married and was awaiting her change of status so she could begin teaching. The children of Jaclín Montez Ybarra and Juana Uribe Sanchez were especially fond of Pilar. She

attended first holy communions for children of each family. Jaclín's daughter Nansi said she when grew up she wanted to be a teacher like Pilar—because Pilar “knows a lot of stuff about everything” (16 Jun. 2010).

Leti Navarro

Leti Navarro began volunteering at MANOS during the end of her junior year in high school. She graduated and began undergraduate studies in Manhattan, the first in her family to go from high school to college. Like several mentors, she lived a short train ride away from Foraker Street. The oldest of three children, at times she would bring her younger siblings with her to receive tutoring, and sometimes to help tutor other youth with homework. Her family was from Puebla, and for many of the MANOS families, Leti served as a model for what MANOS youth could be, despite difficult financial hardships regarding citizenship.

As a daughter of immigrants I understand the situation that both the children and parents in this mentoring [program] go through. My parents always wanted to be more involved in school activities, but the language was a serious barrier for them. Unfortunately, because they worked so much, they never had a chance to take any ESL classes. At MANOS I provide the help that my parents were never offered. I love most helping out children. It's important that our youth learn to value education at a young age and become empowered to promote positive change in our world. (8 Dec 2009)

Leti developed a special bond with the Fernandez family. As recounted in Chapter 3, she had a serious talk with thirteen-year-old Jesús about ‘the immigrant bargain’ and actively

repaying his parents' sacrifices by trying harder in school. She wrote the following field note after one of her sessions with Jesús:

Jesús is very motivated and willing to do his work. He is very good at math and so I feel I help him the most in reading/writing assignments. He still has problems understanding what questions mean, like some word problems, but I think just re-reading the question over and reading it sentence by sentence is helping him. Basically I think he just needs some confidence. And to read slower. (12 Feb 2010)

Leti took an active role in mentoring Jesus and his siblings. She consistently checked-in with this family because she lived only ten blocks away from them. She also introduced her younger cousins to seven-year-old Flor, and they became close friends. She began college wanting to study forensic science, but then considered education—partly, she said, based on her experiences at MANOS, in particular, working with Jesús and his mother María.

Roberto Sanchez

Nineteen-year-old Roberto Sanchez was born in Puebla, Mexico. His family migrated to New York when he was five. He lived several subway stops southwest of Foraker Street. He began volunteering for MANOS just after he graduated from high school as class valedictorian. Awaiting his immigration status to change before enrolling in college, he took another year to register because of delays in processing. After this, he had intentions of applying to several elite universities. With offers from private schools in Vermont and Pennsylvania, he eventually chose to attend a CUNY school to remain close to his family and MANOS.

Roberto, however, hadn't always been the academic overachiever. When he was younger, just after elementary school, he had an oppositional stance toward his education: "When I started middle school I had an arrogant view of school and life overall. I hated school and I believed that the only way to make it big in this world was to be Caucasian and/or of high status. One of my teachers changed me drastically, and to this day she is a friend and a mentor to me" (2 Sep. 2010). Roberto gave full credit to a special mentor outside his family who helped him through his schooling. He credited his sixth and eighth grade English teacher for mentoring him away from the dangers he associated with not valuing education and "bad lifestyles" deemed by dominant society according to Roberto as "at risk." This mentor taught him to set high expectations of himself, and she motivated him to believe in his abilities: "Above all, the life lesson that I carry to this day from her is that anything is possible with education and hard work, no matter what background you come from."

When applying to become a MANOS mentor, Roberto included a cover letter and short essay of introduction. MANOS organizer Carlos Portales said that was a first for the organization. Roberto's essay touched upon his reasoning about applying for a mentor position with MANOS. With his permission, I have reproduced a portion of the text here below:

I have witnessed Mexican youth abandon school and take paths which have lead them to bad lifestyles. There are many factors that have resulted in this. Most of the parents of Mexican youth in New York City hail from rural parts of central Mexico, where an education was not seen as a tool to progress. That along with an already precedent wave of low-expectations from the public educational system, difficulty with the English language by the parents, long and arduous working schedules as new immigrants, and poor guidance has brewed a concoction of set-

backs that have lead many of these children and teens to do poorly in school. I was one of those students who like many were “at risk” and had minimal chances of even graduating high school. However, I thank God for the amazing mentors and tutors that have been placed in my life. (2 Sep. 2010)

“Low expectations” were prevalent from both schools and families in Roberto’s experience, and this was his reasoning for getting involved with MANOS, and what he saw as the program’s holistic approach to family learning. He argued changing educational expectations for Mexican youth happened at the family level. Before encountering MANOS, he had goals of doing similar work with the Mexican community of New York:

One of my life-long dreams is to one day set up an organization that can help New York City students of Mexican descent achieve higher academic results. [. . .] Despite the fact that the Mexican community is one of the largest ethnic groups in the city, its students perform poorly when it comes to academics. It is an epidemic of low expectations, social pressures, and lack of inspiration. This reality gives me outrage because I am Mexican, but determination as well—determination to make a difference, change the statistics but lives as well. However, I have never stumbled upon such an organization until recently when I discovered the organization which you have founded. I was amazed and ecstatic that there are people in this city who are already working to fight this issue, and I want to be part of that effort. (2 Sep. 2010)

Over the course of his time volunteering with MANOS, Roberto had gradually come to take on more of a leadership role, becoming the volunteer coordinator and trainer. Speaking with Roberto, it was clear that he would someday be a community leader. I could sense the desire to

teach and make a difference in him, and I could also sense his desire to contribute to both New York's Mexican community, and to bridge this into the U.S. mainstream. As a young New Yorker, he was of the American generation, and he saw Mexicans as one piece of the New York cultural landscape.

Jon Taylor

Jon Taylor was originally from San Diego, California. He attended college in Utah, and arrived in NYC in order to work at an advertising firm. He found MANOS on the web, and his interest in Latin America (sparked by anthropology and literature courses in college) led him to volunteer. Actively involved with the program for four years, he helped MANOS with various public relations matters, including securing media coverage for MANOS in English mainstream media, as well as Spanish mainstream local and national media. Jon was the inspiration for Carlos Portales's relentless searching for media coverage for MANOS. Jon brokered contacts for Carlos to draw from, and to advertise on his own when Jon's work schedule became too hectic, decreasing his hours volunteering. He still remained connected to MANOS, though, through social networking sites and regular e-mails among the MANOS staff sent by Carlos to his extensive social network (at times e-mails with address lines over 300).

Jon was an English monolingual, but had interests in learning Spanish, mostly because, he said, he grew up in California among Mexican American and Mexican immigrant communities. His Spanish was improving but he admitted that much of what was said in Spanish around him needed translation. "The kids help me when I need help, and absolutely to talk with their parents," he said (19 Feb 2010).

Jon also had considerable experience volunteering as a youth mentor in the past. In San Diego and Utah, he had been involved with the Boys and Girls Club. Jon enjoyed mentoring youth because he had noticed how impressionable children needed positive guides.

It's a great organization whose goal is to inspire and enable all young children—especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds to reach their full potential. [. . .] I continue working with MANOS less direct now but in more administrative ways with donations and fund-raisers. But that's important for the youth too. (19 Feb 2010)

MANOS for Jon had similar goals as the Boys and Girls Club, but he liked also the “grassroots” nature of MANOS. “It's like really helping a program to start, and without a lot of the problems that come from a bigger non-profit bureaucracy more concerned about sustaining itself than helping people” (19 Feb 2010).

During Jon's first two years of volunteering at MANOS he attended the program on a regular basis because he lived short subway ride away from Foraker Street. The last two years he lived on the other side of the city and had a longer commute. As a result, his attendance became less regular, but his contributions over e-mail and social media increased. As will be detailed in Chapter 5, he used his social media expertise gained from his work in advertising to help Portales with MANOS's successful media campaign. Partly inspired by his MANOS experiences within the Mexican community, he started a blog addressing the news of the New York Latino community with reports written in English, Spanish, and Spanglish.

Cristina Trujillo

Twenty-eight-year old Cristina Trujillo was born and raised in the South Bronx, a short bus ride from Foraker Street. Her parents emigrated from Puebla, Mexico in 1977. She graduated in the top 2% of her high school and was awarded a full scholarship to an elite liberal arts school in Vermont. She graduated with two Bachelor's degrees in economics and French. According to Cristina, she was attracted to MANOS because of its "close-knit environment of the community center and the desire of the parents to see their children succeed" (9 Aug. 2011). After a few years working on Wall Street, she decided to pursue her Master's degree in economic and political development. She also served as the official treasurer of MANOS.

Cristina's reasons for volunteering for MANOS centered around her desire to mentor Mexican American youth passing through difficult stages in their identity formation, or what she termed during an interview as living "ni de aquí, ni de allá" (9 Aug. 2011). I wasn't familiar with the concept, so I asked her to elaborate. "It's about," she said, "the issues many Mexican Americans face, about being ni de aquí, ni de allá—neither from here or from there, from America or Mexico." For Cristina, this meant that Mexican American youth felt between cultures, and this presented particular challenges that affected their educational trajectories. "For me," Cristina continued, "I feel Mexican, like I have one foot in Mexico and one in New York City. And I lived for a little while in Chiapas and Puebla. But I have to always defend my strong connection to Mexico." This meant, for her, speaking "good Spanish to Mexicans, because they judge Spanish like Americans judge English." Not belonging, it seemed, affected the cultural experience and identity formation of Mexican American youth down to the linguistic level.

She didn't realize this, though, until after she had come back from living away from New York City for four years in college. After returning, the reality of the educational situation of the Mexican community presented itself:

Upon graduating college and settling back in NYC, I not only realized that my younger family members were dropping out of high school but that the entire Mexican population, which I also noticed had recently exploded in numbers, was at risk. Everywhere I turned, the Mexican youth that I spoke to had either dropped out or had this notion that Mexicans didn't go to college. Even the parents had this notion that once of age, kids should be working. After all that is why they had come to America. And so I realized the dire need to not only disseminate more information about college but to also help dispel this notion that Mexicans didn't go to college. At the source of the problem and why so many Mexican youth had been dropping out of high school, I had identified the lack of support, both academically and emotionally, from parents and teachers (and organizations) and the presence of a strong and emerging gang culture amongst our communities which filled that void. We were losing our children. (24 Aug. 2011)

The sense of "losing" the community's children was also expressed to me by several MANOS parents. Victoria Rico was nervous about gang activity and crime on her block, so besides leaving for MANOS or going food shopping, she stayed in-doors. Tomás Rivera said much the same occurred on his block, and that it wasn't uncommon to hear gunshots some nights. This was affirmed by his son Edward. Cristina grew up near the challenges facing Mexican-origin youth in urban New York. A valuable resource for MANOS, she was proof that

Mexican youth growing up in tough neighborhoods could succeed in school and in their professional lives.

Attending graduate school opened up some hours for Cristina to participate more in mentoring at MANOS than she had experienced when she was working full-time. Cristina's work schedule on Wall Street had prevented her from volunteering more than one day a week for many months. After some of the tumultuous financial shocks of the latter half of the decade and some self-reflection, she decided to return to school to study. Cristina expressed to me an altruistic desire to help indigenous communities in Mexico with educational projects, which she equated with returning the community investment made in her education. "I wanted to join MANOS because I've been blessed to have a great education and I want to give back to the community and give every child a chance to succeed," she said (9 Aug. 2011).

I appreciated Cristina's way of critically imagining social change. Added to her practical experience with finance, she was certainly an asset for the MANOS program. As a mentor, she knew first-hand what it was like to grow up on Foraker Street, and she knew what sorts of difficulties the children of MANOS and their families would face growing up there at that time and into the future. Her connections in the world of finance, as well as through her university social networks had been effective resources for recruiting mentors and researching funding opportunities.

Mentors from Parent and Mentee Perspectives

MANOS parents were intensely grateful for mentors' generous donations of their time to tutoring their children. When children took for granted the help they received from mentors, parents were quick to remind them of the proper *respeto* and manners to demonstrate

appreciation. From my perspective as mentor, I noticed that children and parents often looked to me as a guide, and I felt the respect directed toward me came from my educational credentials and my ability to write, read, and speak standard English. MANOS founder Carlos Portales said that parents were aware that mentors came from their jobs, and also that their jobs were as professionals, and they respected that, and that was something they taught their children to value as well, down to the languages they spoke (15 Aug. 2010). Elisabeth Gonzales described to me the program's mentors as

Hay diferentes muchachos que ayudan. Vienen de la universidad. Otros de sus trabajos, porque trabajan. Y ellos nos estan ayudando todo. Y hasta ahorita pues, bendito sea dios, que mi hijo a progresado más, sí.

There are different young people that help us. They come from the universities. Others come from their jobs because they also have jobs. And they help us all. So far, thank God, my son has progressed more, yes. (12 Jul. 2010)

Elisabeth showed her gratitude to mentors by presenting gifts of homemade *tamales*, rice, beans, and *atole*. When she could, she also offered to make purchases of maintenance supplies necessary for the program as well. She thought of the mentors as “amigos de la familia” or friends of the family. Her son Dieguito said that he liked the help he received from MANOS mentors because “they help with my homework and my reading, and when I don’t know a word they correct me” (11 Nov. 2010). According to Dieguito, all the MANOS mentors were “nice people” who helped his peers and himself with homework. He also mentioned that he appreciated mentors because they “came to MANOS after their jobs all day.”

As mentioned previously, MANOS mentors' educational involvement with families focused on instilling and expanding favorable views of reading and writing in English and Spanish, but also to disrupt asymmetrical, dyadic linguistic-capital relations among monolingual parents and their bilingual children—relations where children established linguistic value while simultaneously feeling shame for their parents' Mexican accents and Spanish literacy, and where parents felt frustration for their failures to command social respect in English (Kalmar; Lippi-Green; Portes and Rumbaut). MANOS welcomed the Spanish of parents, but the preoccupation was with schoolwork as meeting school goals prioritized English reading and writing. As I argued in Chapter 2, language brokering brought into contact youth, parents, and mentors, families, and combined the rhetorical performances of home and institutional languages.

The next section of this chapter adds to my examination into the potential strengths of the triads of MANOS's mentors, mentees, and parents to complete homework unfolding as biliteracy events. The first part points to the importance of links between social networks, literacy, and biliteracy when securing assistance for children's homework. The second part of the section looks further at mentor interactions with MANOS families in practice as bilateral events, and how mentoring triads shaped biliteracy events involving homework in English.

2. Brokering Homework Assistance, Social Capital, and Mentored Biliteracy Events

Homework and Networks

Outside the support offered from community programs like MANOS, bilingual youth still develop their brokering skills as they mediate for their parents when they interface with schools, courts, lawyers, landlords, and on. Children of immigrant, LM parents are at times placed in positions of responsibility in the family when it comes to navigating institutions and a new

culture, including its ways with language. When considering the mentorship relation between MANOS families and its volunteer mentors, the triadic configurations called attention to the range of non-related adult speakers coming into contact with a MANOS community of immigrant families in supervision of children. For the mentees, this allowed them welcome bilingual participation with adults, and to partake in a form of community membership demonstrating positive immigrant ethnic values through role modeling. Research in the sociology of childhood posits that “[. . .] children’s participation in adult-child routines in the family and other settings, and their participation in the routines of peer cultures, both influence their evolving membership in their children’s culture and in the adult world” (Corsaro 111). Thus MANOS youth coming into contact with adults speaking multiple languages opened up the possibility for multilingual appreciation and tolerance, despite the constant reinforcement of standard English. This further complicated the biliteracy events documented below.

The English that MANOS parents encountered at the center was greater than what they usually experienced outside of this specific context. Outside MANOS, all the parents surveyed here had limited contact with English speakers at their jobs. The contact with English for mother Reina Molina Vasquez was typical. Though she had learned an extensive amount of English through her work experience as well as through community adult education programs, she felt more contact would have helped her, especially because most contact was limited to a few words or phrases. Regarding the regular English she used on the job, she said, “En mi trabajo por cuatro horas al día. [laughs] Sí me da risa porque despues de estas horas se me cambia el disco a español” (At my four daily hours at work. [laughs] It makes me smile because after work I change the track to Spanish) (3 Aug. 2010). I should point out, however, that as long as I have mentored at MANOS, I had never met a parent who refused to learn English, or who did not

want—at the minimum—to speak English; in fact, all the Spanish-speaking parents involved in the MANOS program studied English at one point or another while living in New York, but typically only when time permitted, and rarely for extended periods. In English, María Cruz said to me during an emotional interview in front of her four children that, “MANOS helps me with the education I never had in my country” (23 May 2010).

MANOS parents learned English mostly in the practical experiences of helping their children with homework. Homework in English was where MANOS parents had some of their most challenging interactions in English. According to Marjorie Faulstich Orellana, “Homework is a powerful artifact, one of the few items that regularly cross the divide between home and school. Homework brings school into homes and shapes household rhythms” (51). She further argues that

Homework is schoolwork that is done at home, an activity that imposes itself on children’s daily lives and family life, often inflexibly and inexorably. But families’ experiences with homework are little known in part because homework, like other labor performed in the domestic sphere, is an “invisible” sort of work. Like housework, it is generally unremunerated (except indirectly by teachers’ rewards, praise, or classroom grades), and it sometimes causes considerable stress and strife in homes. (51, italics in original)

The contact of school within homes has the tendency to cause strains for parents and children because of language difficulties—further distancing the perceptions of division between the two contexts. The unfortunate tendency in individualist social orders is to internalize social constraints as personal guilt or shortcomings without critically questioning social inequalities structuring certain legitimate forms from those considered illegitimate in the acquisition of

measurable skills and knowledge. The literacy skills of MANOS parents were then often self-consciously perceived as negligent. Subscribing to such a way of thinking takes certain cultural assumptions of literacy as leading to higher cognitive skills and future life success. The social contexts and conditions and diverse cultural interpretations of literacy must be taken into account. According to Brian Street, the “autonomous” model of literacy, disguises the cultural and ideological assumptions that underlie it, which can then be presented as though they were neutral and universal (see also Walker and Romero 289). The autonomous form of literacy learning views literacy as residing with the individual and illiteracy as a moral failure. The autonomous view, according to Street, has the effects of fostering inequality for those who “lack” it and advantages for those who “possess” it (“Literacy Inequalities” 3). One common result from this is to blame those who “lack” literacy for being illiterate.

Individuals with the socialized competency to excel in school-based literacy (autonomous because it is taught and learned as general skills and abstract language usage, divorced from social situations or contexts) obtain linguistic capital of the highest distinction, according to Bourdieu (*Distinction*), that is, literacy with the highest exchange value in the linguistic marketplace. The language of the affluent is marked as the language of high distinction while Spanish and nonstandard English dialects are de-legitimized. Language usages circulate in an hierarchical market of ascribed value and unequal social privileges, and these in consequence tend “to yield to strategies of competition and emulation, based on perceptions of the social worth” (41), thus setting standard usage as the goal for MANOS clients’ competence.

I asked each individual I interviewed involved with MANOS—youth, parents, and mentors— about the homework assistance offered by the program. From the perspectives of families and those mentors whose first language was Spanish, arose a common theme about the

frustrations of LM parents helping their children with their homework. The MANOS parents more often than not pointed out how they used their social networks to find someone to help their children—often the children of friends or family. During an interview with brother and sister eleven-year-old Felipe and seventeen-year-old Sarita, I asked them about who helped with their homework when they were younger:

SA: And when you were little who used to help you with your homework?

Felipe Rubio: My mom . . . and a little bit my sister.

SA: What did your mom help with?

FR: With all my homework. But sometimes when she didn't know and I didn't know, she'd get my sister.

SA: Who helps you with your homework now?

FR: My sister. And MANOS. But she [his mother] still helps me with my math, or she tries to help me in Spanish. She doesn't help with the writing because she can only write Spanish and only a little bit of English.

SA: What does MANOS help you with?

FR: A lot of my hard homeworks. Like the words I need help with, MANOS helps me a lot. Like with math, and sometimes history or science. And I know how to spell more words now because MANOS helps me.

SA: [to Sarita] Who used to help you with your homework?

Sarita Rubio: In the math, my parents.

SA: And the other stuff?

SR: Well my mom's brothers, when they first came, they were able to go to high school here, so they learned a little bit of English. And my cousins, they were in middle school already, so they helped me. (21 Feb. 2011)

Felipe and Sarita both recalled that their mother Lupe helped them with as much of their homework as she could—especially math. With language, however, she would try her best with Spanish before turning toward her network of English speakers in her direct acquaintance. As I documented in the beginning of Chapter 1 with the example of fifteen-year-old Gina and her mother María's scramble across NYC boroughs to secure English tutoring for her children, the Rubio family also used a similar strategy of tracking down homework help. Lupe's younger brother was the first one Lupe turned to when her eldest child Sarita was young. If he was unavailable, his children who were slightly older than Sarita were her next option. As Sarita aged, she became the primary English assistance tutor for her younger siblings, as well as the designated language broker in her family. The networks of family friends on Foraker Street, however, made finding and securing English homework help both a challenge and—at times—a great deal of work and inter-personal communication. The worst-case scenario came from Victoria Rico, who before becoming involved at MANOS had few social connections to draw from Foraker Street. As detailed below, she had to pay a service for homework translations.

The Rubios' social network first extended to family relations, and from there to neighboring distant relations and neighboring friends. Lupe's younger brother lived about thirty minutes away from Foraker Street by bus, and so this was not always the most convenient set-up, but it was much more convenient than some of the other MANOS parents. Around his home,

Felipe said when his sister wasn't available to help him, he always had MANOS. This was interesting to compare with the experience of Luis Uribe who lived in an apartment upstairs from the Rubios. For Luis, when his mother couldn't help him, he would ask Sarita, and if she wasn't available, then Felipe (who was one grade ahead of him).

The Rubios lived in the basement of the house where Juana Uribe Sanchez's family also lived. Felipe's mother Guadalupe had learned about MANOS from Juana—who learned about the program from her cousin Jaclín Montez Ybarra. Jaclín's and Juana's children attended the same charter elementary school around the block from MANOS on Foraker Street. Their children befriended the children of Reina Molina Vasquez, who learned about MANOS from meeting Jaclín and Juana at a school event conducted in Spanish. Reina lived just south of Foraker Street in a building—according to her—composed entirely of Mexican tenants. She lived on the second floor of the building, and her friend (whom she also introduced to MANOS) Linda Fernandez lived on the fourth. Several children had come to MANOS from this building just south of Foraker Street. The mothers of these families all shared a common goal of connecting and securing mentors for their children, and MANOS met this community need. Their social connections brought them together with the program, and offered a form of word-of-mouth advertising. Their participation, and that of their children, also demonstrated their civic participation, resulting in a form of community cohesion of the Mexican-origin population of Foraker Street. The social network of the parents was another form of social exchange, and also a product of their social ties within the local immigrant community in this *pequeño Mexico*.

Homework in Practice: Mentored Biliteracy Events

Below, I offer five biliteracy events to further compliment those documented in Chapter 2. These events, however, came from observations made at MANOS between mentors, mentees, and parents. They offered glimpses into the types of literacy mentoring interactions at MANOS. These biliteracy events each centered on homework and how different forms of nonstandard languages circulated around the standard English of schoolwork. When possible, I provided a reproduction of the actual text(s) discussed. Each observed event provided evidence of the sponsorship of English that MANOS promoted in its homework assistance for mentees.

Biliteracy Event 1: Organizing Writing Webs

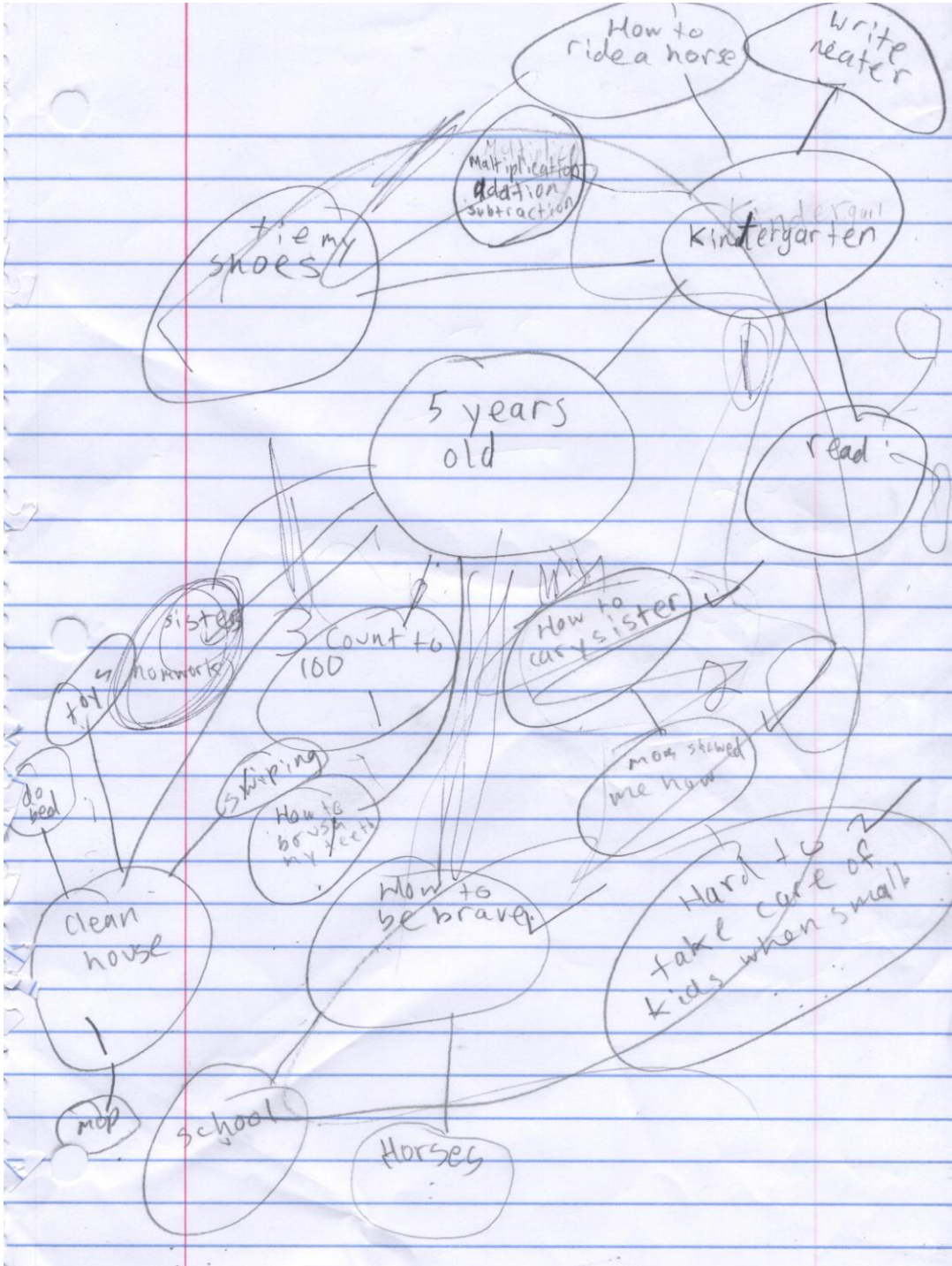


Figure 4.3: Model of writing web constructed for Felix Molina’s fourth-grade essay English Language Arts preparation for the state exam with the help of mentor Liana Abarca. The essay

was a reflective piece back to when the author was five-years-old and all things he had learned five year later.

Reina Molina Vasquez worked as a part-time caretaker of two young children for a family on the Upper East Side. She completed the eighth grade in Mexico but left school in order to help support her widowed and disabled father. Then, she migrated to California in 1998 at nineteen and subsequently moved to New York in 2002. She eventually earned her General Educational Development (G.E.D.) diploma in Spanish at a community college near Foraker Street. She wrote in a questionnaire (appendix A) on using Spanish when helping her children with their homework:

En español, con unos libros que mande a pedir de México. Practicando en el pisarron que tengo [en mi] casa. Formando palabras, asiendo oraciones. Aunque debo confesar que no me prestan mucha atención pero si creo que a su manera estan apreiendo. Tengo confianza en ellos.

In Spanish, with some books sent from Mexico. We practice with a chalkboard I have [at my] home. We practice words, and learning prayers. I have to confess though I never gave it much attention, but I know they are learning this way. I have confidence in them. (3 Aug. 2010)

Reina was concerned about her son Felix. He seemed not to want to take school seriously, despite all the active participation of his mother. This was hard for mentor Liana Abarca to observe, and also difficult to mentor. It was difficult because she saw how hard Reina

worked to provide educational assistance for Felix, but he seemed tired. If not tired, then unmotivated, and she had a difficult time knowing why.

On this day of writing homework, Liana found herself demonstrating a writing web to Felix and three other fourth grade students for their upcoming English Language Arts exam. As discussed in detail in Chapter 2, the method of organization of formal writing was something that came with everyday use and practice outside of school contexts.

Felix's essay asked him to reflect on his younger days, and to think about what he had learned since then. According to Liana, her main purpose with showing Felix the web design was to, "help him with keeping his ideas in order, and also to help him brainstorm and connect ideas that are alike. That's important for essays, so it's good to know at his age" (25 Apr. 2011). Felix had to write two essays this day, however, and Liana saw this as an opportunity to demonstrate one example of a writing web, and to allow Felix and Reina to try their hands at collaborating on the second. It was a smart way for Liana to step away and allow Reina to put to practice the observations she made of Liana's explanation. Liana later jokingly told me after the tutoring session that Reina was "maybe paying more attention than Felix."

Previously, when I asked Reina during an interview how she helped her children Felix and Samantha with their homework, she responded,

Nos sentamos todos los dias con ellos para hacer la tarea. Tenemos una rutina y un horario fijo para ellos. Cuando no entendemos o estamos confundidos en alguna pregunta buscamos en el diccionario o otras libros que tenemos en casa. Ya en el último de las cosas llamamos a mis sobrinos para aclarar las dudas. Esto sucede cuando no tenemos programa en MANOS.

We sit together with them to do homework. We have a routine and a schedule planned for them. When we don't know or are confused with a question, we look in the dictionary or other books we have at home. As a last effort we call my nephew and niece to clear up doubts. This works when there's no MANOS. (3 Aug. 2010)

Coming up with a routine for homework was something Reina said she picked up when noticing how her employer dealt with homework with her own children. In that family, homework always happened at the same hour each day. Because of her job as caretaker of two middle-class children, Reina was also a member of these children's routines, and she used some of the ideas she gained from her work experience in application to her child-rearing strategies. Again, the refrain of turning to family members with a better command of English also came up. Reina's nephew and niece lived in another borough of the City.

As Felix came up with different things he learned since he was five, Reina contributed to the brainstorming. Liana instructed Felix to make a circle with "5 years old" written at the center. Before branching off, Felix drew numerous circles connecting from this center one—Liana stopped him then, and she told him to wait, because he had to think of ideas before filling circles. Liana was going to allow Felix to keep the excess of circles he drew branched off, but Reina thought it a better idea if he erased and started over, which Felix did.

Liana first asked something he learned since he was five, and she also made the suggestion to kindergarten. As quick as Felix repeated, "write neater," "how to do addition and subtraction," "ties shoes," "how to ride a horse," and "read," Liana lined these up at the top of the page. She continued with "count to 100"; "clean house—mop—toys"; "how to cary sister—mom showed me how—hard to take care of kids when small"; "how to be brave—horses." How

to carry his sister was an addition from Reina, and this is why Felix included the line “mom showed me how.”

Felix completed the essay using his web, and with minimal help from Liana, aside from a proofread at the end where she found some small mistakes with his spelling. Reina observed to make sure that Felix’s penmanship remained legible, and when it was deemed sloppy by her, she enforced corrections.

Felix’s second web, composed by mother and son with minimal contact from Liana follows:

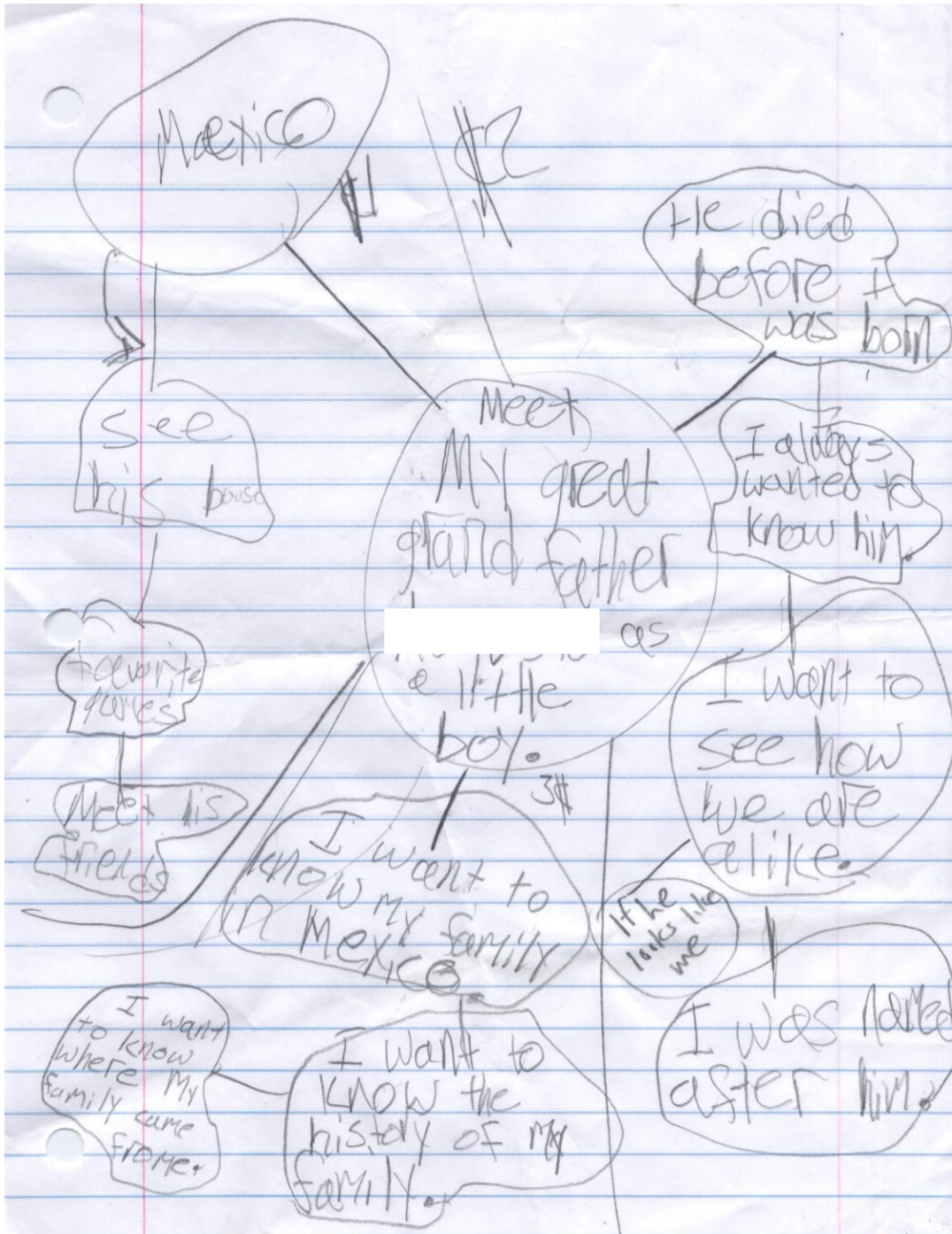


Figure 4.4: Writing web composed by Felix and his mother Reina after the example of Figure 4.3. The focus of this essay was the hypothetical meeting of anyone the author wanted to know, and why that person was chosen. The core of the essay, as the center of the web read, was “Meet my great grand father [Felix] as a little boy.”

Immediately, Felix did not draw several circles before generating ideas to fill them. Before beginning the project, Liana made sure that both Reina and Felix understood what the essay asked him to write about. After some deliberation about the person whom he would most like to meet, Felix decided on his grandfather. Reina was pleased with this decision.

Felix broke up the web into the following structure: “He died before I was born—I always wanted to know him—I want to see how we are alike—if he looks like me—I was named after him”; “I want to know my family in Mexico—I want to know the history of my family—I want to know where my family are from”; “Mexico—see his house—favorite games—meet his friends.” Liana helped Felix put some of his ideas into words, especially when she led him by asking questions, especially when putting Felix in the perspective of his grandfather as a boy. Reina also added the detail that Felix was named after his grandfather—a detail of which he wasn’t aware.

When they finished with the essays, Felix thanked Liana for her help, and he said he was going to show his father the essay he wrote about his grandfather, because, according to Felix, “it will make him happy because my dad loves my grandpa.”

Biliteracy Event 2: Dear Friend Letter

I continue this second biliteracy event further with the experience of Reina Molina, though this time with homework from her daughter seven-year-old Samantha. On a day just a few weeks after the event narrated in the first biliteracy event, this second encounter took place between Samantha, Reina, and mentor Cristina Trujillo.

Samantha’s writing homework for the evening entailed her composing a letter to a friend on a photocopied homework packet entitled “Dear Friend.”



Figure 4.5: Homework of Samantha Molina. Identifiers have been concealed. Mentor Cristina

Trujillo assisted her with the composition. The written portion reads:

June 26, 2010

[Dear] [Andrea]

You are a nice friend

This summer I eat cake at my

house. I went swimming.

I osol sleepd alot becuse

I rest when I am on vacat-

on becuse I like to do noting

I wish I was happy.

I like if went

to the park.

I like the summer

alot.

[Your friend]

Samantha

The “packet” form of homework was the most common encountered by MANOS youth and brought to the program. The first page typically had a weekly schedule with subjects and days on a grid, with corresponding titles and page numbers (though pages were often out of sequence as they were photocopied or printed out from different sources). The attached pages had all the week’s homework, composed of forms just like that in 4.3. MANOS parents would often request for mentors to review the week’s schedules and corresponding homework with

them for those days during the week when MANOS was closed. Completing packets, or filling up the pages, became some of MANOS parents' preoccupations. Samantha, as can be seen from 4.3, tried to pull a familiar trick from students in their resistance to packet homework: she filled up all the lines on the page—indeed—but after increasing the size of her font to twice its original size. When questioned about the maneuver, she argued that fulfilled her mother's expectation of filling up her packet. MANOS mentees used such visual tactics when they raced through their homework, and this was another place where MANOS intervened and asked for parents' support.

Before composing the letter, Cristina asked Samantha about who her friends were, and to which she would want to write the letter. Cristina asked Samantha a few guided questions to instigate some thinking. Immediately Samantha responded with her “school best friend,” Andrea. After this, Cristina asked her what she wanted to tell Andrea about her summer vacation plans. Next to Samantha, Reina was writing a few words in list form on a page. She wrote down “park,” “swim,” and “camp” on her page. She showed this to Samantha. Cristina also looked at the list, and she gave Reina praise for her spelling. This made Reina slightly chuckle. She appeared to be making a structure that resembled something like an organizational web but without the elaboration of circles. Next to park she wrote “cumple de Felix” (Felix's birthday), and “party.” Next to camp she wrote “primera vez” (first time). She shared these ideas with Samantha and Cristina during the tutoring session.

It was clear Reina practiced some of the skills she had learned from Liana's demonstration of the writing web with Felix just days before. She applied a similar method of organizing ideas. She used Spanish and English to organize her thoughts, an indication of “code-switching” in her method of structuring writing. Since the composition itself would be in English, she practiced her English. She practiced her English and Spanish biliteracy modeled on

her son's bilingualism. In experience tutoring and mentoring her son, she gained an approach that demonstrated for him parental involvement with homework, assisted by a mentor with sponsorship in the dominant language.

Biliteracy Event 3: A Journey with Dad

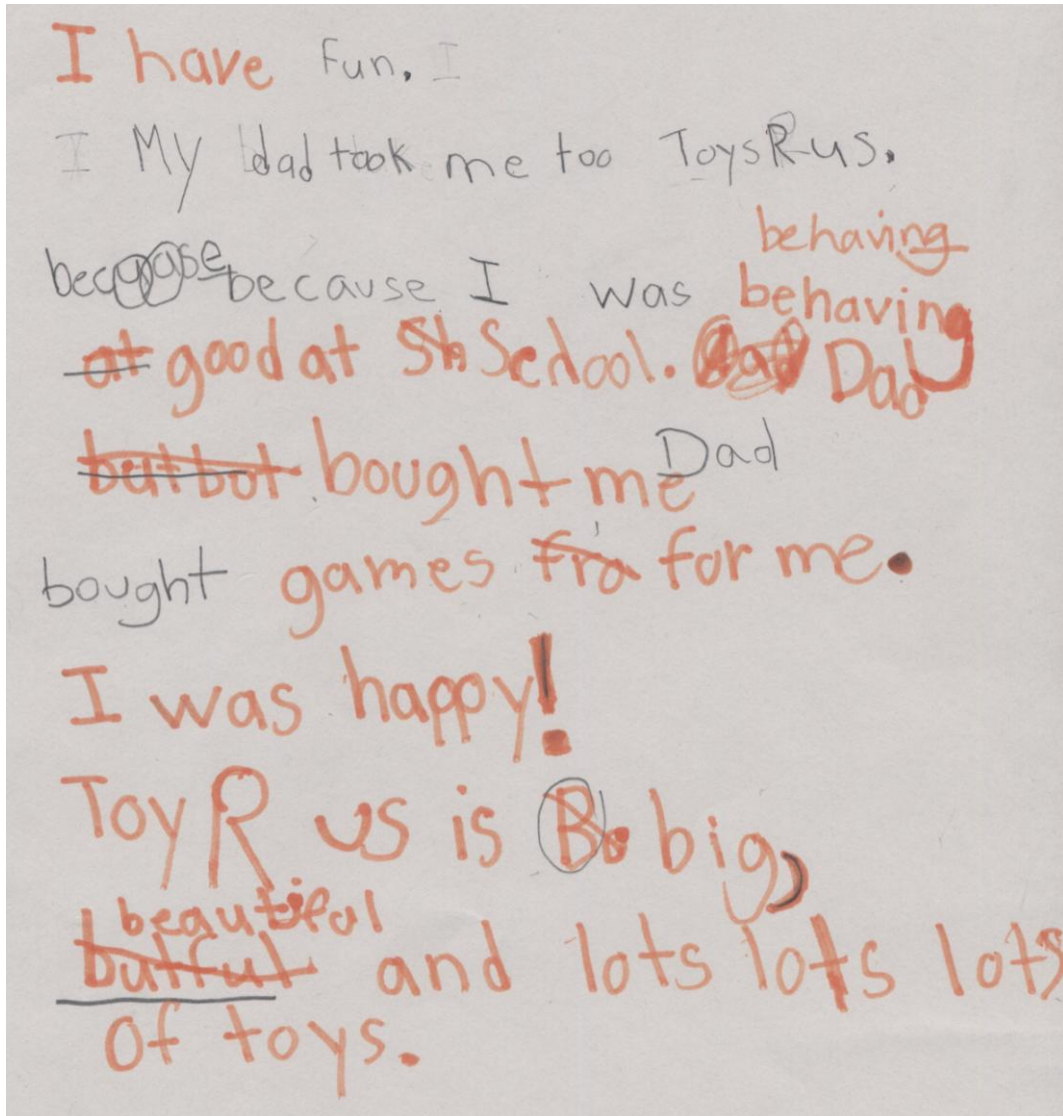


Figure 4.6: Homework “scratch” page of Marcos Rico. Marcos and his mentor Pilar Lopez used two different colors (pencil and orange marker) in composing this narrative. Pilar practiced a method she learned in teaching classes with Marcos as his mother Victoria observed. Pilar also

explained to Victoria in Spanish her intentions of using different colors to stimulate Marco's visual senses. The changes in color below are designated in boldface below:

I have Fun. (I)

(I) My dad took me too Toys R us.

because because I was **behaving/behaving**

at good at Sh school. dad Dad

butbut bought me Dad

bought **games fra for me.**

I was happy!

Toy R us is **Ba** big,

beautiful/**butfu** and lots lots lots

of toys

Pilar's practice of tutoring Marcos using different colors in Figure 4.6 was something she said she learned from a course in education she took during her undergraduate studies. She said Marcos loved to visualize things—most of the MANOS kids did according to Pilar. She credited this to the abundance of art materials available to mentees, and she thought it a good idea to use the art materials not only as tools to keep mentees busy after they finished their homework, but also when doing homework.

Marcos narrated a trip to a toy store with his father, which had some planning and vivid description before he began composing. Victoria reminded Marcos to focus, but he continued on just a little longer about some of the many wonders he saw at this particular toy store with his father. He began the composition in orange marker and finished it in pencil. He wrote the next

sentence in pencil until he had difficulty at syntax in the second half dependent clause of a compound sentence when he returned to orange at Pilar's insistence because she saw him struggling. They finished the sentence together orally, and Marcos composed when they had said together. Victoria also slowly pronounced some of the words with her son, though she was careful not to disturb him as he sounded out the words when he wrote them.

The next sentence continued in orange until Marcos arrived at the construction "Dad bought me." Pilar stopped him here and asked him what he was going to write. Marcos answered, "that my dad bought me games."

"We have to write something different. Because your dad didn't buy games called 'Me' did he?"

"What?"

"'Me' games," she explained. "He bought games called 'Me'? No, he bought games *for* me."

"Oh," he said.

Victoria watched as they spoke. She asked Pilar something quietly while Marcos wrote.

Marcos continued the rest of the composition in orange, and he remained focused until he completed his project—which was not for a grade, but for practice. Pilar sometimes completed such small sessions like this with Marcos to help mentees struggling with reading and writing. She had learned from speaking with Victoria during MANOS that her son was having problems with his reading and writing. During MANOS, when she was free, Victoria requested Pilar's help with giving additional study material for Marcos. Marcos was happy to work with Pilar because she—according to him—"helps me with writing the words right."

Victoria Rico eventually learned about MANOS through family friends distantly related to Marcos's father, Luis. After attending MANOS, she learned she was being exploited through a company on Foraker Street that charged her \$25 a week to translate her first-grade son's homework packet. Victoria had an increasingly difficult time understanding her son's homework. When he first started school, Victoria went to great lengths to find ways to help him, including paying for Spanish translations. She told me,

Que era lo que más se me dificultaba. El año pasado por eso les digo, tuve muchos problemas con lo de las areas. Porque, cuando tenía para pagar los veintecinco dolares que me tradujera la hoja en español pues yo lo hacía y cuando no, pues no, no podía. Y buscaba quien me ayudara pero Con los vecinos, decía ayudame, a ver con mi'ijo para ver lo que tenía que hacer. Y yo me sentía mal porque no puedo ayudar m'ijo.

That to me was the most difficult. For this I tell you, last year I had many problems in this area. Because, when I had to pay twenty-five dollars to have each page translated to me in Spanish, well I did when I could, and when I couldn't, I didn't. I was looking for someone to help, and my neighbors told me. I went with my son to see what they could do. That made me feel bad because I wasn't able to help my son. (22 Jun. 2010)

The service that Victoria found was a business that specialized in cashing checks and sending packages to foreign countries. The business also conducted translations for fee. According to Victoria, the store always looked busy, and when she was there a few folks in line before her also purchased translations of documents. She was thankful she found the community

of MANOS because this way she was able to secure native English speakers to help her son, and for free. She always showed her thankfulness for MANOS by volunteering to clean up after children, and also to cook tirelessly during the winter months so that all the MANOS children could have something warm to taste while they worked on their homework in the unheated basement on Foraker Street.

Biliteracy Event 4: What I Did Last Summer

Seven-year-old Flor Fernandez was practicing her writing with mentor Amy Chen and her mother Linda. She was still on summer vacation from school, but MANOS was open during the summer months as students were assigned homework packets from school to complete before September. Flor had completed her packet weeks back, but she still came to MANOS so she could practice writing for school. In fact, MANOS found its greatest demand during the summer months. Initially it was closed for the summer, but from 2008 and on it has hosted summer programs because students had homework packets to complete over the summer.

On this day, Amy asked Flor to write about her summer. Amy hadn't seen Flor for most of the summer, so she convinced her she wanted to read a little bit about what she did for the last few months. Figure 4.5 illustrates the sentences Flor composed.

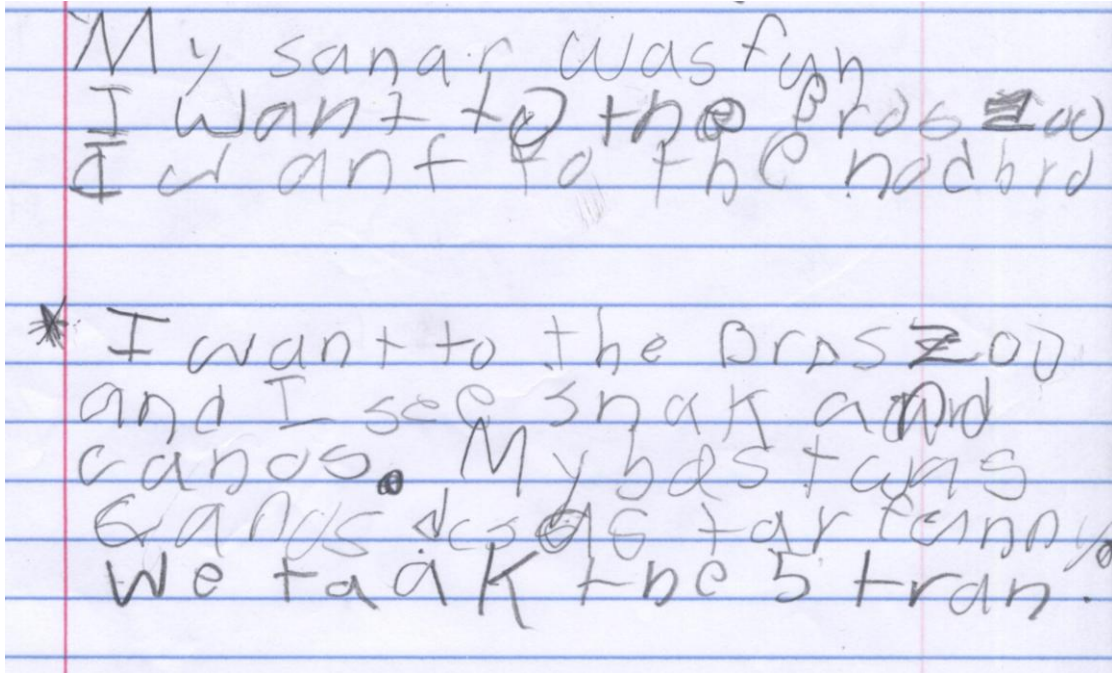


Figure 4.7: Homework of Flor Fernandez. Flor’s writing homework asked her to write about her summer vacation. She completed the task with the assistance of her mother Linda and mentor Amy Chen.

My sanar was fun

I want to the Brob zoo

I want to the hodbro

I want to the Bras zoo

and I see shak and

canos. My bast was

canos desac tar fenny.

We taak the 5 tran .

Flor's composition had phonetic approximations in her misspelled words, but Amy was familiar enough with Flor's writing to know the sense of what she meant. She needed clarification of two words though, what she read as "canos" and "ganos."

"Changos," (monkeys) said Flor.

"Changos?" asked Linda.

"Sí mami, me encanta los changos," (yes mami, I love the monkeys) said Flor.

Linda demonstrated how to write *chango* for Flor, as Amy observed. She watched her closely, and on her own imitated what she observed. Amy spoke out each letter as Linda demonstrated. According to Amy, Flor's English literacy had improved a great deal over the course of the previous school year. According to the tutoring reports she completed when helping Flor with homework, she continually mentioned that Flor's writing was difficult to read. It took her some time to get familiar with Flor, and how she wrote what she heard when she spelled aloud. Amy noted that Flor's sentences made grammatical sense to her, and that Flor had begun to capitalize proper nouns, used more punctuation, and that she wrote less of her letters backwards (Aug. 2010-Dec 2011). In one informal daily report written months before about reading with Flor, she wrote,

Read level 1 book—(preschool/grade 1)—Read this very well

2nd book we read: Oh the Place you'll Go! by Dr. Seuss

Flor had some trouble reading this book I noticed she had a lot of problems with reading the words you'll, who'll, and any contraction words. However, I did notice Flor read well and understood when to change tones based on exclamation points. She learned new vocabulary words: through, sprain, frequent. (14 Jan. 2010)

Amy had mentored Flor for a few years, as well as her older siblings thirteen-year-old Jesús and eleven-year-old Marisol. Amy had watched Flor develop as an emergent bilingual, and she had noticed some of the issues and challenges Flor encountered when using phonetics to spell words. Her text resembled “invented writing” by children on the verge of literacy.

“Three days a week only does so much,” Amy said to me one evening at MANOS as everyone put away the tables and chairs before leaving for the night. Amy communicated to Linda that it was important that her daughter read everyday in order to practice. She also told Linda it was fine that if she read to her daughter in Spanish too.

As for the English words that Flor struggled with (“sanar”/summer, “Brob”/“Bras”/Bronx, “hodbro”/harbor, “shak”/shark, “desac”/because, “taak”/took), Amy had the idea of composing flashcards with the words on them. After thinking about this, however, she realized that flashcards wouldn’t work unless she developed a somewhat sophisticated system that would not reveal the words completely.

Linda had a better idea: she made flashcards for herself that indicated how to pronounce the words, including phonetic interpretive inflections over certain clusters of sounds, as well as other marginal comments. For the word *harbor*, for example, she wrote on her note card *jar-bur* with the correct spelling below. She did the same for *took*, which she wrote as *tuc*, approximating as best she could with Spanish notation a guide for English pronunciation. This allowed her to more finely articulate on the card what the words should sound like when pronounced aloud, thereby, in some respect, pronouncing the “h” as an English speaker would the same as the “j” of the Spanish speaker. She made cards for several additional words that Amy mentioned Flor had difficulty with, along with small one to three-word definitions written in

Spanish. She worked on some of these at MANOS with Flor. She used these cards to practice in spelling drills with her daughter at home.

Biliteracy Event 5: Writing About MANOS

Fourth-grader Luis Uribe mentioned to mentor Roberto Sanchez that he had trouble reading schoolwork together with his mother Juana because of his mother's limited English, but that he sometimes read Spanish with her. His homework on this particular day asked him to write a one paragraph journal entry about a place he liked to go. After some brainstorming with Roberto, and a little coaxing too, Luis decided he would write his paragraph about MANOS. Figure 4.6 is the resulting text.

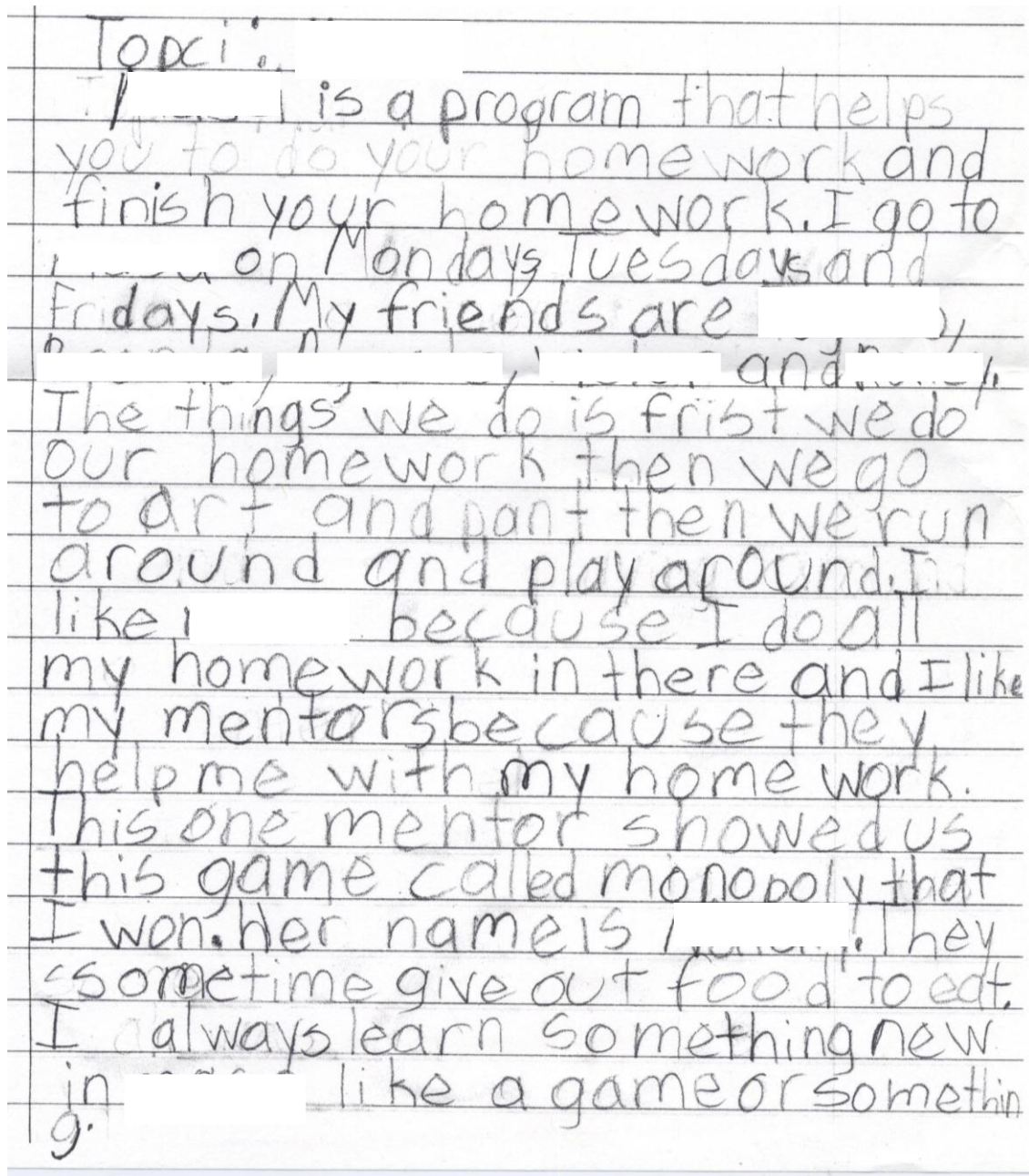


Figure 4.8: Homework of fourth grader Luis Uribe. Mentor Roberto Sanchez aided Luis in the composition. The transcribed essay about MANOS reads:

Topci: [Manos]

[Manos] is a program that helps

you to do your homework and

finish your homework. I go to
manos on Mondays, Tuesdays and
Fridays. My friends are [Felipe],
[Nansi], [Felix], [Marcos], and [Dieguito].

The things we do is frist we do
our homework then we go
to art and pant then we run
around and play around. I
like [manos] because I do all
my homework in there and I like
my mentors because they
help me with my homework.

This one mentor showed us
this game called monopoly that
I won. Her name is [Leti]. They
sometime give out food to eat.

I always learn something new
in [manos] like a game or somethin
g.

Over the course of his involvement at MANOS, Luis's mother Juana's English vocabulary had expanded. Luis, Juana told me during an interview (with Luis as language broker), did not take bilingual classes when he started school even though he spoke mostly

Spanish—he learned some English from continual interaction with older cousins and friends already in school, and from watching television (10 Feb. 2011). In the same interview, Juana expressed that it was necessary for her to speak better English in order to get a better job. She told me that she needed more English than she currently had. She often remained silent while he read aloud, helping her when she could, but mostly struggling to sound out words with her as he progressed, often at rhythms too fast for his mother.

When Luis read the instructions for writing his paragraph from the homework assignment sheet distributed by his teacher, Roberto stepped back to allow Juana to slowly follow her son's reading, watching his finger as it moved down the page, mouthing the words herself and occasionally saying a syllable or word aloud. Her accent was distinct. Luis sometimes made negative comments about his mother's English, in English. He didn't always translate what he said into Spanish for her benefit, but by the look on Juana's face she knew what he said. Her younger son, four-year-old Pablo, had begun completing homework sheets for his preschool Head Start program. Juana helped him memorize the words at home, and like Reina mentioned previously, she used skills she developed imparted by mentors who helped her older child.

Before beginning his composition, Roberto asked Luis a series of questions about what he liked about MANOS, and with each response Luis gave, Roberto made a list on a different piece of paper. He wrote brief one-word answers to help him when they returned to his list in order to structure the paragraph. According to Luis's answers, MANOS helped mostly with "doing homework," "playing with friends," "getting help from mentors." These three ideas were to be the focal points of the paragraph. Juana watched closely as Roberto demonstrated that the three ideas would be the "main parts" of sentences, and that each idea would have a sentence or two of "support." Roberto translated this into Spanish for Juana who nodded. Roberto asked Luis

questions, wrote down his answers, and fed these back to him as in incipient outline for writing, while modeling this to his mother. Orality in both English and Spanish is a valuable tool to develop literacy in both languages. A “lack” of English on the parts of MANOS parents made Spanish orality and literacy as inoperable.

Juana asked in Spanish how many sentences a paragraph usually had. Roberto answered her it depended, but around six to eight would be a good number.

“My teacher said just five,” said Luis.

“At least five I think she said,” said Roberto.

“Oh yeah,” Luis said.

Before beginning the first sentence, Roberto asked Luis who he thought his audience was. Luis answered, “my teacher.”

“That’s good,” he said, “but does your teacher know about MANOS? Has she ever been here?”

“No,” he said.

“Then we have to describe it for her so she could imagine it.”

Luis began his composition, then, summarizing the main points of MANOS for his audience not familiar with the program. He also gave his thoughts about why he enjoyed the program, as well as some of the educational games he played, and he also mentioned of one his favorite mentors who taught him how to play Monopoly. By the time he had reached his eighth sentence and stopped to count how many sentences he had written, he was surprised how easy it had been to complete what at first seemed a daunting task. Roberto was satisfied with the final sentence Luis wrote, but Luis said he wanted to add one more. This was when he added the final summary sentence, “I always learn something new in manos like a game or something.”

When they completed the paragraph, Roberto asked Luis to read it aloud so his mother could hear it in English. Luis did so, and his mother responded in English then Spanish, “good—*muy bien Luis.*”

Discussion: Public and Private Languages: Mentees Brokering Between Home and School and the Threat of Language Loss

This final section of this chapter returns to the MANOS families and how the sponsorship of English affected their language uses and perceptions. As I have pointed out in each chapter, translation became central in my ethnographic research in the MANOS community because over the years of mentoring I saw the social implications of translation not only as a necessary linguistic resource, but also as a skill set bilingual children exercised on a day-to-day basis in the informal setting of MANOS. It was difficult for me to understand how translation and interpretation differed for the MANOS mentees who brokered language between Spanish-dominant monolinguals and English monolinguals like me at the program’s space. Looking to the skills involved in language brokering and translation and removing the stigma of L2 “difficulties,” we can search for ways to understand how languages in first-generation families affect views toward schooling, reading, and writing. Linguistic anthropologists have long known that native speakers are largely unaware of the systematic workings of their language, as sociological misrecognition is more fundamental than awareness. Monolingual adult immigrants with limited English in this study routinely permitted their more linguistically-aculturated children to mediate their social encounters with the English-speaking world, particularly when dealing with English-speaking adults of higher social status outside MANOS, such as teachers, lawyers, doctors, and psychologists. This put a certain amount of pressure on children to partake

in adult conversations. This also put pressure on parents as the primary conduits for Spanish language maintenance and development within families. The loss of Spanish literacy was always a legitimate concern for them.

Lupe Rubio was one of the few parents at MANOS who tried to maintain her child's Spanish literacy. Her three children attended public schools and had taken bilingual courses during their first years of elementary school before transitioning to all-English classrooms. Her youngest son Miguel was in kindergarten, and he was currently undergoing this transitioning process. Most of Miguel's homework was in English, but sometimes he also had homework in Spanish on certain days of the week. Lupe claimed to have no problems helping Miguel with his homework in Spanish, but when she was asked to write a task in English she searched other avenues to find assistance. Nevertheless, she told me she made sure that Miguel practiced his writing in Spanish because she could help him with that. For her, it was important that her son speak and write Spanish. She said during an interview:

Yo creo que es muy importante que tener mejor comunicación con las personas hablar diferentes idiomas. Estamos en un país donde hay diferentes personas que hablan diferentes idiomas . . . y es importante para tener un buen trabajo. Y si él quería viajar a México, ya lo tiene.

I think it is very important so as to have better communication with people who speak different languages. We are in a country where there are different people that speak different languages. And it is important to have for a good job. And if he wants to travel to Mexico, he has it. (19 Jun. 2010)

The cultural diversity of New York did promote multilingualism as a positive attribute for social success, provided that English was one of the languages one had at her disposal. For Lupe, having Spanish in the case of her children would help them when they returned to Mexico to visit as well. Lupe's daughter Sarita told me upon returning from a few weeks of vacation in Mexico a few years back that her Spanish improved because she had to rely on it more in Mexico than in New York. As for reading in Mexico, she still said she read mostly in English, but Spanish when she had to.

I asked Lupe why it was important for her that children read and wrote English, and she responded, "Para tener un mejor futuro, una mejor vida . . . mejores casas, materiales, y una forma de vivir" (To have a better future, a better life . . . better houses, things, and a better standard of living) (19 Jun. 2010). She framed being bilingual in Spanish and English as valuable because it resulted in the ability to communicate across peoples, thereby producing professional stability and a good job between cultures. Being literate in English, on the other hand, meant the promise of a better future and life, "better" translated into a higher standard of living. For non-English-dominant immigrants, the achievement of English was understood to be obligatory for advancement. In multilingual settings, decisions to make use of one language or another depend on the perceived prestige, status, or desirability of one language over another.

Evidence for the higher status of one language over another can affect immigrant youth's perceptions of their home languages and also their value in circulation among dominant society. The status of English for Lupe equated with American material wealth and security as forms of good living and economic, upward mobility. The social status of all languages is closely related to economic status (Lippi-Green; Rossell and Baker; Zentella). Where a minority language coexists with poverty, social deprivation, and unemployment, the social status of the language is

affected. When speakers of a minority language perceive higher social status and political power of the majority language, a shift toward majority language use may occur, so much so that younger generations typically lose the original foreign language their family brought to this country as the price of their assimilation. Likewise, a resistance to the dominant language might also have resulted. As documented above, the status of Spanish and the shift toward English bilingual preference and use are evident in Lupe's responses. We could also imagine a smaller, negative economy where an inverse status system contrary to the larger linguistic marketplace values Spanish, resisting complete domination or profit.

When working on homework with families at MANOS, I noted how mentees sometimes criticized the “illegitimate” Spanish accents of their parents when reading aloud in English. As a result parents either laughed the joke off or silently retreated from participating. Such conditions were ripe for linguistic stress within immigrant families. In “The Language Socialization Experiences of Latina Mothers in Southern California” Ana María Relaño Pastor argues that

Linguistic stress is one of the sources of conflict between immigrant parents and their children. Children learn English quickly at school, often preferring the dominant language and rejecting Spanish because it makes them feel different from the rest of their peers. (156)

Stress caused by language differences was something that both children and parents faced. Yet both generations would come to understand together the cultural differences between perceptions of their language and that of the dominant standard. The stress in dis-identifying with one's home language and all that language entails symbolically and culturally caused anxiety, family divisions, and as mentioned above sometimes language loss—as in the famous case of Richard Rodriguez entering school in California at age 6 speaking only Spanish and

reaching the age of 16 only speaking English. (*Hunger of Memory*). My own family had similar experiences, which I will touch upon in Chapter 6.

Children of course sometimes didn't perceive language divisions in such stark terms. They did, however, perceive divisions, which they put forth in more practical ways. A conversation I had with ten-year-old Nansi Montez while we cut out pieces of newspaper to use for a piñata project was about bilingualism and how she saw it both excluding and including people. She spoke of her own Spanish use and how she felt it was diminishing: "I started to forget Spanish. I mix them together when I talk. Like some words I don't know, and I tell my mom in English instead of Spanish, because it's a little bit difficult to speak Spanish" (19 Apr. 2011).

Nansi considered knowing Spanish important. "It's important because maybe, like, when you went to Mexico and you only knew English, they speak to you in Spanish, and you don't know how to speak Spanish or understand, you would, like, try to speak to them English, and they won't know English because they were born in Mexico. And they weren't born in the United States, and they didn't learn how to speak English. So it's important to speak English and Spanish."

This was clear enough for me, so I asked her about speaking English and how her mother Jaclín communicated around Foraker Street.

"She needs a little bit of help with English."

"Do you help her?"

"Yeah, and my dad. Because whenever they ask me, um, what is this word in Spanish, I tell them. Like my dad starts telling me how do you say this word in English. And he says it in Spanish, like a sentence. Then I tell him in English."

“What are some of the words he asked about?”

“Like, um, he says um . . . *noise*. I told him that one. And sometimes he tells me hard words and I don’t know them in Spanish. But then—so then I tell him something else that is like the word. Then he could figure it out. And sometimes he figures it out, and sometimes he don’t. He looks for words in the dictionary, and then he tells me. He look for words on the computer, and whenever I don’t know how to say the word in Spanish, and sometimes I ask my uncle. He’s good at English, but sometimes he has to look up the words on the computer too.”

The Montez family had the common experience of living between languages, but their experience of living across the street from the MANOS program was a piece of good fortune. The family had been involved in MANOS for over three years. Nansi and her two younger sisters attended MANOS since they first started their schooling, and had therefore extensive contact with English speakers outside of school hours. As Nansi and her younger sister Ana both began their schooling in bilingual programs, this was particularly helpful, but equally helpful having mentors who could offer advice in English and Spanish, and who also passed through bilingual programs during their schooling. Nansi said, “I like MANOS because I learn more at MANOS, then I get some things, and I learn things. And sometimes I learn things and I don’t at school, then I learn things when the teacher asks that question.”

MANOS parents dealt with what they perceived as Spanish loss in their families. They understood well enough that their children’s English development at schools was segregating Spanish to second-class status. Oral monolingualism was the most noticeable, as reading and writing English were much more prevalent among individuals who classify themselves as oral bilinguals. Orality and textuality, however, each have bilingual dimensions, and just as bilingualism enhances oral communication, it can enhance textual modes as well. Unfortunately,

this often goes overlooked when immigrant families take literacy learning for granted as learning to read and write in English.

The reinforcement of standard English, however, became the emphasis of families who looked toward schooling as a means to achieving upward social mobility. Added to this was the stress of calling on children for language brokering. Young translators offering their services for their parents and English dominant institutions sometimes noted how some audiences marked their parents as immigrants when language brokering. As several mentees mentioned to me, this happened mostly when their parents were forced to speak English with a heavy-Spanish accent. In the next chapter, I explore some of the views of immigrants in the U.S. public gaze, a gaze that had grown suspicious of—and hostile to—“alien others” during the political tensions surrounding U.S. Homeland Security and nativist pressuring for federal immigration reform, in addition to the economic woes rippling through local and global economies.

Conclusion

Over the last five years I volunteered at MANOS each day it was open, three days a week, for two hours, and the occasional Saturday here and there when director Carlos Portales and I visited the families at their apartments. Like Pilar Lopez said, mentoring at MANOS taught me a great deal about my own abilities as a teacher, but also about the importance of mentoring families in the education process. This became clearer after studying the sociology of social reproduction and critical analyses of the family-unit as primary transmitter of cultural capital. There was poignancy for my research into families at MANOS, especially when considering how parents from differing social classes reproduce and attempt to secure or elevate the social

positions of their children through tactical acquisitions of valuable cultural capital in education and literacy. This poignancy led to the final autoethnographic chapter of this dissertation.

In order to fully serve a community like MANOS, I came to realize the necessary foundations community programs must have in place before serving with stability. More than half of the equation in terms of increasing literacy for MANOS mentees and parents had been in organizing the program and maintaining a strong volunteer base of consistent mentors. MANOS had never lacked, though, interested parents requesting help in learning English and homework help for their children. There had been times at the center where there were as few as two mentors/tutors and as many as 25 children and 15 parents.

Unlike mentoring programs with continual engagement or a sustained relationship between youth and a single mentor (such as Big Brothers Big Sisters), MANOS mentees received attention from multiple mentors of different ages. It was a free after-school program completely run by volunteers without institutional support of a sponsoring school or non-profit agency. It operated as a grassroots community organization in a damp church basement without heat in winter, or air-conditioning in sweltering summers. MANOS also had difficulty stabilizing its volunteer staff resources so it often lacked sufficient mentors to work with children. The demand for MANOS's services was high because aspiring parents came to it in large numbers requesting assistance in learning English and in homework support for their children. This suggested that the demand for L2 services far outstripped government provisions supporting it. The number of non-English families needing L2 instruction is high, so why is the federal commitment so low? Does it have to do with nativist fears about foreigners during a time of economic downturn? The failure to provide adequate service had been one material limit on MANOS's impact. It's also a border separating wage expectation and life changes for non-

English immigrants. Failing to provide L2 instruction for them is to also deny them equal opportunity in the U.S. linguistic marketplace, and also denying them the opportunities to compete for better-paying jobs.

Alyshia Gálvez in *Guadalupe in New York* documents a Mexican immigrant religious community organized around community participation and promoting community building and self-empowerment. According to her study, “the activities of the organization generally serve to build community by fostering a shared identity through a common history, shared experiences, spaces, and needs, as well as by documenting activities and accomplishments. Often, many activities are made public beyond the Mexican community defined internally by the organization.” (42). MANOS, as I will argue in Chapter 5, did much the same. At the beginning of her study, Gálvez asks the two following research questions: “How does grassroots organizing function in the development of an undocumented identity? Through what tools, discourses and cultural activities?” (45). I also wanted to know how to answer these questions, but in the context of MANOS. Without knowing it, I found the answer much later when I spoke to mentor Roberto Sanchez. His inspiration for being a mentor to youth from his background was important to him, and also to his aspirations of being a high school teacher. Through mentorship, Roberto had evolved from a disengaged student to graduating as the valedictorian of his high school. As a mentor, he said,

pass such inspiration to students of Mexican descent. It just is so much easier to connect with someone from your background for inspiration [. . .] I want to pass on to students, habits and skills that will help them in the long run. That is how I was changed into the person that I am today. I developed a passion for education and learning because of the fundamentals mentors and teachers placed on me. A

testament to this is that I was honored with the title of Valedictorian at graduation, a title that I frankly never aimed for, it simply happened by pursuing my passions and aiming towards college. (18 Oct. 2010)

The MANOS program was staffed by like-minded individuals with passions to help youth and families. Poorly-funded immigrant services like MANOS require devotion in their staff to put up with the community program's organizational stresses. Program organizer Carlos Portales worked incessantly to staff his program, and he brokered social connections from everyone he reached out to. As a community organizer, he was well-known for his reach into the media and politics in New York City and in Mexico.

The next chapter details how Portales established and ran MANOS for ten years, through its gradual transformation into an official non-profit social welfare program. There, I will further explore how MANOS as a grassroots organization functioned for close to a decade without a stable budget from public or private sources. Though MANOS had been around for close to ten years and had achieved significant media coverage and political recognition, it barely stayed afloat, and though afloat remained disorganized. The importance immigrant families placed on dominant language acquisition and educational success for their children will be examined to explain in part the bottom-up support which sustained the precariously under-funded organization.

Chapter 5:

Brokering Community:

Addressing Community Needs and Facilitating Community Involvement



MANOS, the pseudonym of the mentoring program, in Spanish means “hands.” The communal significance of hands signifies both the diversity and commonalities of individuals in this study. As a volunteer mentor and tutor for several years, I followed the organization’s day-to-day struggles. When I began writing my dissertation about MANOS during my third year of graduate study, I was still new to ethnography of “human subjects.” Certain background texts in linguistic and cultural theory informed my initial observations of this small ethnic enclave of Foraker Street. Mary Louise Pratt’s *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse* influenced me to look beyond formal analyses of genre, poetics, and rhetoric in literature and into the broader, social analyses of linguistics applied to the diverse varieties of texts circulating in practice around me. My contexts became grounds for studying how languages and literacies intersected with formal elements of language in daily practice. As I dug deeper into my linguistic

communities of practice, ranging from university colleagues, to friends and family in southern Arizona, New York City, Mexico City, and rural Sinaloa, Mexico, I began to cultivate what I now regard as a sociolinguistic approach to understanding languages and literacies. My approach to novels, advertisements, accents, and communication extended to wider circulations of cultural texts (Berlin). I use cultural texts loosely here as any kind of communication expressed and interpreted between communicants. Cultural texts need not be limited to literary artifacts or belletristic narratives. Such items are one social field of academic discourse among many. My wider study of cultural texts have uncovered not only how discourses shape/d the social fields of my participation in each of my communities of practice, but also how my own linguistic capital circulated within a larger linguistic marketplace.

As I will detail in Chapter 6, this shift from the study of the literary artifacts to the study of what Shirley Brice Heath calls “literacy events,” shifted my research from Twentieth Century literature to Composition and Rhetoric, and then from Composition and Rhetoric into community literacy, discourse analysis, and critical ethnography. When I took on the MANOS project, I understood that my research might also benefit the community program in a few ways. I could write my dissertation about MANOS while serving as a mentor on its staff. This dual perspective of action-research, participant-observer brought with it assets of gaining rich inside detail as well as liabilities of identifying too closely with the site as one of its advocates. Embracing too closely the site of research can compromise the distance needed to see the critical incidents and interlocutors for what they are.

When I began researching MANOS in 2006, I thought of it as a small effort of a few volunteers and families. However, its organizational “President,” founder Carlos Portales, was so dedicated to the Foraker Street community that he won recognition by local and international

media. He was well-known and connected in the Mexican non-profit sector, yet despite this considerable symbolic and social capital of his, the program remained unincorporated for nine years. Gradually, a push during the years I volunteered at MANOS to achieve non-profit status succeeded. By fall 2010, MANOS legally held non-profit certification through partnering with an already-existent education program serving New York's Mexican-origin community. One year later, MANOS had gained sponsorship from two grants and was competing for two larger grants totaling just over six-figures.

This recent institution-building challenged MANOS's intimacy as a family organization centered in the Mexican parents' desires for assimilation, mobility, and education for their children. This singular focus helped MANOS survive despite under-funding. MANOS served a decidedly under-served constituency, so it never lacked interested clientele from the community; whenever its doors were open, families arrived. The issue with MANOS as it became incorporated into a larger non-profit program was how to institutionalize a grassroots community organization without losing its distinct localized identity. The institutional growth phase documented in this chapter recorded a transition from an annual budget of at most \$3,000 to a two-year budget over \$100,000.

Without a doubt, MANOS would seem a success story, a narrative of perseverance and *confianza*—the immigrant bargain narrative at the program level. True enough, the MANOS organization for many years was not an organization by most definitions. Numerous local community and transnational organizations had appeared and disappeared within NYC's Mexican community. MANOS was a survivor of the smaller organizations that rarely found direction toward media and social connections that Carlos found through his recruitment of talented mentors. Several of the larger organizations serving the Mexican community in New

York began as small grassroots community initiatives which eventually branched into social justice and political activism programs (Gálvez; Smith; Solís). MANOS itself was originally an activist program. This shift in MANOS's mission from political activism to educational assistance over its ten-year life includes a narrative of growing pains, or tensions between sustainability, project development, and program organization.

Like other small service organizations in New York City, MANOS addressed the unmet needs of a disfavored, politically-weak community neglected by public authorities. Though MANOS promoted itself as an "official" public agency, it was sustained by its day-to-day low-budget, labor-intensive educational services for the Mexican-origin families of Foraker Street. As such, MANOS was built by the community it was building. In regard to such dialectical interaction, Alyshia Gálvez argues that when Mexican immigrants become involved in community organizations "the often overwhelming and traumatic experience of migration and living as an undocumented immigrant in New York City is given meaning and purpose, enabling immigrants to imagine themselves as having rights and belonging to a community" (149). MANOS, then, built a public sphere with and for a public invisible immigrant community who gained a civic foothold through this organization. While it was true that a significant number of the MANOS parents and some children were undocumented, I think Gálvez's idea of communal citizenship applied regardless of legal status, nationality, or language, because these participating families acted as if they were citizens with civic rights to consolidate themselves in public. They created through MANOS an identity they could not have alone. There were documented and undocumented parents, children, and mentors at MANOS, there were members from the community who identified as indigenous, Mexican, and any number of nationalities, or mixed nationalities, such as of mentees Dieguito and Frankie Gonzales. Their mother was a citizen of

the United States and Mexico, and their father was a citizen of the United States and the Dominican Republic. The common project of participating in a literacy center elevated them to the status of public agents acting in concert.

The diverse backgrounds of mentors also contributed to diversity at MANOS and the sense of communal goodwill that came from helping mentees with their homework. Despite the seemingly oppressive burden of “living in the shadows” as President Barack Obama termed the plight of undocumented immigrants in the United States (“National Hispanic Prayer Breakfast”), citizenship as paper identification meant nothing in comparison to the citizenship happening on the paper of the children’s homework. Languages mixed and moved freely with rhetorics and literacies mingling in the task of completing homework. Discourses and languages functioned as pragmatic tools for getting things done. MANOS fostered family involvement in children’s education, and this established the common ground of association among families and mentors involved. Similar to the communities devoted to the devotion of the *Virgen de Guadalupe* in studies by Jocelyn Solís and Alyshia Gálvez, MANOS as a community-led organization enfranchised immigrants through action, in this case educational action, into a “discourse of empowerment and rights [. . .] [a]nd the transformation of self resulting from the experience of migration [. . .] channeled into the production of a collectivity, a community” (Gálvez 151). Regarding common ground as common needs among the community, Solís writes that an organization founded on “common needs” rather than profit-driven logic, “realized through voluntary rather than paid service [. . .] diminished the potential for conflicts of financial interest to emerge in the institution” (299). Studying *la organización gadalupana*, an immigrants’ rights, human rights, religious-affiliated organization, Solís argues for a transformation that happens within immigrant families who participated in the organization, in ways that taught Mexican

immigrants in New York “to interact in a new world, lose their fears, and become active agents of their own fates” (298). Furthermore, she found it compelling that such agency happened despite economic and social constraints. This, she writes, points to a vast resourcefulness in the community that is based on a rich cultural heritage and family values. Women involved in the organization especially seemed to benefit from its outreach: “women described their personal transformations through the development of language skills, leadership skills, and alternative ways of understanding their condition as undocumented immigrants” (155). Solís forcefully argues that grassroots organizing functions as a tool for the development of an undocumented identity through such “purposeful language and literacy cultural practices.” Indeed MANOS parents played the same decisive role in their commitment to the program and what they described as benefits of increasing English language skills, family leadership training, and a shared community of immigrant parents raising children in New York City.

At MANOS, mentees gained “transcultural repertoires”—a range of skills that are deployed in and arguably developed through such work (Orellana 60). MANOS was an educational provider distinct from the public schools close to Foraker Street. Whereas public and private schools are formal educational units established and regulated by larger agencies (the city, the state, the church, etc.), a community-based, marginal operation like MANOS is a site of “non-formal education.” Formal education in schools is typically large and bureaucratic, organized around a standard curriculum broken into grades, with published requirements regarding attendance, lateness, grading, and testing. In contrast, non-formal education is built from the immediate needs of a local constituency which is not required to use the service, unlike formal schooling which is legally required for grades K-12. As non-formal education, MANOS was freed from bureaucratic regulation of its stakeholders; its lack of official funding and

supervision produced freedoms of time, space, activity, and authority that the schools of its mentees didn't provide. Non-formal community agencies like MANOS enable non-institutional literacy practices. In the case of MANOS, these literacy practices involved situated uses of bilingualism such as language brokering, fulfilling Shirley Brice Heath's and Brian V. Street's claim that "nowhere is the practice of learning environments more evident than among those learners positioned on the margins (whether through racial, socioeconomic, age, or linguistic barriers)" (73).

As previously examined in Chapter 3, MANOS harvested the aspirations of MANOS parents and youth into a work ethic that kept the program running, even with meager resources, including lack of heat in winter months, mice running underfoot, poor lighting, and small floods when basement drains periodically clogged. MANOS operated with little to no funding largely because of the donated space in the basement of San Juan Bautista on Foraker Street. During the winter months, the freezing families, walking in snow, put up with the cold, doing homework wearing coats and gloves. To warm everyone up, different families signed up for alternating duties to bring hot *atole* for everyone to drink. There were problems with securing funding from San Juan Bautista for heat, as the priest requested that the organization had to pay upward to \$600 a month for heat because heating the basement required heating the entire building. The parish, it seemed, was hit hard by the flagging economy. MANOS organized several small fundraisers to raise money in order to finance the heating situation. The fruits were not enough to pay what the priest requested, but were sufficient to finance small gas heaters—a temporary solution. Better a freezing space than no space.

This picture of cold families coming together to do homework in a dimly-lit center was a potent image of MANOS used by founder Carlos Portales when addressing the news media. As

can be expected in such handmade operations, MANOS's site left much to be desired but it made up for this in rent since it was free, and free space in New York City was a powerful asset. San Juan Bautista, a Foraker Street Catholic church, donated its basement which MANOS decorated with colorful handprints of all sizes and shapes joined together from everyone in the program. The image at the beginning of this chapter illustrates the project that was led by mentors Monica Abalos and Pilar Lopez. "This is so everyone knows that MANOS is theirs," said Pilar as she painted the hands of mentees and brothers Luis and Pablo Uribe, which they pressed next to one another on the wall (14 May 2010).

Portales aspired to build greater resources and infrastructure through fund-raising drives. He wanted to transform the basement of San Juan Bautista into classrooms with sheetrock partitions. This began to happen once MANOS consolidated with an already established educational non-profit, the New York Mexican Youth Educational Foundation (NYMY). This established non-profit aligned with MANOS's mission of educational outreach into the New York Mexican community. The "name recognition" of MANOS as well played a role in this, as the chair of NYMY mentioned to Portales and me during an informal discussion (12 Sep. 2009). NYMY initially focused on connecting college student mentors from NYU with Mexican high school youth. The program met with varying success depending on funding. MANOS continued to thrive in its leadership and outreach, and with less secured funding. Its grassroots model appealed to NYMY's leadership, and Portales joined the board of directors.

Among established programs serving New York's Mexican and Mexican American communities, MANOS proved to be successful while the other programs' reach into local elementary schools had faltered. This alliance pulled MANOS forward from marginal grassroots agency to more substantial non-profit status. This shift challenged its local identity. My research

at MANOS recounts the necessary foundations community programs must have in place to develop with their stakeholders and not separate from them; somehow MANOS's grassroots structure sustained for ten years, but the non-profit model felt as inevitable for developing a sustained, community-based civic organization. MANOS had never lacked, though, interested parents requesting help in learning English and homework help for their children. There have been times at the center where there are as few as two mentors/tutors and as many as 25 children and 14 parents. In such cases, the need for tutoring overwhelmed the resources of the grassroots program.

MANOS's effectiveness in the Mexican enclave of Foraker Street was managed through Spanish, as larger discussions with parents were communicated in Spanish or with Spanish translations, and through media marketing in Spanish. Portales's Spanish fluency enabled him to cultivate community in the Mexican mainstream media, but his accented English marked him as an immigrant. He advocated a sense of value for English and education as political tools for immigrant families at MANOS. Apparently a children's literacy unit, MANOS served multiple purposes—mentoring, adult education, childhood education, parent education, and, most importantly, interactive parent/child activities. As I pointed out in Chapter 4, several of the parents who accompanied their children to MANOS improved their English literacy skills along with their children.

In Chapter 4, I claimed that MANOS's educational sponsorship extended beyond homework help and into their literacy development in the dominant language, and that informal adult education experienced by MANOS parents was a by-product of the formal instruction offered to their children. The Spanish milieu of MANOS initially drew in mostly-monolingual parents, but it was the English instruction at this site which secured their membership, because

English fluency had great appeal to the parents for their children. MANOS kept extensive records of its mentees' English learning. Carlos constantly updated the statistics to use for grants and applications. When presenting data as a guest speaker for the Chicano Caucus chapter at Columbia University, Carlos focused on how MANOS benefited the families of Foraker Street by providing homework help, reporting with graphs that "around 70% of our students say that they have difficulty in their homework, either because of language or because their parents could not help with their homework" (15 July 2011). Carlos also claimed that "87% of MANOS students improved their school grades significantly during the most recent academic year." I should note that Carlos's records are not part of my study because I found his methods somewhat questionable since I discovered when speaking to many parents that they never gave Carlos copies of their children's report cards. Again, I had not been able to verify Carlos's statistics because of incomplete records from families who have moved or stopped attending. Based on the MANOS families I corresponded with, however, all saw results.

To register for MANOS services, each school term parents brought in their children's most recent report card, though again some parents did not provide them. Most parents, however, were willing to share their children's report cards and were eager for MANOS tutoring. In addition, some MANOS parents shared additional documents, such as texts from teachers and learning specialists from the school. From this data, MANOS built profiles of families to assess individual needs. In order to do this, report cards were augmented by a short self-assessment written by youth in the MANOS application. These assessment cards were indexed and filed. Yet, the handmade, low-budget operation could not use all this data efficiently; though the information was largely collected, because of volunteer limitations, the individual assessment cards were largely in disarray.

There was a great deal of additional data stored at MANOS, which included student homework, application forms for mentors and families, release forms, photographs, and certificates, which became the background archives for me to document the program. These archives attested to the tremendous need in the community for programs like MANOS, with similar structure, mentorship opportunities, and—perhaps most importantly—a convenient schedule. Because of its evening hours, this timeslot fulfilled something of an after-after-school program. This sometimes meant mentees were exhausted when they arrived, and it also meant intense competition for mentor attention because of the stress of completing homework. Mentor Cristina Trujillo put it this way: “at times it can be somewhat stressful to deal with the families because they would all love one-to-one and individualized attention, I understand that it is only because they have their children’s best interest at heart” (8 Aug. 2010).

The program’s interests are the focus of this chapter, and how families and mentees shape it together. In Part 1 of this chapter, I will examine the work of Carlos Portales as the backbone of organizing MANOS, as well as some of MANOS’s history, and my involvement with the program. In Part 2 I focus on mentoring and educational involvement as a form of community building. Part 3 identifies how MANOS brokers contact zones and home fronts, and in what ways parents under linguistic constraints find means to participate in their children’s educations.

1. Organizing MANOS: the Mission of Carlos Portales

Arriving at MANOS

During graduate school I had regularly made the long commute from my apartment in Spanish Harlem, or *El Barrio*, to eastern Queens twice a week in order to adjunct two composition and literature courses at a public college. At 5:30 A.M. on one particularly biting

cold, dark Tuesday morning in January 2006—the beginning of the “spring” semester—I walked toward the entrance of the south-bound local train at 116th Street and Lexington Avenue. Before boarding the sleepy train, though, I thought it a good idea to get something to warm my nearly empty stomach. I stepped into a twenty-four-hour *taquería* on the corner and purchased a small *atole* which I sipped outside, savoring the steam of the floury beverage before making my long trek of two trains and a bus ride. I drank my *atole*, disposed of my styrofoam cup, and embraced my walk down those steps into the dank underground.

Like any lit grad student, I always carried something to read. This made the journey to and from work slightly more bearable. That morning I was reading Thomas Pynchon’s *Gravity’s Rainbow* for an English seminar at the City University of New York Graduate Center entitled “Aestheticizing Science,” on representations of science in Postmodern American literature. In three days, I was to give a short presentation analyzing analogies of “scientific” Pavlovian behaviorism, Protestant predestination, and metaphors of salivating dogs in the hefty novel during class. As I rode the Six train southbound to 51st Street before transferring to Queens, I annotated something about dog drool and buzzers in my copy of the novel, at around 103rd Street as a gentleman sitting next to me asked me if I was studying for class. I mentioned earlier, when on the Six heading downtown on the first leg of my commute, the time window was typically between 5:30-5:45 A.M. If the reader has never ridden the MTA New York City subway this early, know that when someone tries to start a conversation with a stranger on the train during cold days before the sun comes up, problems could be in store.

I told the gentleman that, indeed, I was studying for college, graduate school really. I wanted to remain friendly, but I also wanted to get back to the novel. I continued reading. He

nodded then craned his neck forward to see the book's title. "Hmm" he said. I felt somewhat cheated because I knew he would not allow me to return to the novel's world in peace.

He asked me where I was from.

Reluctantly I answered, "Arizona."

Then he asked, "yeah, but where you from?" and I immediately regarded his accent, how he spoke "you" with the voiced phoneme; how he elongated the vowel in "from." He sounded like he said, *Where djoo frome?*

I said Arizona again, and again he asked where I was "frome," requesting some sort of specificity I couldn't locate, though not lost through his accent. I had already told him Arizona. I looked at my open book.

"But what are you?" he asked.

"What?" What? I had no idea what he meant. What am I?

Again: "What are you?"

People in the train were waking from their comas to catch all the action.

"I have no idea what you are talking about, buddy."

"Eres Mexicano?" (Are you Mexican?) he finally asked pleadingly.

Ah yes, suddenly I understood his question.

"Oh, sí, simón I'm Mexican, er, Mexican American, pero"—thick gringo accent compensating with *cholismos* (cholo-phrases, or stereotypical Mexican American gang phrases) I had picked up over the years—"pero más Americano que Mexicano. Entiende?" (But more American than Mexican. Understand?)

The folks around us returned to their comas.

He pulled out a homemade business card printed on thin paper, as well as a flyer with black ink on green paper from his book bag, printed in Spanish on one side and English on the other.

“My name’s Carlos Portales, how you doing?”

We shook hands, and I noted his card said he was Mr. Carlos Portales, President of the Mexican American Network of Students (MANOS). He also told me he was the founder of the program. He explained to me, pointing to the bullet points of his flyer, that his organization made an effort to impact the lives of Mexican and Mexican American youth living in New York by—according to English bullet point number one—“provid[ing] guidance and support for local Mexican American youth ranging from kindergarten to high school by helping with their homework while promoting education as empowerment.” As a Mexican American graduate student, he said, I would be the perfect mentor for these “at-risk” (his phrase), urban, and largely first- and second-generation Mexican and Mexican American youth MANOS served.

I mentioned to Carlos that I was also a teacher—of sorts. That I was heading to teach a couple college courses. His eyes lit up. “You could really impact some kids,” he said.

Carlos told me that I would be helping children with their homework and talking to kids and parents about any problems they were having with school. He assured me that everything was informal and that I didn’t need any special training, only time and patience.

“And if I don’t speak Spanish?”

He smiled. “Eres un pocho, ¿verdad? (You’re a pocho [an Americanized Mexican], right?) That’s okay, practice.”

“Órale,” (right on) I said. Carlos laughed.

I pocketed his card, thanked him, and asked him if he found many recruits on his subway trips early in the morning.

Carlos laughed. “No. I go first now to the deli I work, then my college class, then to open MANOS.”

He told me he was originally from a small town in Puebla and had lived in New York City for close to twenty years after leaving Mexico when he was 15. He started the organization in 2001 because he wanted education to be a bigger concern for the Mexican community. Currently an undergraduate political science major. He was three more courses from completing his degree. He asked me where my family was from in Mexico. I told him my mother was from Sonora, but beyond that I had no idea. I had never really thought about it before I admitted.

He nodded toward my book and said, “A busy day, no?”

It’s true, I would have a busy day.

We sat quietly without saying anything before my stop, then he asked me, “So, then, ¿hablas español?”

I answered in the negative. I hoped it wouldn’t be a problem.

“No problem, no problem” Carlos said. “You’ll learn.”

As the train slowed down for the 51st Street station, I jokingly thanked him for making a scene and interrupting my quiet commute. All of course for good cause, I joked. He chuckled at that, we shook hands one more time, and I stepped away for my transfer to Queens.

I later learned that Carlos was always on the look-out for potential mentors, and that he always had his business card (which he designed and printed himself at home) ready to distribute. Table 4 records the lines of contact connecting Carlos with the ten mentors of focus in the study. Carlos’s consistent media and internet recruitment strategies paid off, but he was in the

habit of approaching strangers (like me), or newcomers by word-of-mouth, like two of my former students to MANOS. At several points in my adjunct teaching, I had also recruited a few students to volunteer. Pilar Lopez and Amy Chen were both former students in courses I taught. They had been dedicated mentors at MANOS, and they also served as positive role models for mentees. Both had recently graduated and were in the process of applying to graduate programs. They both also made long commutes to volunteer at MANOS.

Table 4: Recruitment of MANOS Mentors

<u>Mentor Name</u>	<u>MANOS point of contact</u>
Monica Abalos	Recruited in-person at high school volunteer fair
Liana Abarca	E-mailed flyer to a Chicano student organization
Steven Alvarez	Distributed flyer in subway
Amy Chen	Directed to Carlos by author
Laura Kruchenko	College classmate recruited by Carlos
Pilar Lopez	Directed to Carlos by author
Leti Navarro	Former mentee recruited in-person to mentor
Roberto Sanchez	Online volunteer bulletin board
Jon Taylor	Online volunteer bulletin board
<u>Cristina Trujillo</u>	<u>Online volunteer bulletin board</u>

37-year-old Carlos Portales founded MANOS in 2001. When I asked him why he built a program like MANOS in the Mexican community, he said because it was the community “I know best, and I love,” even though he had lived in Mexico for less than half his life (16 Jul.

2010). He was initially involved in New York City's Mexican community when he demonstrated for in-state tuition at CUNY campuses for undocumented students. His leadership in student activism included a three-day hunger strike that helped to pass the New York State In-State-Tuition Law in 2001-2002. This policy made it possible for anyone to attend New York City and state colleges regardless of immigration status. His involvement for student rights brought him into contact with students who shared similar activist views. Some initial contacts through his activism became early MANOS mentors.

Most of MANOS'S earliest mentors were public college students with a few from high school. Ten years after Portales founded MANOS, the mentors were either enrolled in or graduated from community colleges and four-year colleges of the City University, as well as from elite private colleges and universities. MANOS became part of their professional development into college graduates. It focused and formed them through its community service orientation.

The numbers of mentors Carlos attracted to MANOS steadily rose over the years as his networking capacity grew. Carlos reached out to meet each mentor through different means, but always thinking—as he put it—“a few steps ahead. To think about what could be good for MANOS in the future, and always looking out” (16 Jul. 2010). His inventory of mentor traits especially focused on those dealing with education, media relations, and fundraising experience. Ways of looking ahead for MANOS included building (and later “strengthening”) a board of directors, and networking with organizations in the tri-state area. His larger ambition of improving the program's networks with other organizations helped him to develop institutional knowledge for dealing with organizational problems/issues in New York's Mexican non-profit sector. His education at running an after-school program happened largely through networking,

fundraising, and promoting MANOS. His dedication to MANOS remained consistent, and as an inspiration to mentors and families. MANOS eventually filled a stable board of directors in the fall of 2010, composed of Carlos, a professor, and two graduate students with professional experience working in finance and law. They each brought a wealth of social, cultural, and symbolic capital, but they were always on the search for more economic capital, until recently (2011).

Carlos emigrated alone from rural San Antonio Tlaxcala, Puebla, Mexico in 1989 when he was 15 years old. He journeyed from southern Mexico to Tijuana where he twice crossed the border in groups guided by a “coyote” before arriving in New York City without knowing where to go next. He lived on subway trains for several weeks until he located his relations, who lived twenty minutes away from Foraker Street—close to mentors Cristina Trujillo, Monica Abalos, Laura Kruchenko, and Leti Navarro. Eventually, Portales learned English, earned his G.E.D., graduated from a CUNY college, and expected to finish his Master’s in public administration in 2013 while working part-time and running MANOS. He had not seen his family in Mexico for over twenty years until mentor Cristina Trujillo traveled to San Antonio Tlaxcala and established a live-feed video for Portales with his parents and brother on Skype. When he finished his Master’s degree, he wasn’t sure exactly what he would do next. The thought of returning to Mexico had appealed to him for a long time since his job prospects in the United States looked limited.

Carlos’s journey to New York and his struggles to get ahead made for powerful narratives, and I’ll allow him to speak here on his own. He became a motivational speaker as well as a consultant who spoke to different organizations including universities and delegations to visiting Mexican politicians. The following text comes from a class presentation Carlos gave

to a course I taught about migration in the Americas. He gave the talk and fielded questions from the class afterward. At the point where we begin, he was describing his first job in New York:

As a teenager, I worked in a supermarket. There, I was typically on lockdown in the basement for more than 12 hours at a time, often without food or water. While working in that basement, I realized that I needed to go to college. Without second thought, I left my job at the supermarket in search of better opportunities. While I searched all over New York City for a better job and the opportunity to finish high school, I met Angela, an international student from South Korea. Angela changed my life by helping me to imagine a different future, one in which I had a college degree. After I told Angela my story—in my broken English—she helped me find a job, and inspired me to seriously consider completing high school and pursuing a college education.

One day while I was getting ready to leave work, Angela approached me with her face full of kindness and tears in her eyes. She asked me, “Do you still want to go to college?”

“Yes,” I said simply.

At that moment, she took a notebook out of her backpack with a note inscribed inside: “Education is knowledge and the opportunity to pursue the American dream.”

Inside that notebook, there was an envelope that held the \$285 I needed to register for a G.E.D., the high school equivalence class. With tears in my eyes, I asked her, “How could I ever pay you back for such generosity?”

Her only request was that I should help other struggling students like myself to go to college. From that moment, I knew that in order to truly fulfill my educational and professional dreams, I must also help other students to be the first in their families to go to college.

If a homeless boy forced to work under harsh conditions was able to graduate, and pursue the American dream by working hard on my Masters on public administration, then anyone can. I continue helping my community. I know that a community as generous and kind as ours can make it possible for many, many children to become the first in their families to go to college. (12 Dec. 2009)

Carlos’s dramatization was thick with *pathos* and had produced this rhetorical effect by narrating the immigrant bargain, or the story of upward mobility and arguing for educational support in the New York Mexican community. He sought to inspire his audience in the positive direction behind the community’s “immigrant work ethic.” Indeed, this story Carlos narrated about Angela was one that he used in various interviews and speeches, and it was quite familiar to me when I heard it during his presentation to my students. After hearing it so many times, the *pathos* was slightly lost on me, but for my students it looked like he pulled it off. I had heard it before, it was true, and yet I have to admit even after having heard it so many times, the face of sincerity behind his words never seemed rehearsed or inauthentic. His pauses were genuine, his gestures

fluent. His pace gave great weight to the cadence of his voice, and his accent—for better or worse—was forgiven. His *ethos* in his version of the immigrant bargain produced the same rhetorical effect as that of the MANOS parents examined in Chapter 3.

After Carlos finished his presentation, he opened the floor to his audience. Students asked Carlos questions about MANOS, and also about his predicament of citizenship. One student asked if he would marry for his documents. He said he had thought about it, but he believed marriage should be for love. Another student asked if he would go back to Mexico and come back. Carlos said if he went back to Mexico, that he probably wouldn't come back, or that it would take a long time because of the bureaucratic red tape to migrate legally. At the end of his presentation, several students inquired about volunteering for MANOS.

As for Carlos, he eventually earned his G.E.D., and began community college. He transferred to a four-year college after completing his Associate's degree in computer programming in 2000, but before graduating, he found himself in a struggle to complete his college degree. During 2001, the New York state legislature took aim at raising in-state tuition for undocumented students. Carlos, and many undocumented students who had lived in New York City for decades, protested. In 2001-2002, Carlos and several students staged a three-day hunger strike at the state capital to pass the New York State In-State-Tuition Law, S.B. 7784 in 2001-2002. Four years later Carlos completed his Bachelor's degree in political science. According to Carlos, his activist involvement during the protests for in-state college tuition brought him into contact with the staggering numbers of undocumented Mexican-origin youth dropping out of high school. He listened to their stories, which were much like his own, except without the mentor, or Angela, his co-worker who helped him to begin his journey toward reaching his aspirations. I should note that at the end of my research project at MANOS, Carlos

was still undocumented, and upon completing his Master's degree, he had no prospects of arranging a job—not even a paid position with the MANOS-NYMY non-profit.

The MANOS Mentorship Project (as it was originally called by Carlos) provided a college linking approach that promoted college attendance, and included concrete steps such as encouraging college visits, providing college and financial aid application support, and contacting schools on students' behalves. Carlos was sensitive to the stories of youth who had sold themselves short by not attending college and who said to him “that college isn't for Mexicans” (12 Dec. 2009). This struck a chord with him as he asked himself why couldn't college be for Mexicans in New York City? He'd studied political science, so he knew an educated community was an empowered one: “I think is important that my community is well educated,” he said. “At the same time, it is a great feeling to know that the kids are looking up to you as a role model. I personally didn't have academic role models back in Mexico, having this opportunity to be a role model feels great” (6 Sep. 2011). This turn toward a mentoring project took shape primarily for younger student mentees of elementary-school age, but MANOS was open to students in middle and high school. It also began to include family involvement.

Carlos paid attention to parental issues. He said, “It is not just the mentor working with the kids—it is in the parents. They are the role models” (24 May 2010). In regards to the tutoring of homework and how this combined with mentoring, he said “We [MANOS] teach the parents how to help their kids. See the kids learn English by going through the home and not around it.” In a later interview with me he said that, to him, MANOS parents dedicated to helping their children with their educations, but were “in many cases also desperate because they can only help very little with homework in English” (19 Jan. 2012). Further he said,

In most cases, lack of English proficiency is a barrier for their children. It's the parents at MANOS have very strong values of education, even though many of them don't have formal education. In some cases, many parents didn't even attend elementary school.

Carlos's idea was to turn from activism to mentorship as preventive intervention, especially for pre-school and elementary children, but again also continuing on into middle school, high school, and college. At MANOS, students of all ages and grades came together. Carlos's hope was to connect another Angela with an impressionable youth and a family willing to support children's educational achievements. He felt the best way to do this was to demonstrate to the mainstream that Mexicans in the United States "want to make a better society for everyone . . . to be contributors" (24 May 2010). In this project to credit Mexicans as hardworking all-Americans, he faced deep prejudice because of nativist hostility at "illegal aliens." Mexican immigrants, legal or undocumented, were frequent targets of conservative talk show hosts on radio and television, as well as a favorite butt of comedians like Jay Leno, whose satire against Mexican immigrants was a constant on his late-night show. Carlos used his extensive media contacts, his personal specialty, to counter the demeaning caricature of Mexicans circulating in American society. He built MANOS's reputation as a small but effective mentoring partnership between volunteers and Mexican-origin families on Foraker Street. He established a network of contacts around Foraker Street's growing Mexican ethnic enclave and then around the City's Mexican community programs, and later by extension Mexican politicians and Spanish language media in NYC. The portrait of "poor helpless immigrants" with profound work ethics and family dedication became the constructed representation for which he aimed.

Carlos used his social connections and marketing skills in order to secure fiscal sponsorship for MANOS. He raised funds as a community advocate for the Mexican parents of Foraker Street and their children. He took the rhetorical high road in representing his clients as deserving individuals. Forging the connection between homes and schools became MANOS's stated mission, but its preoccupation was sustainability, or struggling to maintain stability with limited funds. MANOS's economic poverty, of course, was a reminder of the marginal families that formed the core of MANOS's membership. Carlos said of MANOS's mission to reach low-income Mexican families, that "we can't change the socio-economic status. We might not be able to provide them legal status, but we can provide them with skills to be academic role models . . . with mentorship and the incentive to develop" (24 May 2010). In his previous interview he called parents role models, but in this later interview, I noted that he used the term "academic role models." Carlos repositioned the parents into a bright narrative which gave them agency instead of disability; in Carlos's representation, the parents set the example for their children even though the parents' limited English was in fact an obstacle to their children's success in school. Standard English and academic language in schooling fundamentally disqualified the monolingual parents as legitimate actors or role models in these relations. As Carlos knew well from speaking to parents, this left some parents feeling insecure and frustrated. This was not only a shame to Carlos but also a loss of a singular asset in the community because "the Mexican family is valuable for support" (12 Dec. 2009), he insisted.

Carlos's intense networking for ten years on behalf of the Foraker Street families was actually enabled by the families themselves because they had bought him the cell phone he used, paid for through a small pool of money from mentors and parents. He secured the free space for MANOS in the basement of San Juan Bautista on Foraker Street and then patiently recruited the

staff who could provide services. With few material resources, he filled a community void. However, his manner of organizing sometimes was chaotic, and often drew criticism from both families and mentors, who disapproved of his preoccupations with media coverage for the organization. This had also been problematic for some MANOS families. Eight-year-old mentee Nico Saucedo asked me when a video crew arrived who all the new MANOS people were who showed up that day. Carlos, it seemed, had made extensive contacts by phone to bring in a large group of individuals from the Mexican community beyond Foraker Street to emphasize the outreach of the program. Some of these individuals had traveled from different boroughs.

“Who are these people who came today?” Nico asked.

I responded I didn’t know them either. Carlos said he felt compelled to make calls for Mexican people from beyond Foraker Street to come to MANOS in order to increase the appeal to the media and the impact of the media reporting. This he claimed would be one way to generate potential donations from donors. This caused me some concern because it was a hyped situation rather than a typical representation of MANOS. As I observed the events with Nico in half-detached amazement, I stopped to consider my ethnographic discourse, and how my project may have done something of the same, reifying stereotypes of “my” subjects as I saw them being portrayed in the news. I stepped back as much as I could, focused on helping Nico and a few other mentees with homework, and casually observed the filming crew. They interviewed four parents and six children. The camera man also hovered around the room, filming. When asked by the reporter to take part in the filming, I declined. I had not expected a film crew that day, and I wanted to maintain my distance in order to preserve my position as researcher.

After I helped Nico start his homework, I wandered over to another table to see how other mentees working on their homework fared, and also to gauge reactions to the media

spectacle. MANOS parent Reina Molina Vasquez and mentor Cristina Trujillo both agreed that Carlos was doing too much publicity. Cristina said she thought Carlos sometimes tried to do too much for MANOS at one time, and that this resulted in things like the unexpected film crew, and the “bigger version” of MANOS projected for them. “He has too many things going on, and he doesn’t always inform the families what’s going on. Like today, nobody had any idea all these people would be here, and now Reina thinks her kids won’t be able to get help with their homework,” said Cristina, translating to me what Reina had just said to her in Spanish (9 Sep. 2008).

I had to agree, Carlos had high ambitions, but few resources to run MANOS. What he had established, however, resulted from his accumulation of social capital from friends in his networks, both in English and Spanish. In this regard, as a leader, Carlos was a prime example of a language broker. His ease of handling audiences in either language and brokering social networks helped to maintain the community image of MANOS as an established program among those serving New York’s Mexican ethnic enclave. He moved between languages and audiences effectively, as illustrated in his attentive rhetoric in his presentation to students in my course given earlier in this chapter. Carlos also developed his language brokering and bilingualism as he became more actively involved in community politics around New York City. In doing so, his language skill increased, as well as his knowledge of how the New York political and educational system operated. He told me during an interview he that recorded his speeches and listened to them in order to study his accent. He did his best to imitate the accent of English he said he heard on National Public Radio (where he had done a few interviews in the past). As his English improved, his accent became less pronounced, but still lingered.

Carlos also tapped into the politics of the non-profit sector in the Mexican community, as his reputation with MANOS had continued to grow. Though programs in the non-profit sector shared similar cohorts, intense competition and rivalries often took precedence in political battles for status and funding. This bickering between organizations serving New York's Mexican communities further limited institutional and larger mainstream integration opportunities because "Mexicans in New York could have high amounts of social capital within the immigrant enclave [. . .] because they are not connected to the larger ecology of New York City's social and power structure" (Gaytán 28). Carlos hoped to change this, and also to avoid the competition among the more established and bureaucratic New York City Mexican non-profit scene. For this purpose, he used the media to MANOS's advantage to promote its close connection to the community and its grassroots nature. During that same "unannounced" taping of MANOS by a Spanish-language media team, Carlos gave an interview, shot with a table of four MANOS students sitting with two mentors and three parents. Carlos said to the reporter off to the side of the rolling camera: "Queremos ayudar a nuestros hijos a darles herramientas para mejorar sus vidas. Esta es la razón por la cual el programa de mentores es importante, ya que sirve de referencia para la comunidad, al saber de personas que han alcanzado sus objetivos académicos" (We want to help our children by giving them the tools to improve their lives. This is the reason why our mentorship program is important, because we serve this community as focus, we want everyone to know that they can reach their academic objectives) (9 Sep. 2008).

The report ran on television and included interviews with several parents, children, and mentors. Carlos eventually used this video as a promotional device. The report also spread offers among non-profits in New York City to collaborate with MANOS, which Carlos usually declined because of his hesitancy of creating tension among the politics behind the non-profit

programs serving NYC's Mexican communities. MANOS eventually, however, risked becoming one of these bureaucratic non-profit machines and losing its local face.

2. Mentoring and Language at MANOS: Involvement, Education, and Community

Building

For over five years I was involved in MANOS continually, volunteering as a mentor three evenings a week, two hours each session. MANOS, in the basement of San Juan Bautista Catholic Church, had no heat in winter, so families and mentors held fund-raisers and pooled money to purchase kerosene heaters and fuel. There was also poor lighting in the wide-open space. To take advantage of the flickering fluorescent bulbs hanging in the center, mentors, parents, and children moved tables and chairs from the main room's periphery to the middle. Before closing for the night, they returned the tables and chairs back to the room's periphery. Thus, the space of MANOS had to be self-organized each session, and individuals of all sizes (even some two-year-olds) helped carry furniture. The MANOS group tables were brought by teams of MANOS mentors and parents toward the room's center, with six or more chairs at each table. Each session the MANOS parents, mentors, and several mentees wiped off the tables and chairs before sitting down to study. Mentor Anabel Chavez Salazar, originally from Mexico, said while un-stacking chairs that this kind of parent participation was one of MANOS's marks of success: "They come here and you see them put up the tables, tidy up and clean. That is a testament of them wanting to be here," she said. "Something is working here. Part is the help with school work, part of it is a sense of belonging to MANOS, and that's something very valuable" (12 Nov. 2009). In 2011, the MANOS-NYMY Board of Directors approved the purchase of brown-walled partitions, with extendible feet to prevent tipping. These were used to

create separate classroom spaces in the basement, with the idea that this would help to keep students focused on their homework. However, the partitions proved burdensome to arrange and were left in a corner of the room. Eventually they were arranged in order to create a small storage space for the kerosene heaters and chairs and desks when not in use. In a literal sense, then, MANOS was hand-made from the bottom-up by the stakeholders, a mark of its character as a democratic public sphere and a participatory community project.

On typical MANOS evenings, mentees of all ages pulled out their homework from book bags while some mothers with founder-director Carlos Portales organized or cleaned up the space, as others parents chatted or kept smaller children entertained with painting paper or coloring or reading. Some practiced writing with their young ones. Several mothers worked with mentors who tutored older children. Mentors worked typically with groups of three or more children during each session. Some mentors tutored five or more students at once because of bad scheduling and lack of commitment by some volunteers who failed to show up. MANOS continued to implement different methods to improve mentor retention. Retention remained consistent with those mentors who lived near San Juan Bautista. Mentors who had long commutes were more likely to be absent.



Figure 5.1: The MANOS library: MANOS mentors arranged the books by grade level and language. Families often borrowed books and returned them. The library had tripled in size within the last year with donations of books from Columbia University and also from mentors and parents. The MANOS library had a large variety of books written in English and Spanish: textbooks in multiple disciplines from all levels and grades and various genres including novels,

poetry, drama, world classics, dictionaries in English and Spanish, and encyclopedias in both languages. The extra-curricular literacy practices in the parent-child relationships at MANOS were largely influenced by the availability of textual materials on hand at the site. Most of the reading that parents did with their children was in English, even despite the availability of Spanish materials. Some partially visible paintings by MANOS mentees are in the upper-right corner of the photo.

The homework help covered levels and genres. Although mentors tried to group children based on grade level, the shifting demands of both mentor schedules and the volume of children needing help made this difficult. It was common for me to tutor children ranging from pre-Kindergarten through high school on any given session. In the MANOS office, mentors gathered materials for working with mentees, including pencils, crayons, paper, and books from the small MANOS library (see Figure 5.1). For my part, working with such different demands acquainted me with the varieties of homework from New York City public schools. Mentoring at MANOS also permitted me to experiment with developing my own pedagogical practices, as demonstrated in the impromptu immigrant bargain writing lesson with MANOS students in Chapter 3. Figure 5.2 below represents a schematic rendition of the MANOS space, and figures 5.3 and 5.4 are images of MANOS just before opening one afternoon in September 2011.

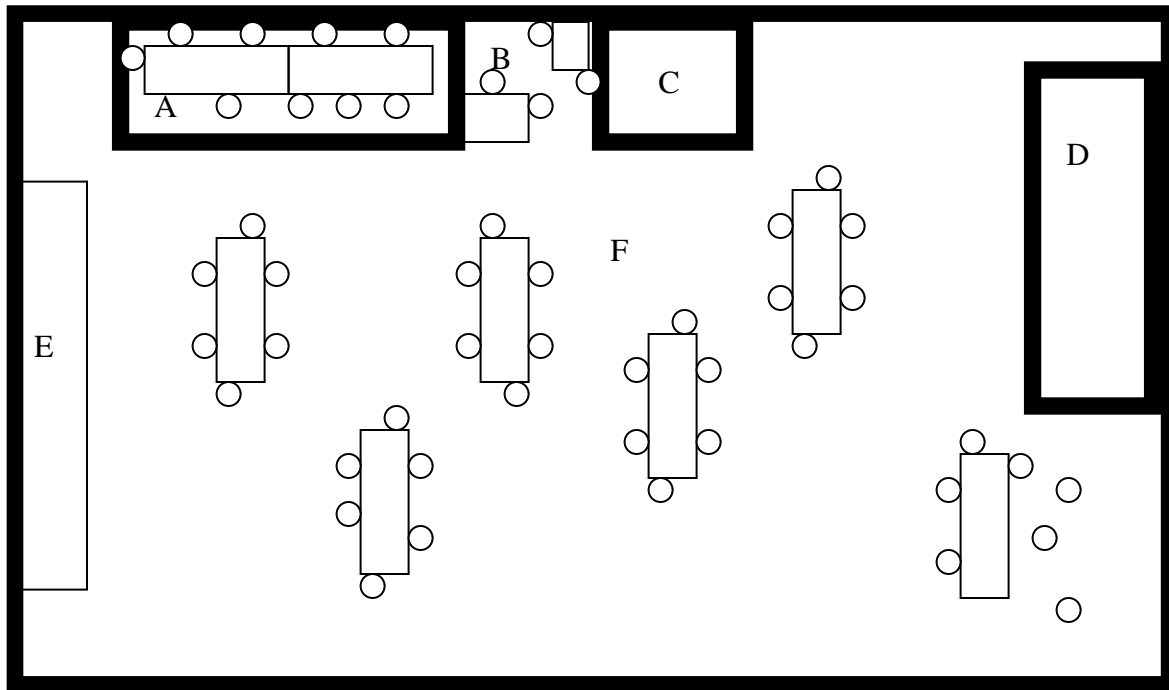


Figure 5.2: Map of the MANOS center. The center was divided into three primary sub-spaces of operation, room A, room B, and the largest section, room F which spanned the length of the San Juan Bautista’s basement from one end of the block to the other. Rooms C and D were reserved for the church and were off-limits to MANOS. The section marked as E was a small stage built into the wall. Before MANOS used the basement, the space was used for performances by the San Juan Bautista’s private school.

When MANOS was in full-swing, the program’s lived space grouped mentors, mentees, and parents sitting at tables among one another. If there were not enough chairs, additional ones would be added just outside the table behind those doing homework. Some parents would stand in order to keep an eye on other children who might be sitting at different tables. Ordinarily a mentor would rotate around the table with different youth, with parents either giving up their

seat, or floating around the table observing. MANOS mentees always were given priority for seating. As mentioned earlier, there was an experiment with partitions, but these proved too difficult to maneuver and were set aside. Toward the northern end, there was a table of parents with younger children who periodically made rounds to check on their older children. Typical of this low-income population the families could not afford to pay babysitters to watch the youngest children while parents took older ones for tutoring. Parents with small children sometimes tried to maintain a distance from mentees in order to prevent distractions. Small observers, however, were not uncommon, as they would also watch their siblings working at the tables. Little ones were never excluded from participating, but some parents grew upset if other parents did not supervise the young children who were making too much noise.

MANOS's space thus embodied its family identity as well as its low-budget character. Prior to partnering with the established 501(c)(3) NYMY organization and gaining legitimate non-profit status, MANOS used multiple outlets for fundraising, sometimes pulling off efforts, and other times never quite gathering the necessary momentum to form a "legitimate" community organization and eligibility for public and private grants. After MANOS had formed a partnership with NYMY, Carlos began to seriously look for foundation funds to cover operational fixed costs, as the organization relied heavily on the contribution of unpaid volunteers to provide academic support to mentees and parents. While, in the long-term, it hoped to obtain sufficient resources to pay full-time staff, MANOS in the short term still sought to increase its stability as a running after-school program with limited financial resources.

As for the dim, cold, and unfurnished basement space, it offered despite its shortcomings an office, a flexible workspace, and an address. The door to the small office didn't lock to store materials securely. The "security" for keeping this door shut on days MANOS was not in

operation was a table pushed in front of the closed door. The “art room” next to the unlockable office was long and had slightly better lighting. It was always arranged with three tables aligned down the center of the room and chairs surrounding them for mentors, mentees, and parents.





Figure 5.3 and 5.4: Photographs of MANOS. I photographed these images of MANOS just as mentees and parents arrived. Mentors and a few families had already organized tables and chairs. In 5.3, just behind the participants was the door to the MANOS office. In the opposite direction in 5.4 (standing in the right half of 5.3), the door to the art room was visible.

When I started volunteering for MANOS in 2006, the program was a small after-school operation run out of an upper-floor office of San Juan Bautista, not the basement. MANOS was sponsored by a larger Mexican non-profit that donated space for Carlos to conduct his after-school program to help students with homework. In the spring of 2007, the larger Mexican non-

profit lost large amounts of funding after alleged fraud and mismanagement. The larger organization had to close the site at San Juan Bautista, and this left Carlos's program temporarily homeless. He searched Foraker Street for a replacement space, soliciting libraries and schools. Finally, he returned to San Juan Bautista's priest asking if there was any way he could work out a deal for MANOS. The priest offered San Juan Bautista's basement with some conditions, including maintaining a trash-free space, adding paint, and keeping the basement in order. Carlos thankfully accepted the priest's conditions, but there was still no toilet facility, for which the priest added this condition: to use bathroom facilities upstairs, MANOS members and mentors had to exit the basement and ring a buzzer to enter the church's main office area where a bathroom was located, and that MANOS was also to stock the bathroom of the church and to clean it on a regular basis.

MANOS met the priest's conditions, and it brought life to San Juan Bautista's basement. Because MANOS had no lease, it could be forced to a new location anytime. Also it turned out that most MANOS families attended San Gregorio, a Catholic church south of Foraker Street. San Gregorio had a large shrine dedicated to the Mexican patron saint the Virgin of Guadalupe. The Argentinian priest of San Juan Bautista's hope was to draw a larger share of Mexican membership to his largely Puerto Rican congregation. María Cruz Vega was the only parent I met at MANOS who attended San Juan Bautista. She had been going there for several years though. Her children attended San Juan Bautista's private elementary school until it closed in 2008. The remaining families who attended services went to San Gregorio because of its large Mexican congregation.

The basement space had rhetorical significance because MANOS transformed it and gave it meaning. It housed a community acting in concert to address cooperatively its unmet needs. It

became what Carlos and the mentors called “the center” in the MANOS discourse community whose aggregate activities re-constituted an unassociated urban group into a cohort of stakeholders. It did this primarily as a drop-in homework resource “center.” Carlos claimed that this tutoring element was simultaneously a mentoring relationship—that being an adult engaging students with schoolwork outside of school qualified sufficiently as a mentoring relationship. In his eyes, MANOS served as a cultural broker for Foraker Street’s Mexican community, promoting educational achievement and college attendance, including concrete steps of encouraging college visits, providing hands-on college and financial aid application support, and contacting universities on students’ behalves. Such a community-based project constructed a civic sphere for this disfranchised constituency to act in concert on their needs. The MANOS community literacy center provided a social arena in which immigrants without public presence could participate publicly.

Mentorship research (Hirsch, Hedges, Stawicki, and Mekinda; Rhodes; Rhodes and Lowe; Suárez-Orozco et al; Smith) argues dedicated commitment between non-familial adults and youth can have especially positive impacts on academic outcomes for children and adolescents, especially in low-income urban areas. In their article “Informal Mentors and Role Models in the Lives of Urban Mexican-Origin Adolescents,” anthropologists Ricardo D. Stanton-Salazar and Stephanie Urso Spina contend that

[. . .] in low-resource urban areas, resourceful and caring adults (potential mentors) find themselves in an environment where the need is overwhelming and institutional support is lacking. Although we can find community agents with the connections, the political clout, the cultural and financial capital, and the psychological disposition to work with youth and to incorporate them into the

own resource-full networks, institutional mechanisms for fostering these relations are weak or absent. Efforts at community empowerment need to locate and organize these adults in such a way that the adults themselves feel validated, supported, and energized by the mentoring experience. (251)

MANOS provided a mentoring relation between the Foraker Street Mexican families and the traditional, Anglo-centered public schools, despite existing without direct connection to any school. MANOS brokered connections first among the Foraker Street ethnic enclave and next with mentors from around the city, all geared toward maximizing the potential for the contact, both in time and commitment. Time and commitment truly were what created a sense of validation and support, but also *confianza*. The “empowerment” the researchers speak of was indeed validated in the friendships forged between MANOS mentors and families. Yet building partnerships of *confianza* with parents was core to MANOS’s mission. *Confianza* was written into the MANOS membership contract, and it was the social glue that maintained the integrity of the program. A relation of *confianza* on MANOS’s part meant that informed parents were requisite for educational success—the better informed the parents, the more likely they were to become further involved in establishing consistent educational expectations with their children.

There were a few mentors at different points during MANOS’s history who questioned their level of mentoring engagement as nothing more than tutoring schoolwork. These mentors envisioned a more sustained engagement outside of school without school as necessarily the subject, or at least not the primary subject. The line for them between tutoring and mentoring was firmly distinguished. Yet at the same time, they admitted that it was of crucial importance to help with schoolwork, and therefore they began to blur the line between tutors and mentors. Homework was the common need among families involved at MANOS, and this was what really

brought Foraker Street parents together in a shared community venture toward securing academic support and mentoring. For the MANOS parents, homework represented a firm line of their own between their language and that of their children's schools. Families were thankful to mentors, and mentors were validated by what they saw as a family struggle toward something greater. Mentor Cristina Trujillo said,

What I admire of the families is that they are present and that they contribute to MANOS and keep our culture alive. In addition, they voice their opinion and are always questioning the way things are done which again can be stressful, but I feel that it helps us mold the program and gives us great insight into the real needs of the community we serve. (24 Aug. 2011)

Cristina identified with the struggles of immigrant parents as that of her own, and she was glad to help out with the experiences she had growing up among similar circumstances as the MANOS families, and struggling to make ends meet in one of the most expensive cities in the world. She also added that the MANOS families were active in their critiques of how MANOS functioned, or that they had “say” in how things ran. MANOS of course invited parent critique, in order to—as Cristina said—identify the “real needs of the community we serve.” At the moment, MANOS parents solicited criticisms in small meetings with Carlos. Cristina was advocating for more methods for feedback and consultation from MANOS parents.

Meeting the families' educational needs often proved tricky however. Mentors were sometimes not aware of tutoring strategies like constructing writing webs, eliciting free writing, or modeling effective reading practices. They also were not always trained as educators, and most had little to no teaching experience. Experience with schooling as students seemed to be their entryway into helping mentees with schoolwork, but after volunteering a few sessions

mentors began to develop tutoring strategies. At the beginning of each fall semester, a group of seasoned MANOS mentors conducted a workshop on helping with homework. The sessions provided role playing games and also discussions about discipline, time management, educational games, and bilingualism, as illustrated in Figure 5.5.



Figure 5.5: MANOS youth, mentors, and families forming a “dendrite chain” between one another (15 July 2011). The science-based activity was also a social one that taught the students the importance of teamwork with critical skills of sequencing and neuroscience. MANOS youth composed dendrites out of different colored pipe cleaners and connected these together. It was a hands-on lesson in brain science for youth, their parents, and mentors. The activity was conducted in English and Spanish.

The intent behind all this was to develop tutoring techniques, including behavioral expectations and disciplinary techniques. The session also generated ideas to improve the

program. Mentors brainstormed ideas they found problematic at MANOS. For example, an important issue was raised during the workshop in fall 2010 by a new mentor, Kathy McBride, a pre-school teacher who planned on offering to lead a pre-K group at MANOS called “Mommy and Me.” Carlos had just explained to the group that MANOS wanted to connect with student needs. Kathy immediately asked, “How do we identify student needs?”

Carlos said, “Let’s talk about that,” and a discussion ensued.

One answer offered by Cristina Trujillo and supported by several mentors proposed using in-take sessions with students with an interview form enabling an initial assessment. Another suggestion from Liana Abarca was collecting and reviewing report data on a semester-by-semester basis. It was agreed that assessment of students by mentors at the end of each session was a good idea to be instituted. Carlos had some old mentor reports he had composed some years back. These were to be updated and structured as a small survey which mentors completed after each session for individual mentees. Meeting individualized needs was the intent behind this. After identifying the needs of specific mentees, these would be matched with the specific strengths or interests of mentors. At the time, there was no explicit method of matching mentees with mentors, as things were arranged more in a first-come, first-serve basis at MANOS. As late-comers arrived, Carlos would try to distribute them with groups already formed by school grade proximity. The individualized needs approach seemed the best way of addressing Cristina’s question but keeping to a strict time schedule would be important as well, since mentors too often would show up thirty or forty minutes late to MANOS. And then of course there were questions of capacity which followed shortly thereafter. Would there be enough mentors to provide individual attention to all MANOS students? And also would the qualitative data collection be of any use for funding purposes later on?

After that meeting in fall 2010, MANOS succeeded in recruiting a pool of 25 mentors each school term, significantly more than in recent years. Mentor commitment to MANOS was demonstrated through regular attendance and in their consistent generation of data on students through the aforementioned surveys. The 25 different mentors usually volunteered one day a week, though some volunteered twice a week or more and some only every other week. As Table 5 below accounts, MANOS mentors usually helped no less than two mentees during each session as they sometimes re-taught and clarified homework materials.

Table 5: One month attendance record at MANOS, 7 Mar. 2011—8 Apr. 2011

		Youth	Parents	Mentors
Week 1	Day 1	23	12	6
	Day 2	23	14	11
	Day 3	23	10	8
Week 2	Day 4	23	14	9
	Day 5	18	9	8
	Day 6	14	7	11
Week 3	Day 7	26	15	7
	Day 8	13	10	6
	Day 9	22	13	11
Week 4	Day 10	22	12	7
	Day 11	18	8	6
	Day 12	12	11	7
Week	Day 13	20	11	9

	Day 14	13	5	6
	Day 15	18	9	8
	<hr/>			
Totals	<hr/>	288	172	120
Averages		19.2	11.5	8.0

In order to achieve a steady mentor base, different MANOS mentors had stepped up to the position of “Mentor Coordinator” from 2007-2011. The intention with creating the Mentor Coordinator post, as Carlos Portales indicated (16 Jul. 2011), was to improve recruitment and develop capacity to select qualified volunteers: the method was to develop promotional materials, including brochures, business cards, and increase internet outreach. The Mentor Coordinator’s role was to set and enforce clear selection criteria, or develop an intake system. This included generating a detailed application process, which also included three references, and conducting a personal interview with all applicants. Applicants generally filled out their own applications, or sometimes mentors or children helped them. The Mentor Coordinator later helped filling out the form and also conducted the initial interview, as well as subsequent follow-up dialogues with parents. MANOS’s organizing mentors wanted to set clear requirement for future volunteers and to insure commitments to work at MANOS at least once a week. Monday and Tuesday evenings MANOS had been shorthanded with mentors, and many mentors were not meeting their initial agreements, which were always informal. MANOS however never required experience with education and youth. The goal was to improve mentor retention.

Using my graduate training, I collaborated with the Mentor Coordinator to adopt ethnographic methods for research into the effectiveness of mentoring practices. The Mentor Coordinator kept notes on how different mentors and students interacted, and also re-read the daily logs written by mentors after each MANOS session. A narrative of student performance

emerged. The observations recorded by mentors offered ethnographic evidence about academic success or failure. The logs showed how some students struggled with similar material and how mentors approached helping them. The Mentor Coordinator also interviewed mentees and parents periodically about how school was going. This helped MANOS as a program to understand problems that emerged in the community, and also to craft solutions. For example, Carlos had a strong desire to recruit more specialized mentors with teaching experience in math and literacy. Mentor Roberto Sanchez volunteered to do such recruiting, and to take on the position of Mentor Coordinator during the fall of 2011. Because of some successful fundraising, MANOS was able to offer Roberto a small monetary award for his service. As a future educator, the position also gave him practical exposure into the field of educational resources and social networking. He stood to gain a great deal from the contacts already established by Carlos. He also had previous experience volunteering with schools and non-profits throughout the city, and also with organizing group training sessions.

MANOS also facilitated additional programs within the community such as financial literacy, parenting, and also partnerships with arts programs around New York and with schools in the area. In the years after 2008, MANOS operated an art component to its mentorship program. Thirty-six-year old Lena Jaregui, the volunteer instructor, grew up in the United Kingdom and Spain, so she spoke both English and Spanish with European accents. Her arts activities involved MANOS parents and children in cultural awareness of Mexican traditions and iconography. MANOS's art component stressed academic attainment through appreciation of art and self-expression. Children as young as two participated in art projects, creating paintings, sculptures, and collages, among other forms in various media, including clay, cardboard, wire,

plaster, and oil and watercolor paints. Figure 5.6 offers an illustration of MANOS art in the making.



Figure 5.6: the MANOS art room. Several mentees and two mentors were constructing traditional-style Mexican piñatas. Several of the completed projects are shown hanging in the photo. Also partly visible on the back wall are three paintings by MANOS mentees. Also visible on the rear wall is a small shrine to the Virgin Mary constructed by a MANOS family.

There was some difficulty making sure MANOS mentees completed homework before taking part in art time. Mentees associated art with play and homework with school. They resisted school intruding on play, and when given the choice, opted for play. The homework was often boring, after all. Most of the time students completed photocopied pages from state test study preparation guides. But overall the program benefited from having Lena's involvement, especially as she engaged her bilingualism to involve parents and children in art projects. Lena

earned her MFA in arts education, and though she often waited months to receive payment from MANOS, she considered herself a volunteer. Portales eventually succeeded in securing an arts foundation grant, and he used portions of this to secure Lena \$1,000 in payment for her countless hours for four years. With the remaining \$500, he asked Lena to invest in art materials for MANOS. Mentors benefited from the guided and constructive activity Lena offered when kids finished homework. Her professional training in art education also brought a degree of stability and credibility to this under-funded, handmade program. Lena had also been instrumental in organizing cultural “field outings.” In 2010 she arranged free passes for a group of mentees, mothers, and three mentors to the Guggenheim Museum—the first time two of the mothers told me that they had been to a museum. In these ways, Lena personified the capital assets transferred to the poor families by even such a low-budget operation like MANOS. Lena provided access to cultural capital in terms of art-making workshops at the center and museum visits which also represented economic capital because the lessons and visits were free. Finally, Lena and Portales represented social capital for these families because they could connect them to things which they could not connect to on their own.



Figure 5.7: two MANOS mentees painting houses for a model neighborhood. The project engaged maps, community planning, and geometry. The building painted by the two mentees was the school for the city, which was called MANOS City. Lena had learned of the lesson in a textbook she read for an education course at Hunter College, CUNY.

Fundamental goals of MANOS included motivating working-class first- and second-generation Mexican and Mexican-American youth to achieve academic success by attending college and to foster cultural and civic awareness among parents and mentees. As mentioned in Chapter 4, when available, parents at the center participated in an informal English as Second Language course sponsored by the City of New York. Aside from a six month hiatus for lack of volunteer instructors, the ESL course been steadily staffed by a rotating set of mentors—myself included. But even without the English program, parents who had been coming to MANOS

practiced their English with their children as they helped with homework as well, with the assistance of mentors.

MANOS's objectives included integrating parents into a leadership/support through monthly meetings about fundraising, program feedback, maintenance projects, and brainstorming ideas to improve the program. Though this objective was foundationally published in MANOS's literature on itself, parents' meetings weren't formally structured until 2011. This didn't mean that parents didn't speak to one another about how MANOS functioned, as mentor Cristina Trujillo spoke of earlier in this chapter. There were, it seemed, certain rules that MANOS director Portales sought to establish before initiating the parents' group, particularly enforcing parent and mentee attendance. At the beginning of each term, MANOS reassigned contracts with each family which outlined the consequences for non-attendance. The contract also provided behavior ground rules for the program. See Figure 5.8 below.

MANOS/Student/Parents Agreement of Understanding

It is with my full understanding that in order to be a recipient of the service offer at MANOS's after school mentoring/tutoring program that I must agree to the following terms and regulation stipulated in this contract.

I _____ agree to the following terms of MANOS's agreement.

1. - I will treat with respect MANOS's personnel Tutors, Mentors, Staff, and volunteers; I will respect MANOS's and San Juan Bautista Church's property and return all equipment and materials at the end of the day in good condition.

2. - I will arrive on time in order to fully take advantage of MANOS's tutoring and mentoring program, it is essential that I'm present maximum three days but no less than two days a week and arrive no later than 6:00 pm. **I understand that I will only be allowed to have three absences in a MONTH.**

Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays []	Mondays and Tuesdays []	Mondays and Fridays []	Tuesdays and Fridays []
--------------------------------------	-----------------------------	----------------------------	-----------------------------

3. - I understand that a repeated misconduct will not be tolerated. These will lead me to the following course of action: First I will receive a warning following with a meeting with my parent; Secondly, my parents will sit-in with me and I will have a **one-day suspension**; for the third misconduct I will be suspended from the program.

4.- I understand that playing and fighting is not allowed. This will result in an immediate one-day suspension from MANOS. Continued incidents of fighting will lead to my dismissal from MANOS.

5. - I understand that I MUST leave MANOS's premises when the program ends, and I will not be involve with loitering in the building or surrounding area.

6. - I understand that I will not leave my group without the consult of MANOS's staff, and I will not be allowed to leave the program early unless MANOS has received prior written or verbal notification from my parents or guardian.

7. - I will be responsible to clean up after I eat my meals and all other activities.

8. - I will not be allowed to bring to MANOS's after school program any electronic gadgets (Walkmen, Ipods, game boys, etc.), toys, money and jewelry. I understand that MANOS is not responsible for any losses or damages.

If a participant does not follow these rules, it will be understood that he/she may be dismissed from the MANOS's Mexican Mentorship Project.

Parent's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Youth's Signature: _____ Grade: _____

MANOS/Estudiante/Padres Contrato de Entendimiento

Es mi entendimiento que para poder ser participe del programa después de la escuela de tutorías y modelos académicos de MANOS, tengo que firmar el siguiente contrato con los términos que la organización me estipule.

Yo _____ estoy de acuerdo a las siguientes estipulaciones.

1.- **Me comprometo a tratar con respeto** al personal de MANOS, Tutores, Mentores y voluntarios; a su misma vez, **me comprometo a respetar** las propiedades y establecimiento de MANOS y la Iglesia San Juan Bautista, retornar todo material usado en buen estado al finalizar la jornada de trabajo.

2.- **Me comprometo asistir a tiempo** al programa para poder aprovechar al máximo el apoyo académico que se me brinda. Es esencial que yo este presente máximo tres días, pero no menos de dos días a la semana y llegar en punto a las 6:00 pm. **Es mi entendimiento que solo se me permite tres faltas al MES.**

Lunes, Martes y Viernes
[]

Lunes y Martes
[]

Lunes y Martes
[]

Martes y Viernes
[]

3. - La mala conducta no serán tolerada. Estos conducirán alas acciones siguientes: Primero una advertencia, después una reunión con los padres del participante y finalmente, el padre tendrá que estar en la clase con su hijo/a **O** una suspensión de un día.

4. - Las peleas de juego no se permiten. Esto resultara en la suspensión de un día inmediata del Programa. Si los incidentes de peleas continúan, su niño/a será suspendido del Programa.

5. - Todos los participantes deben dejar las premisas cuando están despedidos del Programa.

6. – Los participantes no deben dejar a sus grupos sin consultar con el staff de MANOS. Los jóvenes no serán permitidos salir del Programa temprano a menos que MANOS haya recibido consentimiento anteriormente escrito del padre.

7. - Todos los participantes deben limpiar su área después de comidas y de todas las actividades.

8. – Objetos electronicos (Walkmen, Ipods, game boys, etc.) juguetes, dinero y joyas no se deben traer al Programa MANOS no es responsable de ningunas pérdidas o daños que ocurran.

9. – *¡Ven con una mente abierta y ganas de aprender cosas nuevas!*

Si el joven no sigue estas reglas, se entendera que el/ella sera despedido/a del Mexican Mentorship Project de MANOS.

Firma del Padre: _____ Fecha: _____

Firma del Joven: _____ Grupo: _____

Figure 5.8: The MANOS membership contract in English and Spanish. The documents were adapted from that of an after-school program in a different New York City borough from that of MANOS. The mentor who worked at this other site suggested that contract as a model. She claimed that the other site had borrowed it from yet another organization. She joked that “these non-profit forms were originally first produced sometime in a different century and have been recycled since then.” The rules translated in Spanish had an interesting addition: the English rule list stopped at 8 with no electronic gadgets during MANOS, while the Spanish version had an additional rule, an enthusiastic, “*¡Ven con una mente abierta y ganas de aprender cosas nuevas!*” (Come with an open mind to learn and hopes to learn new things!).

MANOS membership for parents and potential mentees entailed signing the contract in Figure 5.8. The disciplinary measures noted in item number 3 were thankfully never actually carried through. They served as a warning, but there no serious altercation among mentees or families. Because parents were involved, mentees were regulated by their own family members when their self-discipline failed. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, parents exerted linguistic power in Spanish, and sometimes mentees used English to challenge their parents’ authority. Again, however, mentees more often than not followed the rules established by MANOS and policed by their parents, who agreed to the stated requirements for membership. This said, no family was every dropped from MANOs membership for excessive absences. In terms of rules of conduct around the basement of San Juan Bautista, the only times mentees were allowed some slack from playing restrictions was when the tables and chairs were put away. Then they were free to play games of tag in the basement’s wide expanse. Sometimes this, though, produced a scraped knee

and some tears. This was also why MANOS added an injury release form to the membership application packet.

Carlos consulted the MANOS mentors about drawing up the contract. The consensus was for such an explicit rule-making contract, even when breaches of discipline were not serious. What was really at issue was attendance, not conduct. Even more, the rules and contract were part of MANOS's rhetoric of legitimacy as an after-school program. Their production was a collaboration of mentor networking and experience, and as Carlos expanded his volunteer base, with the additional support of Roberto as Mentor Coordinator, the community knowledge pool expanded. Carlos optimistically looked to a near future when MANOS would finally get to what he called "the next level"—a fully instituted after-school family mentorship program funded with donor support, and with a fully operational MANOS parents committee.

Committing to a schedule was also emphasized so as to set a condition of regularity with individualized or specialized attention from mentors. Some families attended less often than others, and those who lived closest to San Juan Bautista came everyday. The dedication of Tomás Rivera Altamirano and his son Edward, for example, was consistent: they came two days a week, right when the program opened and stayed until it closed. They lived a five-minute walk from Foraker Street. Tomás was a helpful MANOS parent who also assisted mentees who asked; he had more than once helped me with keeping eight-year-old Nico Saucedo from literally walking away from his homework while his mother helped to prepare refreshments for everyone. Tomás was jovial with the mentees, but also watchful to help with mentors around the MANOS space whenever he could. This kind of involvement was welcomed by mentors who sometimes had to try to maintain four or more mentees at once in staying on task with their homework.

Parents mentored at MANOS also, achieving the program aims specifically geared to increasing their involvement as mentors for their children and their community.

The MANOS parents contributed to help the program's survival. On September 15, 2009, MANOS parents teamed up to celebrate Mexico's Independence Day by putting together a sale of typical Mexican food to help raise funds for arts and program materials. MANOS had partnered with different organizations and the U.S. Census to sponsor a "Census party" informing the public about the importance of filling out and submitting the Census. The program was of course geared to promote a strong turnout among New York City's Mexican population, both documented and undocumented. Carlos had made a contact with a former mentor who was mobilizing Latino communities in New York to participate in the Census. The event would draw lots of attention to MANOS, so Carlos opened up ideas to parents and mentors about ways to generate publicity and funds from the event. Five MANOS mothers, Evelyn Saucedo Lopez, Victoria Rico Olivas, Juana Uribe Sanchez, Elisabeth Gonzales, and Jaclín Montez Ybarra, strongly supported the idea of selling food. They organized their own food committee for the event.

Carlos also opened up the event to members of San Juan Bautista who set up their own tables, and various sponsors from banks to immigrant law firms came together to celebrate. The event, unfortunately, did not generate a great deal of money for the program, partly because of bad planning. Carlos had thought he had secured a city permit to block off Foraker Street in front of the San Juan Bautista, but found out the day before the event that his form remained unprocessed. According to Carlos, this was when he learned the valuable lesson to always follow-up when dealing with the city. As a result, the event was relocated to San Juan Bautista's basement, and this caused businesses who purchased booth spaces for the event to renege on

their agreements. Nevertheless, MANOS pulled off the event in San Juan Bautista's basement, and MANOS generated a great deal of broadcast and print coverage in Spanish. But MANOS netted only \$170 from that event. Had the permit been approved, MANOS expected near \$1,500. For a low-budget, resource-poor community organization, this was a considerable loss.

As mentioned, Victoria Rico Olivas sold food at that event, and she helped with arranging all the mothers to cook large batches of *tamales*, *tortillas*, *elotes*, rice, and other trays full of mouth-watering *comidas Mexicanas* (Mexican foods). When the mariachi bands Carlos booked started to play after the *grito* (symbolic call to arms in the Mexican Revolution), some of the MANOS parents danced. Victoria and her son were interviewed by a Spanish language news crew. Later I asked her how she felt about being “una estrella” (a star). She smiled shyly, “bueno, no se, pero gracias a dios si pudiera ayudar el programa MANOS, voy a explicar a todo el mundo Steve” (well, I don't know, but thank God if I could I would help the MANOS program, I will tell the whole world, Steve) (25 Sep. 2009). She laughed. That was the beginning of the school year, and it started with high hopes for her son Marcos and also his MANOS mentors.

Nine months later, I asked Victoria, with Pilar Lopez, Carlos Portales, and Marcos as language brokers how the year had gone for her at MANOS. She reported a rough year emotionally and physically. Marcos had been having problems at school with being bullied and with fighting but to her dismay she only learned of this through one of the MANOS mentors whom Marcos opened up to. He hadn't told his mother that he was being bullied because he didn't want her to be ashamed of him. She of course was not ashamed of him, and—with mediation from MANOS mentors—they began to communicate more about the issues at school.

She credited MANOS and its mentors for this. Victoria often demonstrated her thankfulness for helping Marcos by bringing me fresh *tamales* or plates of *mole*. She said:

MANOS es para mí, no, no tiene precio. Sí, yo estoy muy agradecida con la organización, con Carlos, con todos ustedes como ya les dije. Que ustedes—sin tener ustedes porque . . . yo digo lo que pienso y digo allí están lidiando con nuestros hijos. Sabrá dios si comieron, o si de la escuela se vinieron sin comer y eso y que uno no sepa valorar eso que hacen. Ese sacrificio por nuestros hijos. Sí uno se sacrificio y dice uno “hay lo tengo que llevar.” Pero el sacrificio de ustedes es mucho más grande todavía. Pero aparte de eso son de buen carácter, de buen humor. Siempre están allí para nuestros hijos. Y eso, no tiene precio.

For me MANOS doesn't have a price. Yes I am very thankful for the organization, for Carlos, for all of you, as I told you before. That you all—without having to . . . I speak my mind and you all are there dealing with our children. Who knows if you had a chance to eat, or if you came straight from school and that makes one value what you all do. This sacrifice for our kids. Yes as a parent one says “I have to take him.” But the sacrifice of you all is much bigger than that. But apart from this you are of good character, of good attitudes. You all are always there for our kids. And this doesn't have a price. (22 Jun. 2010)

Carlos Portales took part in this interview and he teared up as Victoria spoke; perhaps having visited her home contributed to the emotion overwhelming him. I'm sure he heard echoes of Angela in the supermarket from years before in Victoria's voice. For my part, I was happy to know that Victoria felt thankful for MANOS, and as a mentor, I felt I validly contributed to

community building. Experiences like this at MANOS reminded me that volunteers donate time to communities not to get rich or famous. The success and gratitude of being a member of a community was all the wages one can collect.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Marcos had been sent home from first grade for fighting. “First,” he told me, “I pulled this girl’s arm back like this,” and he showed me how he twisted the young victim’s arm behind her back. “First I did it like this, then the teacher saw me because she was screaming. I had to see the assistant. Okay he tells me, like, if you lie to me that you didn’t do it you’re going home. And no if you say you did it. And I said I didn’t do it because that girl hit me before” (30 April 2010). As a result, Marcos was sent home, and Victoria was confused and upset.

She had requested assistance from Carlos for securing a bilingual mentor to accompany her to a school appointment with the assistant principal in order to bring someone familiar with Marcos’s temperament, and also someone she could trust to translate well for her. Leti Navarro agreed to meet with Victoria and translate for her during her meeting with the assistant principal. According to Leti, Victoria and Marcos signed a contract that said he would not fight at school anymore and that he shook hands and apologized to his victim. Both parties agreed to peaceful relations from thereon.

Marcos had no further discipline problems for the short remainder of the school year. He made it completely through the next year, second grade, without any disciplinary issues. During the same interview with her during the small birthday celebration for her son the summer before he began second grade, I asked Victoria what she thought about the cold winters and the basement of San Juan Bautista. I made a comment that even on the worst days of the previous

winter, Marcos and Victoria found their way to MANOS. Pilar translated this into Spanish and Victoria laughed. She gestured at Marcos and said,

Mi Marcos, se ese cuando cae la nieve dice “Mami, ya dame mi gorra, dame mis guantes, vamonos a MANOS.”

Y yo “Hoy no vas, hace frío.”

“No Mami! Vamos vamos no esta cayendo nieve. Vamos!”

Y ahi vamos así con frío y todo yo siempre he ido. Y mi hijo también.

Que, llego de mi trabajo, que ya son las tres, que recojo al niño, que ya vengo, que barro, que limpio, que cocino, que me baño, vamonos para MANOS. A las seís, ya, MANOS es a las seís. Cuatro pa’ las seís, vamonos hijo, porque y es hora de irnos. Ya no se acabó, se acabaron los problemas. Voy, alla me rio, aolla platico, ahora con las muchachas . . . No ya mi vida cambio much desde que yo empeze. También para mí, mucho, much para mejor desde que yo estoy alla en MANOS. Sí, yo estoy muy contenta.”

My Marcos says when it’s snowing, he says, “Mommy, get me my hat, and my gloves, lets go to MANOS.”

And I say, “not today, it’s too cold.”

“No Mommy! Let’s go, it’s not snowing. Let’s go!”

And there we go cold and all, I always go. And my son too.

I get home from work, it is three o’clock, I pick him up, I come back, sweep the house, clean, cook, take a shower, and let’s go to MANOS. At six o’clock it’s MANOS. When it’s a quarter to six, I tell him let’s go. And I don’t know, I was full, full of problems. I went there and laughed, and talked to people, with the women . . . my life changed a lot when I started going. Also for myself, for the better, since I’ve been in MANOS. I’m very pleased with MANOS. (22 Jun. 2010)

Isolation makes the problems of poverty and assimilation much harder; social contact relieves the feeling of aloneness and vulnerability. Epidemiologists who study data on sickness and health find that those poor with rich social connections have fewer illnesses (World Health Organization). MANOS provided that social context. For Victoria the sense of community she experienced at MANOS extended to parents from mentors to fellow parents of mentees, and also to new networks of mothers as friends she could relate to. It became an important place for her to gain support during a difficult time in her life when she was forced to work more hours. MANOS mothers Juana Uribe Sanchez and Jaclín Montez Ybarra offered assistance with taking care of Marcos until things further stabilized for Victoria. She also helped Juana and Jaclín with watching over their children when needed and available. The sense of community beyond

MANOS extended the scope of *confianza* among the Foraker Street Mexican immigrant community.

3. MANOS Brokering Contact Zones and Home Fronts: A Teacher's Letter and Bilingual Event

Bilingual Event: A Letter to MANOS

Mentor Laura Kruchenko received the following letter at MANOS one evening in December 2010 from Lupe Rubio Dominguez, the mother of six-year-old Miguel Rubio, whom Laura was helping with homework in a tutoring group that included seven-year-old Ana Montez, seven-year-old Flor Fernandez, and six-year-old Frankie Gonzales. Lupe's daughter Sarita helped language broker the conversation for Laura and her mother. Lupe told Laura, partly through Sarita as translator, that Miguel's teacher had given her son the letter after school. She couldn't understand if it was for him or not, but Miguel told her it was for MANOS. Laura asked Sarita if she had read the letter.

"It's for MANOS, 'cause look, she wrote MANOS. But she didn't write my Mom a letter."

Laura wasn't sure what this meant. Miguel told her the letter was for someone at MANOS to read, and that his teacher wrote it. Laura further inspected the letter.

"I think it means he was being bad," said Flor.

Lupe looked at Flor.

"But I don't know," she said in quick response.

"No you don't," said Laura. She read the letter to herself:

To Whom It May Concern,

Miguel is a bright and playful boy. He enjoys being read to but needs support reading on his own. Currently, he is reading approximately 8 sight words, which is below standard. In order to meet standards, Miguel must be able to read 40 sight words by March. My suggestion is to use flash cards, sight word bingo or any kind of engaging game that will motivate him to learn those words. Miguel performs his best when working one to one with an adult. He tends to lose motivation and focus when left to complete a task on his own. Increasing his knowledge of sight words will increase his reading ability. I also suggest reviewing letter names/sounds. He should be encouraged to identify at least the beginning sound to words and/or pictures. In addition to reading, his writing needs improvement. At this point, Miguel should be applying some basic structure to his writing. He should work on using a capital letter to begin a sentence, using a period at the end of a sentence, leaving spaces between his words. He should be able to track his words with one to one correspondence. I have attached some materials that may be of use. If there is anything else you may need, feel free to contact me.

Laura read the letter and presented it to me, since I was observing the mentoring session she was leading with her group of mentees. I read it over.

“Well, I guess this is for MANOS,” I said stepping in to the biliteracy event.

“What do we do with it?” Laura asked.

I offered to take a look at it and the accompanying materials with Miguel, Lupe, and Sarita while she worked with her table of mentees.

Sarita, Lupe, and I went over the letter and other attached sheets closer to see what exactly the teacher was saying Miguel needed to work on. I gradually stepped away from the interaction in order to play an observational role, but occasionally asking questions to clarify things. Sarita, Guadalupe, Miguel, and I all sat together at a table, and I went over line by line what the teacher wrote. I allowed Sarita to translate each for her mother. After reading the document again, Sarita and I determined that Miguel's teacher wanted him to 1) read on his own, 2) improve from 8 to 40 sight words, 3) increase motivation, 4) read more on his own, 5) review phonetics, 6) capitalize sentences and space words, and finally to 7) "track words with one to one correspondence." Sarita and I had some trouble figuring out what that last one meant.

Sarita explained to her mother what the letter detailed. I asked Sarita if a letter had been sent in Spanish to Lupe. She answered that the letter in English was the only thing Miguel had brought from his teacher.

"It's for MANOS," Miguel said.

"It's true," I said nodding to Miguel.

Lupe asked Sarita something in Spanish.

"She wants to know if we should write a letter back to her, and what we should do with the letter."

"I guess we should practice with him," I said. Sarita translated this into Spanish.

Lupe responded in Spanish to her daughter, who asked me if I could set something up to help Miguel study. With some brainstorming, Sarita, Lupe, and I came up with flashcards for Miguel. The "phonetic cards" had pictures of animals that matched the beginning of each name. Miguel colored each of these cards with different markers, so he could also practice his colors. The group also introduced him to the game of "Hang Man," which Lupe had never played

before. She watched me play a few rounds with Miguel, and afterward she played a few with him. I also practiced counting forward and backward with him—in Spanish and English. We also reviewed the worksheets Miguel’s teacher attached. We used the sight words she provided to form word games and small art projects like sculpting letters from clay (a tutoring strategy shared by a former resource teacher/mentor).

As for reading at home, I recommended that someone read with Miguel every day. Lupe was concerned because she read to her son in Spanish, as that made her feel more comfortable. I interjected and told her that wasn’t a problem, as long as she was involved with her son, but that he also had to have some exposure to English outside of school, like he did at MANOS.

At that moment, Carlos was making rounds to observe different mentoring groups. I showed the letter to Carlos as the group continued studying words and practicing reading. I asked him what we should have done with the letter from Miguel’s teacher.

He asked to copy the letter, then eventually made contact with Miguel’s teacher and established a connection between Miguel’s school and MANOS. Four additional Mexican students at the school began to attend MANOS thanks to Carlos’s efforts, and the school itself was only a short walk from San Juan Bautista. Though he never actually met Miguel’s teacher face-to-face, he was able to speak with the instructor who organized the school’s parent organization. Carlos sent her brochures and flyers about MANOS. Only a few families from this school ended up attending MANOS however. To date, a firm connection between MANOS and this school had yet to be established. With a Mentor Coordinator position, this would leave Carlos more time to cultivate links with the school, as well as surrounding schools on Foraker Street.

Discussion: Contact Zones and Home Fronts

The shared collaboration that happened between the Rubio family and three mentors, along with her son's teacher, and her bilingual daughter pointed to the rich linguistic context at MANOS for studying how dominant and minority languages fluctuated in rhetorical power depending on context and contact. Mary Louise Pratt argues "contact zones" are sites of unequal power relations and each site as an activity system needs to be read according to the power relations which affect choices, positions, and language use therein. Contact zones are intersections of social institutions, languages, and power where each get disputed, legitimated, or marginalized ("Arts of the Contact Zone"). Contact zones are structured by the power relations circulating in them, including the power relations embedded in linguistic communication structure power relations in engagements, and they produce imbalances of power, or a hierarchy of positions of within a social field. In contrast to contact zones in public encounters are home fronts which are largely private interactions. These spaces are situated away from social institutions, yet still involve language and power relations. Immigrant families experience the dominant language in various contact zones in daily practice, both outside their homes and inside via television, news, products marketed for English audiences, and homework among others.

In *Close to Home: Oral and Literate Practices in a Transnational Mexican Community*, Juan C. Guerra examines linguistic strategies used in letter writing among a transnational Chicago Mexican community, where the letters are exchanged with relatives in Mexico. In his analysis, he complements Pratt's contact zones with home fronts. For Guerra, home fronts are the recognizable genres speech communities produce that clash in the contact zone. These sets of practices develop in response to the spaces of contact zones, and they also shape the discursive battles waged in languages. Home fronts are, in effect, the positions of language utterances

during contact zones. The theories of Mikhail Bakhtin inform Guerra's argument that "available genres are influenced by the group's rhetorical and ideological practices, which, in turn, are constantly changing as individual and group beliefs and values are themselves influenced and changed by an array of social, cultural, political, economic, and linguistic forces" (68). In this reasoning, literacy develops according to the relative discursive context of the linguistic marketplace. Home fronts are scripted responses to various learned configurations of practices for potential contact zones.

Literacy conceived in this way is a developmental and situated process, continuous and malleable according to surrounding contexts, and material and social conditions. MANOS provided the context where such intergenerational communicative genre practice could freely circulate exchanges without the scrutiny found in contact zones. English came into contact with Spanish and language brokers negotiated cultures, translations, rhetorics, and literacies. The asymmetrical power relations between English and Spanish in the contact zone were more evenly distributed among immigrant parents and their children. Communication happened in a situation based on family and community ethnic bonds which gave Spanish and English more trust and meaning. English in such cases builds bonds of affection, *confianza* among families and mentors, parents and children. MANOS fostered the connections between adult mentors who helped with homework and schooling questions. Mentees enjoyed closer attention to writing and reading than they generally received in their schools. The literacy skills that developed with language brokering at MANOS in ordinary practice moved between Spanish and English, and between audiences, among triads, brokered interactions of exchange between two or more cultures. The exchanges also connected adults and youth across generations and languages. The immigrants' tactics and skills in response to contact zones in the linguistic marketplace revealed

how power relations structured intergenerational differences in bilingual families, and how contact zones and home fronts contributed to refinement of the un-schooled language repertoires of bilingual youth. The relationships of *confianza* that developed between certain MANOS mentors and families only came with time and consistency on both sides. The idea for pairing mentors with families seemed a gesture in the right direction to further build on lasting trust between youth and positive role models advocating for youth educational empowerment.

As I argued in Chapter 3, the immigrant parents involved in MANOS wagered on the belief that their children's abilities to master English would lead to success unavailable to the first generation—they themselves who made the sacrifice of migration to a different nation that treated them scornfully. MANOS parent Reina Molina Vasquez described her ability to communicate in English as “pobre” or poor. She said during an interview, “Mi uso en el idioma inglés es pobre a la hora de expresarme, aunque se que entiendo bastante, cuando tengo que contestar no se ni que decir, algunas a veces me sucede esto” (“My use of the English language is poor in how I express myself, although I understand some, when I have to answer I don't know what to say. Sometimes I pass”) (3 Aug. 2010).

I knew Reina read to her children Felix and Samantha on a regular basis. They had a number of books to read at home. I knew, also, that her English was better than she thought. I spoke to Reina in English and she appeared to understand everything I would say. She would always respond, however, in Spanish. I asked her—in English—if she could read in English. She said, “Solo los libros de K, primer grado y segundo. No más de ese nivel. Porque leo con mis hijos sus libros que traen de la escuela y me doy cuenta que hasta el libro de segundo grado. Puedo leer y comprender pero los tercero y cuatro ya se me es más difícil” (“Only the K, first and second grade books. Not higher than that level. Because I read with my kids their books that

they bring from school, and I notice that the second grade I can read and comprehend well, but the third and fourth grade, they're more difficult") (3 Aug. 2010). MANOS had become a place where Reina was able to build on her language skills, and also develop strategies for helping her children with their English language homework—such as constructing writing webs when writing essays. Reina always participated in the homework of her children with the mentors, as a means to help mentors to move between multiple mentees and to further understand how language for her children was being taught in her children's schools.

MANOS youth built collaborative group skill via the collaborative nature of biliteracy in situated contexts. At MANOS, mentees, mentors, and parents communicated with one another to form group learning environments and to build skills of interaction and cooperative leadership. This opened up the social nature of learning in group environments, and between languages. Mainstream public schools could adopt brokering and group activities of translation to enhance multilingual literacy learning. Language brokering and bilinguistic events should be encouraged, treating language as entity, metalinguistic skill, cognitive linguistics. For classrooms with young literacy learners this could entail encouraging language brokering as play among monolingual and bilingual students.

MANOS revealed the value of language brokering for bilingual and biliterate development in first and second languages. Instances of biliteracy events and language brokering, represent what cognitive theorist Lev Vygotsky called "zones of proximal development" but "*for parents*, where children serve as experts" (Orellana, *Translating Childhoods* 104, italics in original). Community organizations offering collaborative mentoring to families must take a Vygotskian approach of establishing "zones of proximal development of language brokering that are dynamic and shifting. Children and parents mutually scaffold each

other's learning in these cases, and they advance their skills together" (Orellana 104). MANOS mentors modeled the sociocultural learning practices of mentorship by helping children with homework as parents observed and also actively participated, while also modeling some of the skills they learned. The literacy session for the children became as well a site of parental development. This reinforced literacy practices modeled by mentors or instructors.

MANOS consolidated collaborations among like-minded parents in the local community, bringing them out of isolation into a social process where they could pool limited resources to meet some of their needs. MANOS also consolidated a pool of volunteer mentors from the city. It secured a space where standard and nonstandard languages freely flowed into one another. Overall, parental involvement at MANOS was important in order to bridge home-school relationships based on linguistic differences, social class, or citizenship. With the *confianza* of mentors, parents alienated by their children's schools and the English language could directly come into contact with the language without institutional scrutiny. MANOS mentee-turned-mentor Sarita Rubio said that language differences were a source of tremendous stress for her parents and others in her social network. She thought the MANOS community helped to alleviate some of this stress for parents. She said during an interview with her and her younger brother Felipe:

I think MANOS helps a lot of kids, and it helps a lot of parents. It helps them have less pressure on them. They're like, O my god, my children, they don't know, how am I going to help them? What am I going to do? Are they just going to fail their classes because of me? And I think MANOS is a good place for them, and a lot of people should know more about it, because it gives them a relief to know that their children are learning. (21 Feb. 2011)

Conclusion

This chapter discussed multiple factors maintaining MANOS'S viability and its importance for addressing community needs and facilitating involvement among the families of Foraker Street. In terms of community involvement and need, MANOS offered a safe space or "safe house" in Pratt's contact zone framework where language minority parents aired grievances about their children's schools and familiarized themselves with mainstream American schooling in dialogue with one another, and with mentors such as myself. As a cultural broker itself, MANOS thus mediated between Mexican immigrant families in this locale and the larger Mexican community in New York City, as well as between families and local authorities, primarily the formidable public schools. These services were obviously indispensable and in preciously short supply in a low-status immigrant community.

My fieldwork developed my skills as a teacher while revealing the crucial importance of families in the education process as sources of social capital or support to get things done and as transmitters of cultural capital. From the sociological perspective, families are key social units preparing children, in this case, preparing children to transcend harsh limits on the parents' opportunities. The human faces I encountered at MANOS forced me to question "the family" as abstraction, however, as I became involved in relations of *confianza* among MANOS mentees and parents. Mentoring and studying the MANOS's organization also taught me a great deal about the necessary foundations community programs must have in place before serving with stability. More than half of the equation in terms of increasing literacy for the MANOS families had been in organizing the program in an efficient manner and maintaining a strong volunteer base (Rhodes).

MANOS had never lacked, though, interested parents requesting help in learning English and homework help for their children. Family involvement was the program's central mission, and its organizing committee of mentors understood that problems of low-status youth more often than not are blamed on presumed deficiencies within the family unit (Villenas). My experiences with language learning and my advocacy of literacy curved into my study of MANOS, and ultimately, the purpose of my research became to understand how such a unique urban grassroots community after-school mentoring program promoted academic goals and literacy among first-generation Mexican parents and second-generation Mexican American children. My interest was in learning more about how English and Spanish interacted in this high-stakes reach for upward mobility, especially at the family level, but also at the program's organizational level. The multilinguistic gift of families should be pedagogically valued rather than penalized. The discontinuities between languages and family involvement in schooling must find outlets beyond schools where they can establish a sense of community identity.

In Pushing Boundaries: Language and Culture in a Mexicano Community Olga A. Vasquez, Lucinda Pease-Alvarez, and Sheila M. Shannon argue that bilingual children draw on cultural and linguistic resources in their personal and social interactions. They argue that in many cases, "these children are themselves resources that others draw upon to negotiate a second language and culture" (17). MANOS mentees indeed became resources for me to draw upon in my second language (L2) development. They brokered my cultural interactions with what I deemed my alienated ethnicity. In the next and final chapter, I move from MANOS to my own family and how my educational trajectory was eased by mentors and my family's generational assimilation to the dominant language. My transition from Spanish as my parents' first languages and Spanish as my L2 will be autoethnographically probed, as I searched for the resources to

negotiate a division between first-, second-, and third-generations and language loss and gain,
and my engagement with the MANOS community.

Chapter 6:

Critical Autoethnography and the Reflexive Study of Rhetorics, Literacies, and Languages

In this final chapter, I contextualize my positions as researcher and MANOS mentor/volunteer through an autoethnography of my family's Mexican immigrant history, especially my parents' preference for English in our household which led to my loss of Spanish. I research my family's educational networks and our adaptation to English dominance in a single generation, which led eventually to studying language brokers at MANOS and my dissertation. This literacy autoethnography entails a parental choice for monoliteracy in the dominant language for the children resulting in limited mobility for my parents and increased opportunities for my siblings and me. I document this narrative with personal interviews with my parents that illustrate the rich literacies in my family's immigrant history, and also our institutional encounters and experiences with language brokering.

This chapter extends the stories of MANOS families, immigrant bargains, language choices, and biliteracy brokering. As a youth, my language use developed when brokering not between two different languages, Spanish and English, but between two English dialects, Chicano English and standard English. As I will discuss in this chapter, Chicano English is a nonstandard dialect of English spoken in working class Spanish-speaking communities, including my home community on the Mexico-United States borderlands. My nonstandard Mexican-American English dialect intersected with my parents' use of this dialect, and I brokered for them when they needed help with idiomatic standard English expression, in particular in written texts. Occasionally I still experience this with my parents, as when a few years ago my mother Anna Alvarez sent me her first-year composition essays for her English

course at a local community college. “I have you for that advantage. And you’re like a walking brain,” she said about the experience during one of our interviews (29 May 2010).

My experiences brokering standard and nonstandard Englishes, however, was not the same as the language brokering my parents experienced during their childhoods. My parents spoke Chicano English and Spanish. They initiated their children into English. In the Alvarez family, parents Robert and Anna brokered Spanish and English for their five children which reinforced their authority, unlike the situation of Spanish-only parents at MANOS. The Alvarez parents oriented their children away from Spanish because of its associations with negative non-citizenship. This was the reverse situation for MANOS youth in terms of their heritage language use and maintenance, but similar in terms of negative non-citizenship connotations.

My parents’ experiences in southern Arizona in the 1950s differed in historically important ways from what MANOS families encountered in New York City in the decade just before and just after 2000. However, some similarities are striking in respect to the strong desire to gain upward mobility through gaining English literacy, including the skill of speaking English without an accent that marked them as foreigners and immigrants, and the confluence of economic expectations with educational expectations. As children, my parents were also like the mentees at MANOS experiencing first-language loss and a disquieting emerging sense of Mexican ethnic difference compared to mainstream culture. Unlike the MANOS youth, however, they did not have access to programs catering to immigrant families coming into the dominant languages and literacies of a new country. Here I admit that the MANOS families moved me personally in ways beyond mere sympathy for marginalized individuals. Rather, I had an intense empathy with my friends at MANOS because of the contexts which perhaps over-determined the focuses of this dissertation. Context and history of course affected how I shaped this research,

and I argue that context influences my observations and perceptions of language, literacy, learning, and identity. This, in turn, is a family and personal matter for me. The compositional problem for me in this study, then, is to maintain a critical distance from the material so as to see, understand, and report the blemishes and failures of a local community service.

My own literacy mentors and the narrative of my own family's loss of heritage language include my doing well with words in school—a regular “scholarship boy” (Hoggart 224)—and my trajectory which took me beyond southern Arizona's Gila Valley to the rows of apartments and Manhattan skyline I see out my window right now in Jackson Heights, Queens. In this chapter, I analyze my perspective as subject of the critical narratives I am authoring with the objective of critiquing my insider-outsider position, in an effort to produce observation-based theory which has a claim to authenticity. All scholarly accounts of living cultures, however, construct knowledge by parsing material conditions not only in motion but also generated by over-determined convergences. In critical autoethnography, the focalized gaze of the researcher empowers the observer's viewpoint, taking into account how observers participate and affect their studies (Heath and Street; Marcus and Clifford; Pratt; Reed-Danahay). As a researcher, I must also be held to account in the same way I look to the interactions between MANOS mentors and families. This chapter turns toward my family history, my educational trajectory, and the struggles of immigrant families at different points in acculturation. I end the chapter with the impact of mentoring as both mentee and mentor in my learning as a teacher and student.

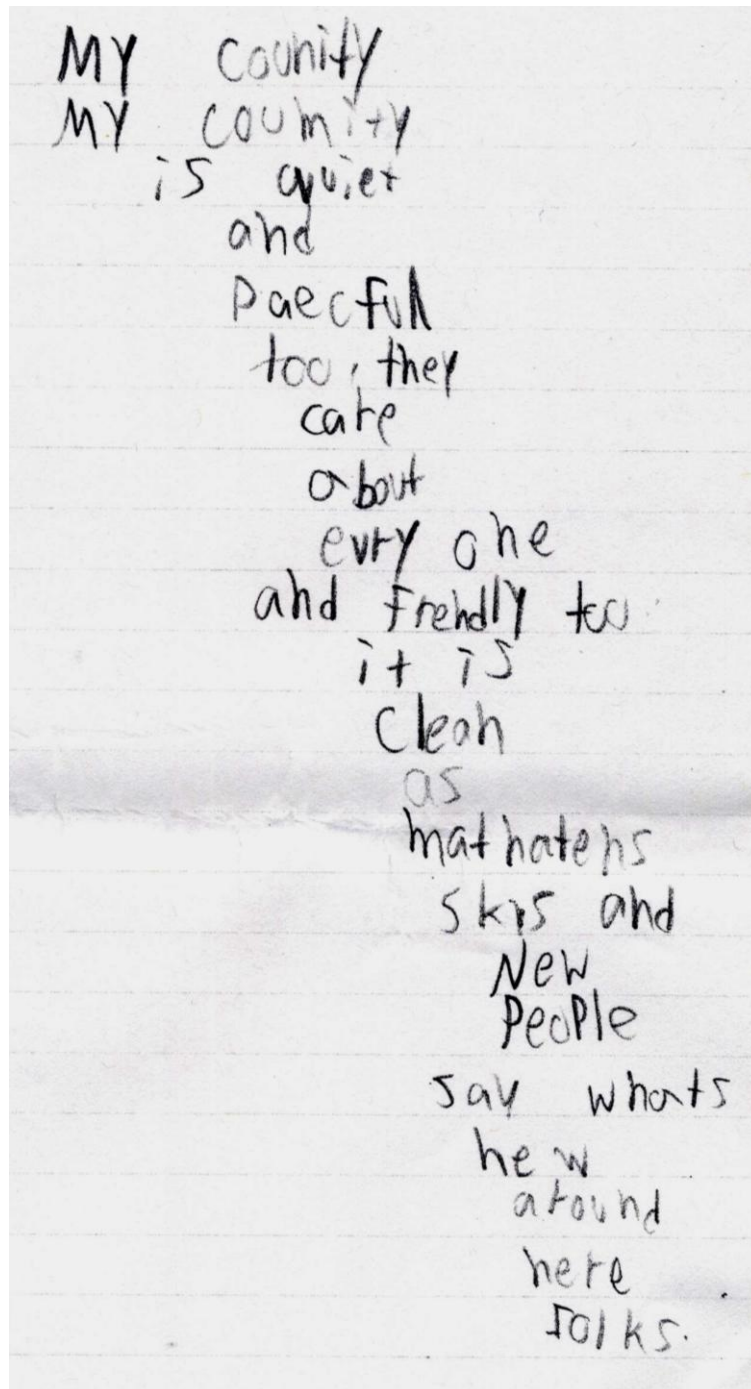
Though I grew up just a few hours north of the Mexico border in southeastern Arizona, I had never considered how border politics created contact zones for my family's heritage language loss and turn to English-dominant monolingualism. This chapter explores the history of some of the border politics that shaped my family's loss of Spanish, focusing on the early

educational experiences of my parents, Robert and Anna Alvarez, based on extensive interviews during 2011. Both remembered their first teachers in Bisbee, Arizona but Robert's negative encounters with "subtractive schooling" contrasted greatly with Anna's positive bilingual experiences, in a segregated Arizona copper-mining border town during the 1940s and 50s.

With regards to my Mexican American ethnic identity, my English dominance had always been a curious thing to myself, considering the level of education I pursued in its literature, linguistics, and educational pedagogy. The Chicano English I spoke with my family and friends in Arizona, however, was not of course the standard English I deployed within the university, but neither was it the same Chicano English dialect of the MANOS mentees. Often mentees would joke about my "cowboy" accent. I examine this further in Part 6 as I move into the critical autoethnography of my own brokering relationship between the highly prized, specialized English needed for Ph.D. studies, and that of the working-class rural Chicano English into which I was born. As did the MANOS mentees, I had influential mentors who encouraged my ambitions. My siblings and I acculturated to the "mainstream" language—a metaphor of washing away minority difference into a standardized course of study, and "conceals hierarchizing by class, race, and linguistic criteria in education" (Santa Ana 306). In Part 1 below, I first account for language and identification as sometimes easing and sometimes constraining the acceptance of the dominant language, and identifying with the language as part of one's sense of self. Part 2 moves into critical autoethnography demonstrated in my family history. Parts 3 and 4 present my parents' narratives. After their narratives, I make a response in Part 5 where I use the notion of "brokering" the hyphenated suffix *-ismos*, a method of accounting for the hyphen connecting asymmetrical relations between languages in contact zones dominated by mainstream ideas of English dominance. I conclude in Part 6 with a discussion of

subtractive schooling practices grounded in English as the most distinctive cultural and symbolic capital in immigrant families.

1. "My Country": Language and Identification



MY Country
MY Country
is quiet
and
Peaceful
too, they
care
about
every one
and friendly too.
it is
clean
as
mathaters
skins and
New
People
say whats
he w
around
here
folks.

Figure 6.1: Poem composed by Felipe Rubio. The text reads:

My counity
My counity
is quiet
and
peaceful
too. they
care about
every one
and freindly too
it is
Clean
as
Mathatens
Skys and
New
People
say whats
new
around
here
folks

Eleven-year-old Felipe Rubio wrote the poem in third grade for a literacy unit incorporating student poetry and wordplay exercises as creative expression. Felipe had written thirty poems for the English Language Arts unit which spanned a semester. In all of Felipe's poems, I noticed verbal and typographical play—things which I greatly admired in some of my favorite avant-garde Modernist poets. At MANOS, I would notice Felipe sitting alone. Approaching, I would overhear him sounding syllables to himself, while also combining the Spanish rolling trill to words in English. I was slightly envious because I could never trill like him. He wanted to be alone, he said, because he couldn't hear the words as well with too many voices speaking around him.

At the end of his project, he created a poem portfolio fashioned into a small book. He brought this to MANOS to show me because he knew I was a fan of his art. He had elaborately decorated the covers with designs of various shades and shapes, a Bat Man sticker, and the words "poems" with his name "Felipe Rubio" below. I remembered during MANOS hours asking him to read a bit to me, and I would offer him suggestions to sounds and rhymes which he often asked from me. He also asked what I thought of certain constructions or clever turns of phrase.

Felipe wanted to show me his portfolio because he was proud he earned an A in his class for his hard work. I told him I was impressed. I picked up the book of poems, and I read the above poem aloud with an English professor's accent (the best that I could effect with several years of adjunct elbow grease) performing at a relatively fast pace:

my co[mmunity] / is quiet / and / peaceful / too. [T]hey care about / every one /
and friendly too / it is / Clean / as / Ma[nhatta]ns / Sk[ie]s and / Néw / People /
say whats / néw / around / here / fólks

I stressed the vowels on the words “too,” “one,” “too,” “skies,” “new” twice, and “folks.” There was a steady rhythm in the first sentence, and the clever alliteration of [c] and [q]. Felipe asked me to read it aloud one more time, and I did. I noticed how his attentive expression configured differently both times I read the poem aloud.

“It sounds different when you read it,” he said.

I asked to hear how he read it to learn how he heard his words. When he read aloud, his voice sounded the qualitative meter slower, at a much softer pace, and he articulated steady syllable weight in multiple metric variations, which I accent below for emphasis:

my cómmunity / is quáiet / and / péaceful / tóo. [T]hey cáre abóut / évery óne / and
fríendly tóo / it is / Cléan / as / Ma[nháтта]ns / Sk[íe]s and / Néw / Péople / say
wháts / néw / aróund / hére / fólks

The poem’s initial steady iambs led to a subtle trotting rhythm by the poem’s end. Though we stressed the same words, Felipe added an extra foot between each stress. I had overlooked this musical element of the poem in my first two readings because of my faster pace. I told him he read the poem much better than me.

“Because it’s my poem,” he said. “I know how it sounds.”

Felipe’s literal enactment of ownership was grounds for me to smile. Looking into the content of the poem, I asked him why he chose such images for his community.

“Because Manhattan . . . everyone knows that’s America. . . . Because America is my community, and it is a good place.”

“America” was Felipe’s nation, though he would sometimes identify himself with being what he called “both”; that is, Mexican and American, but, he said, “more American.” The American in him was not only the “good” part, but also the part that permitted him to claim for

himself patriotic values associated with popular political discourse of citizenship like liberty and opportunity, which he did not readily associate with Mexico. Felipe was not ashamed of his Mexican roots and spoke Spanish to prove this. Yet when it came to the nation he identified with, in customs, culture, and language, he imagined the U.S. and New York. Perhaps Felipe enjoyed this culture's benefits because of his legal status, which—thankfully for him—he shared with his parents, which wasn't the case for a portion of the MANOS families, as he and others typically knew. In such circumstances, he was quick to distinguish himself as American mostly and less Mexican than some.

I read through the rest of the poems as Felipe worked on his math homework. His poems were both whimsical and funny, especially in some of the clever wordplay, attention to sound, and vivid images. I told him I enjoyed his poems. I asked him if I could make a photocopy of his book of poetry to include in this dissertation research. Felipe couldn't believe that I would want some of his poems in my study because—he said—they didn't have anything to do with MANOS or families. I had to disagree with him, of course, because I had seen him compose several of the poems at MANOS. And I had helped him with some of these poems at MANOS. I explained to him the best I could that I considered anything written at MANOS as about and part of MANOS.

“Okay then,” he said.

I begin this part of the chapter with Felipe's poem and the different performances each of us gave. Felipe's poem struck me as both a musical expression of community and as a textual argument for how immigrant communities conduct themselves and establish roots. The community in which he lived, the Mexican ethnic enclave on Foraker Street, was best understood

by how identity and language interacted in the U.S. and Mexico, and the rhetorics of power behind linguistic acculturation/loss.

Felipe's daily experiences were conducted in both English in Spanish but in reading and writing, he was English dominant thanks to the language impact of schooling. He told me during an interview that he read and wrote exclusively in English, and that reading and writing in Spanish was "very difficult" for him (21 Feb. 2011). His earliest school experiences were in bilingual pre-school classes that transitioned him into the "regular" English-only classrooms.

Felipe's poems, and speaking with him, his sister Sarita, and his mother Guadalupe (via translation from Felipe and Sarita), highlighted oral bilingualism versus written bilingualism, and how this contrast contributed to language loss in the second- and third-generations of immigrant families. The powerful significance of English for young people like Sarita and Felipe was enhanced by parents like Guadalupe who encouraged their children's English development. The theme of "language brokering" emerged when I joined conversations at MANOS involving translations by and for various parents, mentors, and mentees. At MANOS, I observed bicultural youth moving between worlds, expressing ideas and identities bilingually while still maintaining ethnic and family identities. The apparent comfort of the bicultural, bilingual youth confirms research into similar young people from other immigrant communities in New York where the second generation "are not lost between two worlds, but move easily between them and among each other. They do not strive to be American, but they feel they are American just by being who they are" (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, and Waters 402; see also similar conclusions in Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, Waters, and Holdaway; Portes and Rumbaut; Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco). Like all maturing young adults, they "may be impatient with how their parents do things [. . .], but they are not ashamed of their parents" (402). Still, the comfort of second generation young

people does not tell the whole story. Language distinctions are also social hierarchies which function as instruments of exclusion and subordination in varying institutional contexts and activity systems, as in homework.

Mexican immigrant assimilation to English from Spanish for Sarita and Felipe took place in a more forgiving and friendly urban New York City than my parents experienced on the Arizona border in the 1950s. In both cases, however, Spanish became English-ized. As used by Felipe and Sarita, English wasn't Spanish-ized as much as their Spanish English-ized (Otheguy and Stern 93). The extended study of English reading and writing (to the detriment of bilingual curricula) increased written fluency, while hyper-attentiveness to the Mexican accent in English conduced attempts at its erasure. This variety of language segmentation results in a reduction of potential between language mixture or hybridity. Without doubt, there are English phrases and constructions in Mexican Spanish, but they are considered at worst a-grammatical or at best nonstandard (Zentella, *Growing Up Bilingual*).

We must also remember, however, that contexts structure receptions and genres, which accomplish different functions depending on situations. Contexts and social networks also shaped my emerging recognition of myself as poet and writer, but with less poetic dexterity on account of my monolingualism, and slowly emerging bilingualism. My contexts also encouraged my literacy narrative culminating in this genre: my English doctoral dissertation at a major university in New York City—so very far away from rural Safford, Arizona where I was raised. As I became involved as a mentor to MANOS families, I realized that the social struggles my parents experienced as children of immigrants had not abated. I understood that my interactions with the families I mentored and befriended established the grounds for the ethnographic intervention I here report. Equally I contributed to meaning making in the study and I

acknowledged that my ethnography was influenced by my family history. In the next section, I affirm the legitimacy of Mexican culture and language brokering as rhetorical skills and valuable resources for me to cast my experiences as Mexican American with value and as an ethos, a means of making community through *confianza*.

2. Connecting the Self: Involved Ethnography and Generations of Family History

This chapter theorizes my Mexican American cultural identity and how MANOS shaped my affirmation of it. My mentoring role at MANOS helped me conceptualize my social position as third-generation Mexican American researcher in relation to the human subjects of my study and our shared and conflicting cultural identifications. My own background includes my family's loss of Spanish fluency, a common outcome of acculturation (Solís).

Migration, emigration, and immigration transform cultures. Population transfers across borders effect individual and group deculturation, acculturation, or transculturation (Portes and Rumbaut). In the United States, federal immigration policy entails extensive state policing "securing" long, porous borders and within the nation. At the same time, popular media discourse depicts a "brown flood" of immigrants washing over the U.S. southwest border (Santa Ana). Both severe state regulation and strong nativist prejudices affect immigrant assimilation and the turn toward English dominance.

At first, gathering accurate background data at MANOS on these families' assimilation processes was difficult because I was new to the MANOS community. After I had become a part of the community, I still had difficulties, however, because of language differences. Though I had a vague understanding and growing appreciation of the culture I found something like my own, something centrally Mexican which I was still searching for in claiming my lost identity, it

was the Spanish language I lost which proved to me that I lacked a connection to Mexicanness my parents had and I didn't. It was not a reason for me to turn away from the study, but drew my ignorance into the spotlight, and the places where I desired to learn most about myself.

As a researcher, then, my experience with language loss and immigration became a biographical foundation for conducting the study, an experience of "being there," an attitude "sufficient to experience the mundane and sacred, brash and nuanced aspects of socio-cultural life and, through observations, encounters and conversations, to come to an understanding of it" (Lewis and Russell 400). My history and life trajectory brought me to "be there" at MANOS, and to learn more about myself in the process.

I left southern Arizona at 23 after graduating from the University of Arizona with two English degrees, and before starting a graduate program. I had read about the world in various disciplines but wanted to experience it. I joined AmeriCorps for two years and performed thousands of hours of community service across the country, from building houses for low-income families in Georgia to tutoring Alaskans earning their General Educational Development (G.E.D.) diplomas. I learned a great deal about my country experientially to compare with the knowledge textually conveyed by college reading.

Why did I desire to earn my Ph.D? I knew I wanted to study for the rest of my life, for one. There were also the stark differences between direct experience and book-learning that made me re-think an academic life as a means to examine my history. Yet I was having second-thoughts about pursuing my Ph.D. in English, which I thought would entrap me in an ivory tower where research would leave me alienated from community involvement and service.

My search for the truths in direct experiences versus the truths represented symbolically in texts first led me to venture away from southern Arizona. I remember my father Robert telling

me a similar story about when he left his hometown after enlisting in the Army at 17. He was never a great student, so he decided to drop out of high school, lie about his age, and sign up for the service. Despite being a poor student, Robert was a voracious reader, and—as I still recall clearly—when I asked him why he joined the Army, he said, “to see the world.” He had only read about it, and he wanted to see it. My father’s narrative and my own were examples of working-class, ethnic minority American youth enclosed in a local area. Our experiences contrasted with wealthy children who traveled to see the world without having to leave home.

By the time I arrived in New York City, I had seen a nation beyond my rural home nestled in the mountainous deserts of southeastern Arizona for a few years. Seven years since I lived in Safford, and three since Tucson, I was still searching for community. I lived in *El Barrio*, Spanish Harlem, or East Harlem. I enrolled in the English Ph.D. program at the Graduate Center, City University of New York (CUNY). The Ph.D. was the best avenue for me in the end because my studies at CUNY exposed me to a pedagogical tradition of teaching language as a social, political, and democratic act. My graduate studies not only enabled me to develop as a scholar but also gave me the opportunity to teach New York City’s economically and linguistically diverse urban student population—the most diverse in the nation. It was during this period that I began teaching college composition and literature courses.

As fortune had it, I was looking to get involved with a local volunteer organization. My years in AmeriCorps instilled in me the importance of volunteering and giving to community as obligatory to membership. Volunteering with local New York Mexican and Mexican American people appealed to me, partly as—I supposed—I was feeling ethnically homesick for my imagined Mexican-American Arizona, but also because—like countless interdisciplinary-inclined Humanities scholars—feeling trapped by study left me academically disconnected from

everyday lived experiences and their pluralities of everyday histories (Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus*).

Before I found MANOS, I wondered if attending graduate school to study for a Ph.D. in English was the best choice. My first semester of graduate study, I grew frustrated by a widening disconnect between my literary studies and my social world. Postmodern literature left me feeling incredibly detached. I nearly seemed to forget that I was living in one of the world's great laboratories for studying social and cultural interactions. The story went back to my undergraduate English and writing studies where I first found that my writing would continually haunt me, that language use was crucial to making knowledge and becoming human.

My interests in writing, literature, and theory during my undergraduate years led to graduate school desires to only study Donald Barthelme, James Joyce, Samuel Beckett and the literary experiments of the OuLipo group of writers. But after teaching, I realized the importance of rhetoric, pedagogy, language, and literacy. I considered my true graduate education as the teaching experience I was gaining as an adjunct instructor of first-year composition. My job as an adjunct opened up my eyes to the practical side of being a graduate student, that of educator. In turn, I gradually forged connections between sociological interpretation of rhetoric in texts and cultural practices linking communicants (Berlin).

In "Sketch for a Self-Analysis," Pierre Bourdieu writes, "to understand is first to understand the field which and against one has been formed" (*Pascalian Meditations* 4). Bourdieu's doubling of the verb "to understand" speaks to the self-reflexive sense of the social context for the understanding of the self. To probe my own social formation deeper, I could say that the Gila Valley of southeast Arizona was the foundational border space through which I now articulate my ethnos-orientated archaeology of my situated perspective of investigator framing a

narrative point of view (Bal 116). I openly claim this initial geographical locale as the bias and recognition of the focalization of this study's limited gaze. My Mexican American cultural identity originated in this *habitus* from which also emerged my social position as second-generation Mexican American, and later as a graduate student studying and teaching writing.

In "Auto/Ethnography: Rewriting the Self and the Social" Deborah Reed-Danahay defines autoethnography as "research (graphy) that connects the personal (auto) to the cultural (ethnos), placing the self within a social context" (145). Qualitative research and writing of the self explicitly seek connecting the self to research/writing projects. The significance of my self-understanding requires the inquiry into false beliefs and mis-recognitions in maintaining power in privilege (Bourdieu, *Distinction*) in addition to my re-positioning as an emerging voice of the intellectual class—the dominated faction of the dominant class, as Bourdieu theorizes it (*Homo Academicus*). Critical autoethnography is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that represents to uncover multiple layers of discourse—connecting the personal to the cultural. It is an individual studying self as an individual within particular social and cultural worlds. The aim is to generate insights from data accumulated about the self, but also insight into how experience is shaped by society, cultures, and institutions. In the case of this dissertation, I use its methodologies in order to understand the implications of my research and volunteer experience with MANOS, and how mentoring shaped my Mexican American identity. I enlist critical ethnography and its probity for enabling researchers to recover hidden social and personal springs of their investigations and thereby "help convert intuition bred by social familiarity from intellectual handicap to scientific capital" (Bourdieu, "Algerian Landing" 415). Critical autoethnography offers the means to test the methodological tools with my own experiences, and to see how the idea of language brokering functions in different sets of contextual factors.

In my educational history, there had been a strong discrepancy between language use in everyday life and language use in academia, between high academic “consecration” and low social origins, a problem of awkward upward mobility discussed famously by Richard Hoggart in *The Uses of Literacy*, by Linda Brodkey in her exceptional literacy autobiography “Writing on the Bias,” by Mike Rose in his best-selling *Lives on the Boundary*, and by Bourdieu who described the problem as a “conciliation of contraries” (*Pascalian Mediations* 100, 103). The tensions between languages I associate with academia and my life outside academia are the same that establish the grounds for what I term “home” and “school” literacies for the MANOS participants. My home language began in southeast Arizona, and my academic language truly begins with this artifact I call my dissertation, here in New York City. This auto-ethnography has been my attempt to reconcile the complications the home and school dichotomy has made in my framing my biases approaching my research project.

My experience as an instructor of language usage and its social effects taught me to focus on the social dynamics of literacy practices, of reading, speaking, and writing, and where and when they happen. Following the influence of Ira Shor in adapting Freirean pedagogy, I looked to the cognitive and linguistic skills students bring to classrooms and how those skills—undervalued in formal school settings where “legitimate” or standard language dominates—have meaning, social value and integrity (Bourdieu; Farr; Santa Ana; Zentella). This entailed looking to situations of contact as content for critical scrutiny, and constant self-reflexive awareness on my part of the pedagogical potentials of any moment of discourse. When I was conversing at MANOS, language brokering from bilingual mentees and mentors, I remained open to teaching moments using translations from diverse subjects and genres, thinking in English/Spanish

cognates, and using bilingual dictionaries. Bilingual dictionaries became pedagogical necessities for academic intervention with students of different levels in multilingual settings.

My own linguistic adjustments to using academic discourse in this dissertation and in my collegiate career, as well as to re-learning Spanish at MANOS to enable my communication with the families, highlight the role of “language brokering” in my own development and research process. The asymmetrical relations of power in the linguistic marketplace structure how agents interact with one another, and the most distinctive and power-bearing language use in any exchange draws on the dominance of that dialect in society-at-large for its own local dominance in daily exchanges. Language brokers redistribute power in these local exchanges even if they cannot of course change linguistic power relations in society-at-large. Generational differences at MANOS put children into positions of power as brokers between their parents and others, including me. My participation in this unique process displayed to me in everyday language use the meaning of linguistic power relations in society. The simplistic manner in which mainstream schools legitimate “standard English” and delegitimize both the Spanish and the non-elite English dialect of the MANOS children became a more complex relation in the MANOS setting.

I claim my authority by opening up the documentary to my family life, turning the camera on myself and those closest to me, offering glimpses into how this critical framework of autoethnography seeks to overcome limits in the self and the social. I bring my familial social network and history into this study partly because families are the focus of this study, and in order for me to write about families at MANOS with any ethos, I have to permit myself to apply the same scrutiny to my family experiences as I do to those with whom I’ve developed *confianza*. When I do so, I—like all ethnographers—must ask: what are the limits to where research can go? Where are the spaces researchers cannot enter? What contact zones do we

collaborate in shaping? What borders can we cross? How do researchers address researchers, subjects, and audiences as “outsiders” and “insiders” (Reed-Danahay)? The answers depend, of course, on the data one collects. Before addressing this in depth, however, I begin with shaping the macro picture of historical context of the Arizona borderlands during the first two successive waves of Mexican migration into the U.S. southwest. I connect the micro history of my family’s migration.

3. Shaping Historical Contexts: Mexican Migration History and a Mexican Family History of Migration

Controversy over Arizona’s 2010 immigration law, State Bill 1070 (SB 1070), bore comparison to a similar outbreak of legislation and reaction one century earlier. SB 1070 signed by Governor Jan Brewer required immigrants to carry state-sponsored identification and authorized state and local police to detain individuals they suspected were undocumented. Proponents argued this would remedy the federal government’s ineffective policing of the border and would deter rampant drug crime and human trafficking from Mexico. The Obama Administration and civil rights activists contested the bill, halting it just before it took effect. The administration objected on civil rights grounds to the portions of the bill that called for probable cause for warrantless arrests by state and local officers based on “reasonable suspicion” that individuals were in the country illegally. A U.S. District Court judge in Phoenix imposed an injunction preventing several portions of the law from going into effect. The U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the injunction, and Governor Brewer petitioned the U.S. Supreme Court (Kiefer). Supreme Court arguments began in April 2012.

Also at the time of this writing, the effects of Governor Brewer's signing of the controversial House Bill 2281 (HB 2281) into law in 2010 began to surface. Amid protests, Arizona State Superintendent John Huppenthal ruled that high school Mexican American Studies (MAS) courses were direction violations to ARS 15-112, focusing on "prohibited courses and classes" (Steiner). According to Superintendent Huppenthal, MAS courses violated portions of HB 2281 that outlawed curricula that "promote resentment toward a race or class of people, are designated primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group, and advocate ethnic solidarity instead of the treatment of pupils as individuals." Many Tucson Unified School District students staged protests.

This charged climate of clashing along this portion of border between Mexico and the United States had been a constant since the Gadsden Purchase of 1853, when the U.S. purchased all southern Arizona and southwest New Mexico in a treaty with Mexico. In 1910, the Arizona Territory elected an all male, all Anglo state constitutional convention that debated immigration restrictions later passed by statewide vote and ruled unconstitutional by federal courts. At the same time, in Mexico itself, long-smoldering resentment over the nearly fifty-year dictatorial regime of Porfirio Díaz broke into revolution. Warfare in Mexican border towns spilled over onto the U.S. The Revolution precipitated the influx of thousands of war refugees to border cities like El Paso, Texas, and Nogales and Douglas, Arizona (Farr and Domínguez Barajas 7). These refugees were the "vanguard" in what would become the first mass migration of Mexicans to the United States (Benton-Cohen). Their much needed labor was welcomed during the first World War.

The first influx of immigrants during the revolution was followed by two later flows in 1900-1929 and in 1942-1964. The flows of Mexican immigrants happened in three large

movements during the twentieth century. The third of these mass migrations still continues from 1964 into the twenty-first century. The first wave, referred to by Durand, Massey, and Capoferro in “The New Geography of Mexican Immigration” as the “Classic Era” in Mexico-U.S. migration history (1, 9), the first third of the twentieth century, reduced Mexico’s population 10-percent. The Great Depression ended this first wave (Alba and Nee). During this “Classic Era,” the political situation in Mexico was unstable which served as a “push factor” for many who became immigrants. At the same time, the United States was expanding its railroad system in the western states, which led to a massive recruitment of Mexican laborers between 1929 and 1937, during which nearly a half million Mexicans were arrested and expelled from the country (Jaffe, Cullen, and Boswell; Massey, Durand, and Malone).

My grandparents emigrated during the Mexican Revolution from the northern states of Durango, Sinaloa, and Sonora to Arizona because of political turbulence and the pull of rapid economic development in the mining and railroad industries in the U.S. southwest during the early twentieth century. Between 1900 and 1920, the southwest United States saw the greatest increases in the Mexican immigrant population (Powers 469). In 1910, Arizona’s two major industries—railroad transportation and copper mining—used discriminatory pay scales, or a dual-wage system to pay Mexicans less than white men, regardless of their citizenship status (Benton-Cohen). This was not a casual racism, but a formal practice illustrated in corporate wage scales with separate columns for “white/American” and “Mexican” wages. In mining towns around the border known as “white man’s camps,” Mexican-origin workers were hired only for unskilled, “surface” labor rather than the more lucrative mining jobs (Benton-Cohen; Horne; Oropeza). My maternal grandfather Gilberto Navarro was born in one of these “white man’s camps.”

My paternal grandfather Francisco Alvarez was part of the first mass migration of Mexicans to the United States. He emigrated initially from Tetaroba, Sinaloa, Mexico first to the Mexican border copper mine at Cananea, Sonora, then later to Bisbee, Arizona. My father was born in Bisbee. My mother was born in Cananea, Sonora, and her family migrated to Bisbee when she was five in 1951. Her family was part of the second mass migration of Mexicans to the United States, referred to as the “Bracero” period after the Bracero (Spanish for “arm-worker”) agreements for the importation of temporary laborers from Mexico into the United States.



Figure 6.2: Mexico-United States border and states. Robert was born in Bisbee, Arizona. Anna was born in Cananea, Sonora. Their children were born in Bisbee, Arizona and Safford Arizona. Anna’s family emigrated from the state of Sonora. Robert’s family had emigrated from the states of Durango and Sinaloa.

I lived the first 18 years of my life in rural southeast Safford, Arizona, population 9,566: a desert town nestled between the Pinaleño Mountains to the south and the purple Gila Mountains to the north, relatively near both Mexico and New Mexico. Robert and Anna found

their hillcrest house at the last moment in a mad search for work, as they migrated from Bisbee, Arizona directly as the copper mine there closed. They arrived in Safford, lived in a series of cramped apartments until something finally opened, and when the house went on the market, they lunged at it. It was not important to them that their neighbors didn't resemble them or speak Spanish, and in fact, they didn't notice. They migrated to Safford to live their lives, and to provide for their children. Their neighbors welcomed them as a loving and hardworking "assimilated" American family (the children didn't even speak Spanish, after all). They also recognized my parents could afford to live in the moderately priced neighborhood. I grew up in a Mormon cul-de-sac, the only Mexican family in this small neighborhood. The nearest Mexican neighborhood, Vista Linda, a low-income community, was across a highway.

My mother had friends in Vista Linda whom we'd visit when I was young, and even then I noticed the children who lived there had last names like my own and spoke Spanish like my parents. But they spoke to me in English. I didn't know these children too well—as we didn't often travel to that side of the highway save for special occasions, like baptisms or weddings. My best friends were the Emery and Bennett kids, who lived on my cul-de-sac, and I identified with these Mormon children. I was an Eagle Scout in a Mormon Boy Scout troop, the only Mexican-American, and the only Catholic. I was permitted to join this troop without any pressure of conversion and with deference for my beliefs. I learned much about religious tolerance in all this, and also about tolerance in general as I made interracial and interclass friendships. I also gained from the mentorship I received in my abilities as a leader and as part of teams. The exposure to "gringo"-accented English also alerted me to the differences in accents between the English I heard spoken by friends' parents and that of my own.

In my experience, none of these mentors were Mexican American, which I now view as significant. Had Spanish been associated with some of those positive relationships, I might have been more inspired to learn Spanish. Unlike some of the MANOS youth who developed connections between Spanish and its positive associations with schooling, I had no contact whatsoever with Spanish in anything associated with school. This is not to say that my siblings and I didn't make positive emotional connections to adults who cared, and who demonstrated value, toward our Chicano English. When this happened, though, Spanish played no part. In the next two sections, I offer the narratives of my parents, their schooling experiences, and what they recalled of their duties as language brokers.

4. “The sooner you assimilate, the better off you are”: Robert C. Alvarez, a Portrait

My father and I have had only a few serious conversations with one another in my life. Richard Rodriguez mentions much of the same “quiet” relationship with his father in *Days of Obligation: An Argument with My Mexican Father* and *Hunger for Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez*. One conversation we shared before research for this study happened several years previously. As an undergraduate, I interviewed him for an ethnography project about a large copper strike in Morenci, Arizona which he witnessed first-hand. Another conversation we shared was when we traveled to Sinaloa, Mexico together to search for his father's adobe home and meet extended family he found through genealogical research. The following conversation on May 29, 2011 was one more rare occasion when I could sit with him alone and speak candidly. Just before the interview, our family suffered a health scare on his part. Thankfully, everything was fine, but during the time of this interview, we were both slightly tense.

Each time I've read the transcript, I've had difficulties finding which parts to select for analysis. Indeed, my quotes from the various MANOS family members and mentors were snapshots of fieldwork notes, documents, and extensive transcripts (totaling over 3000 pages). In comparison, my ethnographic scheme here quotes extensively from the interview with Robert, and abruptly shifts to a narrative discourse. It's true that I have reserved using this discourse sporadically throughout this dissertation at different points in a few chapters, but in this particular context, the understanding I gained in my English monolingualism and my father's painful schooling experiences underscore the power of the cadence of Robert's voice, which I think narrative discourse highlights more authentically than does academic discourse.

Robert Alvarez was born in Bisbee, Arizona in 1943. His parents were immigrants from Mexico who crossed the border in the same year, 1915: his father from Sinaloa, his mother from Durango. Five years of the bloody Mexican Revolution had passed. Robert's father Francisco was 27 years old when he emigrated with his second wife, Gloria, a Basque immigrant. He had abandoned his first wife Rosario Quintero and three children back in Sinaloa.

Robert's mother María was 8 years old when her family immigrated. She grew up down the street from Francisco in Bisbee. In 1942, a year after his second wife of 27 years Gloria passed away, Francisco married María. They had three children together before Francisco passed in 1955. María died in 1970.

Robert completed eleven years of schooling, earned his G.E.D. diploma and joined the military at 17. He was sent to Korea directly after boot camp in 1960. According to Robert, his mother completed the eighth grade in the United States: "My mother went to a Mexican school. It was called Lincoln School. It was only Mexicans up to the eighth grade. All the way through it was for Mexicans. It wasn't around when I started. It was disbanded." Robert said his mother

learned the basics of English at school, but learned mostly on her own since she read a great deal: “My mother used to read a lot. Anything. Fiction . . . almost any kind of novel, she read. In English. Most women didn’t read as much her, or most men either.”

He was less certain about his father’s schooling. Francisco’s job as a custodian didn’t require extensive training, though according to Robert his father’s janitorial job at the mine was preferable to the hard and dirty work of open pit mining which was where most immigrant workers in Bisbee at the time were found. “He used to work for the mines too. At the time he was a janitor. He got a chance for a way easier job, so he got that job as a janitor. When I was born, he was a janitor, and when later on he retired, he was a janitor.” After Robert retired from 39 years of copper mining, he also worked as a custodian. On the day of this interview, he had just returned from cleaning a parking lot for a local bank in town. His wife had cleaned the bank for ten years, and together they cleaned the same bank for close to another decade.

Robert’s father went to school in Mexico, he was certain of this, but he had no idea as to what level of education. However, the rural isolation of Tetaroba, Sinaloa—the village where Francisco lived the majority of his life before middle age—would severely have limited his access to formal schooling. Francisco had no schooling in the United States, though he did complete mail-order vocational courses in Spanish. “He took a course in radio—in servicing and repairing radios,” said Robert. “It was one of those international correspondence schools. But I remember it was in Spanish. So he used to spend a lot of his time—his spare time—working on radios. It was a hobby, but he would make money out of it too. People would come in with broken radios and he would fix their radios. Almost all the Mexicans. Always in Spanish.”

Using language as a point of intersection, I decided to steer the conversation in a slightly different direction. As I had asked all the MANOS mentees about their parents’ accents, I

decided to ask Robert his thoughts on how his parents spoke. I was expecting to hear something similar as I heard from the MANOS mentees as documented in Chapter 4. What I opened up, however, was something quite unexpected.

“How would you describe my grandparents’ spoken English?” I asked Robert as we sat on the sofa in the living room of his home drinking coffee with my digital recorder resting on a book between us.

“My mother spoke it. She spoke good English.”

“What do you mean that your mother spoke good English?”

“As normal people do here in the United States,” he answered. “No accent.”

Robert looked at me skeptically. As if I didn’t know what it meant to speak “normal.” I assured him that I was asking questions as a researcher.

“Put it this way, compared to my father, she sounded American. My father spoke broken English. People understood him, but he had . . . well, he would say the words with an accent. My father had a Spanish accent with some words. Once in a while, if [he] went to an office or something, he would communicate with the people there, but he had an accent. He could do what he needed to do. They didn’t have none of these Spanish signs and stuff like that. The person you went to always spoke English.”

“Did he ever have to speak English?”

“Well, then, I guess the only time he spoke English was when he was at work. He would speak Spanish at home all the time. My mother was always in Spanish until before I went to school. When I started school, everybody was speaking Spanish at home.”

Robert had two younger brothers. The elder was a year younger, and youngest seven years distant. When Robert began school, he spoke only Spanish. Though his mother had

command over English, or she spoke “normal” as Robert put it, she maintained her heritage language in her gendered domestic duty of raising her sons.

The interview returned back to Robert’s schooling experience. I wondered what sorts of educational mentorship was available to him growing up. A program like MANOS probably would have been an aid to his family’s integration into the school-language nexus of Bisbee. When I asked Robert about his schooling experience, I could see him begin to become animated. His voice quickened.

“Did you have any Mexican teachers?”

“Oh hell no,” he said. “No, no. If there was a Mexican secretary, then she was a big shot. No, the Mexicans then all worked menial jobs. Nobody cared about education in those days. As long as you could pick up a shovel, or something like that, nobody cared anything about education.”

“What about you?” I asked.

“I was a loner,” he said. “I didn’t really hang around with the kids who spoke English—well or Spanish either I guess. I didn’t have interests in being there to learn or to make friends.”

“Was Spanish used at your school?” I was expecting to hear how Spanish was discouraged, as I had read in various anthropological studies of English and Spanish on the borderlands during this period. He verified this, but Robert’s experience, however, was like nothing I had encountered in any book I read:

“Everything was taught in English. No bilingual or anything like that. If you, if, um . . . when they would give me directions sometimes the teacher would get madder than heck because I didn’t know—I couldn’t do what she told me to do because I didn’t know what it was. So she’d

get the ruler and hit me all over, on the head . . . and I guess she finally got tired of me, of hitting me. So then she put me behind the closet door every day.”

“Now what grade was this?” I asked.

“My first year,” he said.

“Kindergarten?”

“We didn’t have no kindergarten then. First grade. But that closet—” he continued where he left off before I interrupted him. By this time in our discussion, I think I lost some of my own composure hearing my father’s recollection. There was no subject-researcher distance during this exchange.

“—Well a closet, but really just a corner. You know where a door opens against a corner? And you know how when you open the door all the way, there’s a little triangle space behind it? Well it was that way in the hallway—between the classroom and the hallway. The part of the classroom where the kids hung up their coats and stuff. So she would open up that door and put me behind there. And I’d stay there all day until lunch. At lunchtime, go eat lunch, then come back, and go behind there again.

“I could look through the crack of the door when it was open—in the crack between the hinges and the door. She only did that with me, that I remember.”

I asked why he thought she did that to him.

“Because I couldn’t speak English at all. After a while, you know, she wouldn’t even take me back there anymore. I would come in, take my coat off, put my lunch away, and I’d go straight behind the door. That probably went on for about five months or somewhere around there.”

“Five months?” I asked. I was incredulous. “Half the school year you were standing behind the door?”

“Yeah,” he said.

“After my mother found out I was having lots of trouble, she told my father to start speaking English at home too. She saw my report cards, and she talked to the teacher. My mother was upset.”

“With the teachers or with you?”

“Well, with herself mostly,” he said.

“What do you mean?”

“She kept saying that she should have taught me English a long time before I went to school. She thought it was her fault.”

Robert did pick up English, and perhaps overcompensated by making an active push to forget Spanish and to assimilate to English only. I couldn't help but think that my father's *acento gringuense* (gringo accent) wasn't some form of overcompensation to further distinguish himself from what he perceived as linguistic Mexican, to effect the “normal” U.S. accent. Even his English had a pronounced drawl to it. His variety of Chicano English had a rural twist to it, which localized it more to the regional Mexican American accents of Texas and New Mexico. His English had a Texan twang to it, but also the cadences of standard English and nonstandard Chicano English. In rural Arizona, though, his self-regard for his accent was “normal.” After all, speaking “normal” English was one way to prevent being sent behind the classroom door. This same accent pervaded my Spanish, but in a much more English-pronounced way. As Otto Santa Ana writes, contrary to the hegemonic assumption that Latinos choose *not* to speak English, that “to prove their loyalty to the hegemony of Anglo-American culture, Latinos cannot retain two

public languages. They must appear to be monolingual English speakers” (289). This appearance of “normal” or *gringo* English was the public face for participation as a citizen. Richard Rodriguez’s *The Hunger for Memory* displaces bilingual curricula on these grounds, reflecting a dominant public identity grounded speaking and writing “American” and not like an “immigrant.”

Robert’s negative views of schooling seemed in part to reflect a disconnection between his family’s familiarity with the U.S. system of schooling, and also for what María deemed as her own deficiency. She internalized a misrecognition of racism against her own tongue as linguistic capital. Even though her son was the victim of a bigot teacher, María regretted not providing her son sufficient mainstream English learning.

I asked Robert how his Spanish development compared to his English.

“I have an English accent in my Spanish. A lot of words I can’t say correctly. I can’t pronounce them right in Spanish. I can’t trill the r’s for example. But then again, compared to English, Spanish is a simple for pronunciation. All the vowels have just one sound. In English, each vowel has two or three different sounds.

“I lost the fluency of Spanish after I learned English,” Robert said. “I didn’t use it for years, except when somebody asked me something in Spanish, but not much. I was never able to read and write Spanish but I learned it later. In high school. I took two years of Spanish, and it all started coming back little by little. Except for the fluency and vocabulary. It seemed easy. The class seemed easy. But then I could always learn how to talk different things in other languages too.”

“What kind of work would someone who spoke only Spanish find when you grew up?” I asked.

“If you spoke Spanish and no English? You might find work as a janitor, or cleaning houses, or digging ditches—menial jobs. Speaking with a heavy accent didn’t help either. They would still get classified as Mexican. In other words, even if you spoke English, but with a heavy Mexican accent, they would classify it as Mexican. You were still a Mexican. Period. They didn’t care if you spoke English. It was better to speak English with an American accent.”

I noted that Robert made the turn toward accents in the question of work and opportunities, so I followed up on this lead. “Why would people want to have an American accent?”

“Many of the older people would have given their right arms to speak with the American accent. Because the old people they wanted to get ahead, but they couldn’t get ahead because they couldn’t learn English. Probably when you learn English when you’re old, you’re going to have an accent. But if you spoke English, and got ahead, they would say, oh, you’re over kissing the *gringo*’s ass again. Like you think you’re better.”

“People would say that to you?”

“The only ones who spoke about me were the Mexicans. They would say that you think you’re too uppity-uppity, you think you’re it. Because you speak English good and stuff. They would criticize that I had an accent in Spanish. In their culture, when you cross over from one culture to another culture . . . part of the trouble with the Mexican culture was that they didn’t want to assimilate. And anyone that does assimilate, they started looking down on. If you speak English, you’re a *pochó*, because they expect you to . . . because they like their culture, they expect you to like it too. But as far as culture-wise, I chose the American culture. I understood it better than the Mexican one. I mean, as a kid, you look at the Mexicans and three-fourths of all the drunks in towns were Mexicans, and you never saw a Mexican working at a good job

anywhere. And yet, they were proud to be Mexicans. But they wouldn't assimilate. They wouldn't try to assimilate. They stayed in their own world. There was lot of pride. And there is with me too."

The ideology of assimilation ran deep in Robert's thinking about citizenship, and with this, he made the point of recognizing that he assimilated, and he worked hard all his life, and he loved his nation. The "separatist ideology" he proposes about the refusal for Mexicans to assimilate mixed popular border discourse concerning undocumented immigration from Mexico into southern Arizona (Chavez; Santa Ana). His stereotypes about Mexican alcoholism and unemployment also ran deep in U.S. border racism.

"As far as I'm concerned, I've been a *gringo* all my life. I've been Americanized. I take the American way and English. I support the American culture all the way; I can't support the Mexican culture because it makes me sick sometimes to look at it. Sometimes it's embarrassing to be a Mexican, say you're a Mexican."

Something that strikes me more each time I read my father's interview—as I compose this text that is both his narrative and my interjections—what Pierre Bourdieu deems as an individual's misrecognition of its own marginalization: "I never saw racism," said my father Robert. Well, he later admitted, he had seen some segregated bathrooms in Texas when passing through on his way to Germany while serving in the Army. The sort of misrepresentation referred to might, for a liberal democracy, include the effects of official beliefs in (maybe hopes for) equality of economic opportunity, and an open, accessible political system. The effect of each mis-belief in turn might be to stigmatize the poor as entirely responsible for their poverty, to make the inequalities in political influence underwritten and racially sanitized by economic

power, and to mis-represent low wages or unemployment to workers as an entirely impersonal, natural (i.e. not social) occurrence. Denial is a defense mechanism to protect self-esteem.

I asked Robert if this was the reason that none of my siblings nor I spoke Spanish growing up.

Robert didn't answer right away. "English is a . . . it was a . . ." He took the question in and nodded. "That was the tongue of the future well. If you were going to get ahead—and every Mexican that I ever knew said this—the first piece of advice was learn English. Learn English. If you wanted to get ahead anywhere, you got to learn English. Because nobody would hire you if you didn't speak English.

"I thought you would get ahead more by knowing English. But times change. Now it's instead of . . . it's a money perspective changes over here. Now it's a benefit if you learn. Now Spanish has a little bit of a value to it. Started back in the 60s around there. Late 60s. When it started getting more Mexican, people with better jobs, more people coming from the other side to buy stuff, people going to the stores and seeing things in Spanish."

Robert situated the broader U.S. turn toward increased bilingual tolerance, commercial/administrative necessity, and bilingualism as an asset in the job market. Robert situated the change occurring during the 1960s, possibly recognizing the Chicano civil rights and nationalist movements, and the general spirit of the era's wider acceptance of multicultural society and integrating excluded groups. And yet for Robert, this was not the main reason. He put things instead in economic terms and the larger integration of a world capitalist market:

"The name of the game is money, the United States runs on money. How to make more, how to get more. And the sooner you assimilate, the better off you are. Of all the Mexican kids I

knew growing up in school, maybe four out of ten . . . maybe five out of ten dropped out. The same way I did too. Look: if you don't assimilate, you're going to have trouble all your life.

“There's nothing wrong with what the Mexicans coming as far . . . they may be illegal and working, but they're trying to make a living. They have a right to eat, and to work. They're trying to make a dollar just like everybody else. If they want to speak Spanish all their lives, that's their lives. But they won't get ahead. It's in their benefit to learn English.”

5. “I was embarrassed because of the way they talked”: Anna L. Alvarez, a Portrait

My earliest memories of hearing Spanish spoken by my parents happened when they conversed with my maternal grandparents. Gilberto and Rosaura Navarro spoke Spanish, and very little English. My grandmother Rosaura's words were thickly accented. I remember her pronouncing shoes as “chú-ses,”—“Estévie, pood on jour chú-ses” (Stevie, put on your shoes). My grandfather said few words I remember, aside from “that's good,” “yes,” and “very nice.” With such few words in his English vocabulary, he couldn't have been anything but a kind man. I remember communicating with him mostly in gestures, but nearly always smiles.

My grandparents and I never truly communicated without language brokers, typically my parents. I still regret thinking about all the stories and family histories I never heard from them because I didn't have Spanish. I had heard some of these stories from my mother and also from relatives in Mexico and Arizona, but even with direct access to Rosaura and Gilberto, there was much about them I didn't know. Rosaura passed in 1992 and Gilberto in 2007.

Whatever connection to Mexican culture I've maintained from childhood and nurtured now as an adult had come from my mother. Anna Navarro was born in Cananea, Sonora, Mexico, approximately thirty miles south of the U.S.-Mexico border. She was seven years old

when her family migrated to Bisbee, Arizona in 1953. Her brother was 10, her sister 13.

Regarding her family's migration, Anna said of her parents, "They wanted to have a better life for the family, to make a better life for the family. And my mom had a sister who lived here already who was willing to be a sponsor. She was pretty well set-up here. Here in the States. So she had a lawyer friend who could help here, and that's how we got over here. She was our sponsor."

According to Anna, my grandfather Gilberto Navarro Valdez was born in El Rey, Arizona in 1916. What she called "El Rey," was the Mexican immigrant name for Ray, Arizona (also sometimes called el Ray, Sonora), a mining boom ghost town north of Tucson. Ray was demolished in 1958 when the Kennecott Mining Company began an open-pit mine on that spot and relocated the community to the corporate-planned town of Kearny. Ray itself was a town constructed by the previous mine company, the Ray Copper Company. My grandfather, however, was not a U.S. citizen. The specifics of this curious information had been family lore for many years, especially when more of my mother's history of her undocumented status as a child emerged. Gilberto lived most of his youth in Mexico, however. Raised on Ranchito Llano near Guasabe, Sinaloa, Mexico, he moved to Cananea, Sonora, Mexico as a teenager—just before the stock market crashed in 1929. He married Rosaura Rioseco in 1936.

Rosaura's family had branched to Cananea from Mexico City, and as four of her sisters immigrated successfully to the United States, into southern California. Rosaura lived most of her life in Cananea, and it was here she met Gilberto who claimed to have seen Rosaura the first day he arrived in town. They eventually married and started a family in Cananea. When they were in their early 30s, they and their three children migrated to Bisbee, Arizona. Anna had attended elementary school in Cananea for one year.

Gilberto rented a house, and planned on staying in Arizona. He was deported to Mexico in 1954 during “Operation Wetback,” and briefly separated from his family for just over a year. Anna’s Aunt Carmela, her mother’s sister, intervened to sponsor the Navarro family. Anna always had a fond regard for Carmela, who passed away in 2010.

We sat on the couch in her living room in Safford, Arizona. *Judge Judy* broadcasted on the large television screen, but Anna muted the sound. I had a cup of coffee. She had a glass of water, which she periodically sipped. The digital recorder rested on a pillow between us.

I asked Anna about the levels of education of Gilberto and Rosaura.

“Well my mom was a teacher over there in Cananea. And my dad he worked in the mines . . . *como se llama?* (how do you say?) . . . the . . . *la mina de Cananea, no recuerdo como se llama* (the Cananea mine, I don’t remember the name). And he also had a little certificate as a veterinarian. He used to take care of horses, like a vet. I guess, a little bit of college I guess. I don’t know how to describe the English and Spanish education thing. But my mom was a teacher and my dad had some training. I guess it wasn’t like college over here, but I’m sure they had some college.”

Anna remembered Rosaura teaching small children. She wasn’t sure what subject her mother taught, but she remembered her students were around four or five years old. Initially I thought this might have been the positive influence of mentorship for my mother—since her mother had some experience teaching children, maybe her mother was active in her English education using her Spanish skills, like some of the parents at MANOS. Already I was sensing a difference in the viewpoints of what Spanish meant for Anna contrasting with that of her husband because of the formal training Rosaura had working with teaching children.

Anna withdrew from her high school during the 11th grade when she learned she was pregnant. She said she always regretted not completing high school, but it also served as a valuable lesson she expressed to her children for the importance of education and studying, again, the immigrant bargain. “I went up to my 11th grade,” she said, “and I got married. And then I got divorced not long later. Two-and-a-half years later I got my G.E.D. Later on in life I went to community college for a couple of classes, but I never did go back. I think I was lazy in high school because I could have done a lot more, and I was always wanting to have fun and stuff. I didn’t apply myself the way I should have.” Anna enrolled in courses at the local community college as a retired adult, including English, American Sign Language, and quilting courses. Of her siblings, Anna was the only one to complete her high school education.

In order to probe further into her educational experience and possible mentors, I asked Anna who helped her with her English when she first started school in Bisbee. “When you first arrived,” I asked her, “how much English did you understand?”

“I didn’t speak no English. I didn’t have nobody to talk to, or practice with. Well I was little, so it didn’t matter much to me. But I had a really nice teacher, her name was Mrs. Bonham, and she was bilingual but not Mexican. I never had a Mexican teacher, and only that one bilingual teacher. She helped me a lot. I guess she kind of liked me or something. She was my first teacher in Bisbee, in first grade.”

An interesting further contrast to first English exposure between Anna and Robert emerged as she continued her memory of Mrs. Bonham, her first mentor. I began to see that this teacher brokered Anna’s sponsorship of English and the dominant language. I also had a suspicion that gender may also have been an issue, and that Anglo teachers may have treated Mexican girls differently than boys. Gender relations in Bisbee during this time were subject to

heavily policed surveillance of the town's Mexican male populace for Communist and anti-American activities (Benton-Cohen).

Anna explained how her instructor tutored her after school using her Spanish skills already partially developed in her one year of school in Mexico. "I remember she first started giving me papers in Spanish. And she would see—I think—I could do it in Spanish, and then slowly she started introducing me to the language. And if I didn't understand it, she would write down what I said. And it was just a way like, you know? It took her own time . . . I was very fortunate because she helped me a lot." Mrs. Bonham's bilingualism directly affected how she taught Anna. She assessed Anna's literacy skills in Spanish and translated these into English education scaffolds for building on strengths.

Without doubt, Mrs. Bonham did not think of her language minority students' languages as deficits, and with elements of biliteracy transition into English. The MANOS method of recognizing and utilizing bilingual strengths in social communication, it seems, was in practice, but in the context of the school. Again, it is also important to consider what sorts of "safe spaces" were available for immigrant parents to gather with others in a common educational endeavor on the Arizona borderlands during this era. Even then, as now, schools would have benefited by reaching to communities who share common interests.

Mrs. Bonham communicated directly with Gilberto and Rosaura about Anna's progress. "She spoke good Spanish too. And she would talk to my mom and dad about how I was doing." Mrs. Bonham also followed Anna's progress for a few years after finishing her first year with her. According to Anna, she also stepped in to help with her older siblings as well. "Sometimes she would help my sister and brother too, but not all the time. But they were picking it up too, with their friends and stuff."

To reiterate, nothing had changed in school policy when Anna began attending elementary school four years after my father started. She did not remember any Spanish-speaking students disciplined in the way Robert narrated his experience. Robert's situation with his teacher, then, might have been bad luck. There was still no second language acquisition program at the school, but Anna recalled how Mrs. Bonham organized her class in order to address the specific needs of her second language students.

"How did she help the Spanish speaking students?" I asked Anna.

"She would get all us kids who spoke Spanish in a group. There were a few of us. I remember there was this boy, Emilio. He had a hard time. Poor kid. He couldn't grasp it, it was hard for him. It was hard for him to grasp the English. For me it was easier, but with him it was hard. And she would get frustrated with him with that. And he acted like he didn't want to learn it. And she [Mrs. Bonham] knew that this other little girl and me wanted to learn it, so she helped us more. Poor *chamaquito* (little guy). *Pues* (well), and she would help us more. And with that little boy, I didn't know what happened. The teacher wanted him to learn English, but he didn't want to." Anna pointed to a gender issue in the classroom read that either girls were more linguistically adept than boys, or that Bisbee teachers favored girls. Girls may also have been more compliant to authority than boys.

"But you wanted to learn it? That's why you think she liked you?"

"Yes, I think so. Because I wanted to learn English because everybody else was speaking it. And I wanted to know what they were talking about. I wanted to be able to do the things they were doing. I was in a different country. I didn't understand it then, but my mom and dad told us that we were going to a new country, and English-speaking people, and the whole thing was

going to be different. They explained to us before we came over here. So I just wanted to be one of them too.”

Anna’s parents offered their children their narrative rendition of the immigrant bargain. As with the MANOS mentees, the Navarro children understood that their schooling was an important part of their deal with their parents to show respect and also to honor the sacrifice they made in the migration northward, “for a better life” as Anna put it.

“I don’t want you to get the wrong idea though. Emilio wasn’t a bad kid, I wasn’t better than him or anything like that. I had a hard time too. It was confusing to me at first because of all the syllables and all that bunch of stuff. But the kids, listening to how they talked. I think I was different. I would listen really closely at how they talked, and how they would say the words. And what they were talking about you know. More or less figuring out what they were saying. And I think when you’re young you can grasp a different language easier.” Anna recognized her unique skills of appreciating language and the performance of accents, as well as the incorporation into her own repertoire, studying dominant culture as an outsider, a bicultural perspective. As for Emilio, she didn’t blame him completely for not grasping the dominant language, though she didn’t focus all the blame on Mrs. Bonham whom she said made unsuccessful efforts to reach him. A MANOS sort of intervention would likely have had a positive effect for reaching such a youth, and also involving his family. Mrs. Bonham’s position in the linguistic marketplace, despite her bilingualism, maintained a distance for this youth. With *confianza*, mentorship, and cultural and language brokering the outcome may have been different.

I asked Anna if she had ever had any experiences like Robert’s behind-the-door punishment.

She shook her head. “He went through a lot of stuff when he was younger, when he started school. I imagine he probably suffered you know. Humiliating too. And I don’t think he wanted any of the kids to be like that too . . . I didn’t have the bad experience like he did. I had a good experience. I think if he would have had a good teacher like I had, it could have been different. Look, I can see where it’s coming from—I can see it. And he was just a little kid too, you know. But I never got in trouble speaking Spanish, no—when I was in school, no. But I did get in trouble speaking it when I was a bus driver.”

For just over a decade, Anna worked as a bus driver for the local school district. She ultimately had to retire early after an auto accident left one of her shoulders disabled. “One time, some of the other drivers at the bus barn got mad, and they reported us Spanish-speaking drivers to the supervisor. They thought we were talking about them. And so they [laughs] they were offended. Because we were speaking Spanish, they thought we were talking bad about them, and that when you’re around other people you got to speak English. And they reported us to the supervisor. And he laughed it off. He said I’m not reprimanding you, but I have to tell you that you can’t do that. But to me, he said, I don’t really care because I know what you’re saying and I know you’re not saying anything wrong . . . because I speak Spanish too! And he was a white guy. He could hear what we were talking about, but he had to do it because of the other *viejas* (old women).”

Anna laughed off the language policing of her working environment, taking the resistance to her freedom of expression in stride. Had her supervisor not been bilingual, she possibly may not have had the same nonchalant remembrance. It did not deter her from speaking Spanish completely however, but it did cause her to be more aware when speaking it during extended periods. “I would still put in a word here and there anyway, I can’t help it,” she said.

“My cousins in Mexico tell me that my Spanish is very Americanized,” she continued. “They said that I don’t speak the kinds of words they use. Sometimes I’ll be speaking Spanish and my English comes out. And I have to catch myself. My Spanish is more Americanized, and when I don’t know the word, I throw in some English there. And sometimes when I’m speaking English to people, my Spanish comes out. If I don’t know one word in Spanish, then I’ll use English, and vice versa. When I write too. I switch. I don’t know, it’s just one of those . . . an instinct that comes out. Even to *gringos* too. My friend and I speak in English, and my Mexican comes out. ‘What are you talking about?’ she says. ‘Sorry, it just comes out.’”

Along this same idea of code-switching Anna brought up, I turned to her experiences with translation. I brought the interview to the question of language brokering and Anna’s experience as translator for her parents.

“What did your parents think of you learning English?”

“My parents liked [that] I learned English. They were very happy. My parents said we were here, they wanted us to go to school and learn English. It was important for them for us to learn it. Because I would help my dad sometimes with things, you know—like, the mail, or directions, for a lot of different things. And if you go to the store and you want to find something, and you have to ask, I would help him with that. They would take me to the store, and I would go help and pay. Kind of like a translator I guess.”

“When else would you translate for your parents?”

“Well, like at the doctor for one. Go to the doctor, you know, like if you go to the doctor and your stomach hurts but my mom can only point and go ‘ay ay ay.’ But then I would translate, and help with the medications and ask questions. Like a translator, kind of, but I was a little kid, about nine.”

“So you were talking to the doctor for your mom when you were nine?”

“Yes.”

“How did that make you feel?”

“I guess that made me feel superior to her. Because I knew what the guy was saying, and she didn’t know. She would look at me to see what I was talking about you know. So it made me feel big I guess. But I hope I translated the right things.”

Anna was the language broker for her family, and in her own words, her use of Spanish in practical experiences to help her parents also fostered her appreciations to its functionality in her daily family life. The same with English, and her sense of feeling “superior” to her mother because of her command of the dominant tongue in the linguistic marketplace. She was able to communicate on the same level with the doctor who treated her mother. Several MANOS mentees also expressed a sense of power over their parents in such triad situations when language brokering for parents with adult professionals (see also Orellana 27).

Like I inquired of several MANOS mentees, I asked Anna if she had ever used her bilingualism to deceive her parents. She smiled at this.

“Let me see . . . you want to write about this?” she asked. “To be honest, yes, sometimes the teachers would say that I was either talking too much or being lazy, and I would tell my mom different things, you know. And of course it made myself feel better, but what the hell I thought, I’m not going to tell her. But she would catch me, I don’t know how. And I would get grounded. It wasn’t a laughing matter then, but now, *pues* (well), yeah.” I was reminded of MANOS mentee Dieguito’s intentional mistranslations between his mother and me.

“Who helped you with your homework when you were growing up?”

“My sister and my brother helped me with my homework. Or I would go to my neighbor, my friend’s mom, Lupe. Lupe would help me. This was something later when I was in middle school and high school. She was friends with my parents. This couple, Lupe and her husband, they were younger than my mom and dad. They would help us a lot. They had kids, Rey and Delia, and they helped us a lot too. There was a lot of things I didn’t know how to do, and they would help me. Because I was the youngest of all the kids, my family and Lupe’s. So since I was the baby, I think they helped me a lot more.” The social network of families proved to Anna’s advantage growing up. The joint resources between families further reinforced her educational support nexus in Bisbee. It sounded like she had a learning community and adult and youth mentors. I asked her about some of the ways these young friends tutored her in English.

“They would do things so that I had to guess what they were talking about. They would do things with their hands, and I would guess. Miming. They wouldn’t give me the answer. If I didn’t know, then they would do that. But they wouldn’t give me the whole answer.” The game quality no doubt helped Anna to improve her vocabulary, and she remembered these language games with Rey and Delia as enjoyable learning experiences. Some of these games, such as the team-building games at MANOS described in Chapter 5, became memorable learning experiences that incorporated social learning.

When I asked about her Spanish literacy, she returned to the theme of “Americanized” Spanish.

“It’s like I said, I’m Americanized. My cousins give me trouble when I write them. I lost a lot of Spanish. I lost a lot of . . . of words, there are some words, and the spelling. And I don’t really read books in Spanish and stuff like that. I don’t write it, there’s no need to write Spanish here. And the speaking, the speaking Spanish only happens for me here and there.”

“Do people tell you your speaking accent is Americanized?”

“Well sometimes people tell me I have an accent. In English, people tell me I have a Mexican accent. And I guess I do have to have an accent because Spanish was my first language. But I speak mostly English so my Spanish has an American accent. My friend used to tell me that a lot. I don’t know if she was joking or not. She would tell me that my accent was real thick both ways.”

I asked her how she would describe her parents’ English accents. This question drew strong answers from MANOS youth, and I was anticipating something of equal measure from Anna.

“I think they were embarrassed to speak it. As a matter of fact, I know they were embarrassed, because my mom would always say that she didn’t want people to make fun of her, so she wouldn’t speak it. But I never made fun of her.

“I would think they needed help, because their English was bad. Chopped English they call it. I don’t know how my dad got around, but I think he kind of just got through with it somehow.

“And you know, I would be mad when the other people . . . when my mom or dad was talking to *gringos*, and I know what those *gringos* were thinking because I was thinking it too. ‘Why don’t you speak better English?’ I would think. ‘Why don’t you learn English?’ I would say that to myself. ‘Why don’t you speak it?’ I would think it, but I would never say it. I was embarrassed because of the way they talked. But there was nothing I could’ve done, I was just a kid. Until my dad started working, and he had to learn it, but he never did speak it. He would just say a few words here and there. He just had enough to get by at work.”

I sensed in Anna's description of her parents' accents reflections familiar to MANOS youth embarrassed by their parents' accents or fumbling in English.

"No English, no, just Spanish. Everybody spoke Spanish in the house. My dad picked up some words with his jobs, when he was working. And my mom she would do some of it . . . but it was mostly just bad words [laughs] and stuff like that, she didn't really want to learn it. You know, the right way."

Anna laughed at the remarks about her mother's English swearing vocabulary, but she was also slightly choked up. We momentarily stopped the interview. When we resumed I asked her why she felt so emotional.

"I was thinking about the accents," she said. "It holds a lot of people back, because they're afraid people are going to make fun of them. If you spoke Spanish, maybe a laborer. For women, maybe housekeeping or janitors."

"Have you ever had a negative experience because of your accent?"

"Yes, I have been embarrassed. When there are people higher up, like the superintendent at schools. Like my boss at the bank too. I would feel like my English wasn't as strong as theirs, and my accent was coming up, you know. They didn't make me feel about it, but [I] thought maybe they were judging me by my accent. They should judge you by who you are not your accent. I was judging myself. You feel less somehow. Like on your own for being dumb I guess."

"But how could you feel dumb if you speak two languages?" I asked.

"Yeah, but it depends on your surroundings. But being bilingual is a good thing sometimes. Maybe more opportunities, if you go somewhere to get a job, and you understand both languages I think it's good. Other people don't think that way, but I think it's good."

She knew I was going to ask her next why none of her children were bilingual.

“That’s a good question,” she said. “It would have been a good thing to be bilingual. But people ask me, how come your kids don’t speak Spanish? And I say, I don’t know. He [Robert] was just a firm believer that you should speak English, only English. Your dad always wanted us in the house to speak English all the time. He didn’t want the kids to have the same problems he had in school. Speak English he said. And I would do that. I wanted you guys to learn it, but he would get mad. Don’t speak Spanish, and I don’t know, the years just went by.”

“And Spanish for you?”

“It’s a tie to where I’m from. You have to have roots from somewhere. To remind yourself where you’re from—because I’m not from here. I’m an immigrant. You’re not, you’re from here, so English is yours.”

6. Response to Parents’ Narratives: Brokering –ismos: *Chicanismo* and *Pochismo*

Culture and context intersect and influence unfolding lives (Yoshikawa ix), and social circumstances form settings of interactive group events. To further comprehend the contexts of my parents’ bilingual narratives, I must begin by pointing out my family’s economics which enabled me to attend college. Higher education was out of reach economically for my parents, but also for my elder siblings. My parents had five children over 15 years, 1967-1982. Between my oldest sibling and myself, the second youngest, there was a gap of eleven years. There was also a gap of seven years between next oldest sibling and myself, my sister born in 1972, me in 1979. My younger sister arrived in 1982. By the time my three older siblings had come of age, my parents had increased economic security, helped in part by the older children assisting in child care duties for the two younger siblings, freeing my mother to work outside the home,

which she did, increasing our family income. According to Hirokazu Yoshikawa “higher wages and wage growth result in higher household income [. . . and . . .] appears to have positive effects on children’s learning” (117). The increased income earned by my parents when I was a child as well as the mentoring provided by my older siblings had positive outcomes for my educational trajectory.

A generation earlier, when they were children, my parents Robert and Anna learned English in elementary school in Bisbee, Arizona, where both grew up in blue-collar working families. My father told the strange and cruel—but perhaps not uncommon—story of being punished into learning English by forced standing behind the classroom door. A similar scene appears in fiction by Nuyorican author Nicholassa Mohr, in the young adult novel *Nilda*, whose eponymous heroine is a second-generation Puerto Rican American girl from Spanish Harlem, or *El Barrio*, East Harlem (or as some gentrifiers around 116th Street call it now “Spa Ha”). Set in 1941-1945, Nilda ages from nine to thirteen in a “rough” neighborhood reminiscent of Foraker Street.

Like Robert’s experience at school, Nilda’s fourth grade teacher institutes a “No Spanish” rule to assert English. Miss Langhorn’s logic is that good Americans speak English, “Anybody caught speaking or even saying one word of Spanish had to put to put out both arms and clench his hands into fists” (Mohr 46). Miss Langhorn’s words reflect anti-Spanish sentiment and also enact linguistic power inequalities. She implicitly “teaches” her students to blame their parents for their social conditions. When students reacted to her subtractive schooling pedagogy, she would respond,

“None of that,” she would say, “if you are ever going to be good

Americans. You will never amount to anything worthwhile unless you

learn English. You'll just stay like your parents. Is that what you people want? Eh? she would ask earnestly, waiting for an answer.

"No."

"No, who?"

"No, Miss Langhorn." (Mohr 46)

Miss Langhorn argues that if her language minority students learn English, they'll be "good Americans," and "worthwhile." If they don't learn English, they'll be like their immigrant parents, unsuccessful. These are her terms for her students' immigrant bargains. Put bluntly, her argument imposes the following logic in the sacrifice narrative from their parents: instead of the sacrifices of your family in pushing you to succeed in school, your parents don't speak English; your parents are not worthwhile, and "you people" will never get ahead. Spanish, for Miss Langhorn, is un-American, and since the majority of children in her classroom speak Spanish at home, then what she "teaches" not only vilifies parents but also creates a harsh division between the realms of the school, her students' families, their homes, and their heritage languages. Miss Langhorn represents her minority students' loyalty to their linguistic identity as a marker of failure.

Miss Langhorn's condemnations of language minority parents for lacking English echoes Robert's story of his mother María's disappointment for not teaching her son English before he started school. According to Robert, María felt like she failed her son for not teaching him English, and thereby preparing him only for failure at school. In one way, we would expect such

racialized, terrible teaching practices would be countered by the safety of the home front. Of course families are situated within an educational nexus of power, and they mediate home languages and attitudes toward learning to institutional language and school notions of linguistic propriety. For children it is their everyday experiences in their relations to social institutions—most especially schools—that particularly challenge attitudes about schooling and one’s sense of “place” within the linguistic marketplace. This is “subtractive schooling” (Valenzuela) because schools erase the cultures and languages non-native children bring with them to class. In *Subtractive Schooling: U.S.-Mexican Youth and the Politics of Caring*, Angela Valenzuela argues that cultural erasure means that schooling expects immigrant and minority children to give up their ethnic cultures and lose this valuable support for their educational development. Subtractive schooling is one way in which the brokered social relation between communities of families and schools gets disrupted, when the values of home language practices become perceived as “deficits.” Holding negative views of Spanish in its many local dialects leads to “subtractive” practice. In the novel, Nilda experiences this first-hand from her fifth grade teacher. Robert also experienced subtractive schooling, based primarily in the racial hierarchy of the Arizona borderlands over fifty years ago. Subtractive schooling practices neglect to recognize that children come to schools with complex sets of histories, as members of diverse families and communities (Dyson).

Valuing linguistic diversity in the classroom means collaboration with the families of students in *confianza* to build on already present skills. For LM families and their children in mainstream schools, Spanish has to be re-positioned in the linguistic hierarchy through brokered and bilingual communication. Bilingual children should then be re-positioned as language

mediators allowing language minority parents access to collaboration in their children's educations in English as they develop language skills.

As I described earlier this chapter, racial discrimination in Bisbee, Arizona during the 1950s was so terrible that Mexicans generally earned lower wages reserved for “non-whites.” Yet, some rare spaces were reserved in the “white” category for Mexicans who assimilated well—Mexicans who conformed to the dominant culture which emphasized monolingual English spoken with an American accent, that is, English spoken without a Spanish accent, a *pocho* English really. Whether *güero* (possessing a fair skin complexion) or not, those with the *pocho* accent were “honorary” white Mexicans in the color-caste. My parents, acting out of survival, internalized this model of domination, and as a result of their labors to be integrated and accepted as American, they fully acculturated their children, and at the same time internalized both a resentment and guilt for Spanish-accented English. My inclusion in the one-percent of total Ph.D. students in New York City of Mexican American descent testifies to the success of my family's assimilation narrative spanning three generations. That my Spanish was lacking was “the price of the ticket,” as James Baldwin put it.

My version of the immigrant bargain was not unlike that of the MANOS mentees, and it certainly resonated with all MANOS mentors. I also wanted to do well in school to repay my parents for all their hard work. Robert and Anna had also felt conflicted about my ambitions to expand my educational horizons further and further from Arizona. My academic credentials opened doors for me beyond my rural Arizona community. My repayment for them was confirmation that I would live a stable life and be a contributing, professional member of U.S. society.

Though my grandparents made the sacrifice of migration for their children's benefit, their children—my parents Robert and Anna—did not. Anna migrated as a child, but recalled her father out of work for months at times because of meager opportunities available for Mexican immigrants. My parents' stories taught me that I had an easier life than they did, particularly on those days when Robert and I went to work as custodians for the bank my parents cleaned for 18 years. I heard similar narratives from Anna when working with her, also as a custodian, though at a medical clinic. I went to work with both my parents landscaping and cleaning offices, movie theatres, banks, and parking lots during college vacations. When considering my aspirations to leave Safford, Arizona for New York City, and also my parents' aspirations for me, I had to rely on the clichés such for work experience provided me: an internalized orientation from my *habitus*, or a laborer's work ethic.

When I tell colleagues that my parents cleaned offices for a living, and that I know what it feels like to work, real physical work, I remind myself that I'm nostalgic for my working roots, that sense of familiarity and embeddedness of my *habitus*. I used to accompany with my parents when they cleaned offices in the evening, sometimes doing my homework while I waited, and other times helping out with what I could—usually vacuuming and picking up trash from bins. My efforts there brought no special notice from them, but when I won awards from school my parents were always proud, and Robert told me from a long time back that I was doing things that never really appealed to him because he didn't have what he termed my "ambition." I was ambitious in ways he wasn't, he said, and he credited this with social class for shaping my entitlements to dream the way I could. For him, life sent harsh reminders of his position, despite his strong feelings of patriotism. This aspect of entitlement was something not fully captured in Robert C. Smith's theorizing about the immigrant bargain.

I'm constantly waging a battle within myself in regards to my working class roots and my Mexican ethnicity. I feared that the values I gained from my working class background would become faint memories as I vaulted ahead of the superficial, unfamiliar expectations of me, a young Mexican American entering a career within academia, in a discipline, English, where Latinos were largely underrepresented. Yet when comparing my work ethic with that of my parents, I found difficulties making even approximate correlations. My labor in academia and their blue-collar work were entirely distinct. I noted this when an undergraduate professor of mine in a Victorian Literature seminar spoke in passing about the woman who cleaned her home once a week. As she said these words, with her copy of Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* in her hand, I put something together in my head. My mother was the anonymous, unimportant woman who cleaned the professor's house; Anna was not the professor. The great distance between these two women was collapsed into my consciousness of their differences and my thoughts as their brokered link. I had a sick discomfort in my stomach as I considered becoming a professor who might hire a woman like my mother to clean my home, or take care of my children in the future.

I felt suspended between two locations and identities, which is a common condition for working-class youth who climb up the ladder. Mediating this disjuncture in my identity development fueled my graduate research and ethnographic project at MANOS. At the same time, what I consider my work ethic in my studies often explained how my roots to "work hard" for betterment led to rewards—in my case intellectual ones primarily.

Robert and Anna felt political pressures and racism in the language which they internalized on the U.S. borderlands, and into the U.S. mainstream. Their five children grew up speaking English, like Americans, or as "regular people" according to Robert. This meant English as a first language, and English in the home. Though Anna had insisted on using

Spanish, she ultimately followed suit with her husband who demanded that his children be monolingual English speakers. Though some Spanish did remain with the children—mostly words for food or relatives—English by and far dominated the third generation’s linguistic repertoire. Research on generation language shift argues that Spanish seldom lasts beyond the second or third generation, and that economic, historical, social, and political factors determine these patterns (Loeza 23). Like Robert and Anna, I did not have any bilingual courses during my schooling, though by the time I was growing up such classes were available in the state of Arizona. During the 1950s, however, such classes were not. If they were, my parents would both likely been enrolled in them. In my case, like Robert and Anna, I attended only public schools.

Both my parents spoke about accents at length. Despite our family’s English dominance, we still spoke a marked variety of English. Chicano English is the racially-marked form of English which is my home language. Chicano English may constitute the linguistic interference from Spanish that native speakers experience when learning English, but one cannot assume that this holds true in every case. While Chicano English’s phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon differentiate it from standard English, its features also characterize a language independent of Spanish (Duchnowski). The transition into Spanglish (Stavans; Zentella) is only one marker of collisions and adaptations of languages and cultures. When voiced in English, the Chicano English accent remains, and this often goes unnoticed by its native speakers. Chicano English remains distinct from standard English or “Anglo” English by illustrating its speakers’ ethnic identities and declaring their cultural ties with Mexico.

My place along the Arizona-Sonora border affected my perceptions of the immigrant bargain. Upward mobility for ethnic minorities and recent immigrants conflates social class and national identity transformations. One “loses” both class-based roots and ethnic roots to get

ahead. My father mentioned how some individuals wished they had the “normal American” English, or what he deemed non-accented English so they could live better lives. Robert spoke for the notion of selective acculturation, or acceding to the dominant culture. Without doubt, my pursuit of a Ph.D. in English had been a multiple migration laterally from a marginal ethnic culture to a mainstream one and vertically from a working-class location to a professional one. Thus, the metaphors of migration indicated I was moving in two directions at once, laterally across national cultures and vertically across class cultures.

The choice not to make these moves was visible in fully bilingual cousins my age who spoke Spanish among one another but only English with me. They were more Mexican than my family—had closer ties to their Mexican roots, which my father of course deemed a bad streak because it signaled a rejection of assimilating for success. According to Robert, these cousins on my mother’s side and their family were lazy, bad people. They squandered their money and did illegal things. They were not like us, he would say, they didn’t want to “get ahead.” Us Alvarezzes, anyway, were also fairer skinned. Our color caste in Mexico and the U.S. was closer to whiteness—or *güero*—and therefore afforded us more ease of assimilation into the mainstream. We could pass, and I—well—did pass, all the way to my Ph.D., following my father’s simple rules to work and keep assimilating. My cousins were browner, and they spoke Spanish. They also spoke English with Spanish accents. For some reason, he connected this to their lack of work ethic and resistance to becoming part of the mainstream.

The linguistic outcome of this assimilation narrative was that my poor *pocho* Spanish was more Spanish than my sisters and brothers speak. “The pocho,” explains Gloria Anzaldúa, “is an anglicized Mexican or American of Mexican origin who speaks Spanish with an accent characteristic of North Americans and who distorts and reconstructs the language according to

the influence of English” (78). Anglicized, assimilated, culturally detached: *eso sí que es* (S : O : C : K : S, “that is what it is”—*pocho* trick). When I spoke Spanish in front of some of the MANOS mentees, I was criticized for my Anglo intonations. MANOS parents were often sympathetic to my situation as an “assimilated” American, but at first were distrustful. I think my struggles with Spanish, as well as the concern for the education of the mentees, helped me to develop *confianza*, or trusting rapport. I was in a similar position as the parents of the youth in that I relied on the mentees to translate and communicate for me, or “broker” linguistic exchanges between their parents and myself. Likewise, I could relate to the pressure felt by the MANOS mentees because I had lived similar assimilationist narratives to theirs.

My parents of course were not fully bilingual, but Spanish was their first language. Learning Spanish to the level of fluency had been my challenge, and something I was constantly working toward. Yet as I write this I am careful not to pose my Spanish bilingualism in the United States as the same challenge monolingual Spanish speakers have when living in the U.S. I’m an English monolingual, and when I speak Spanish I speak with an *acento gringuense*, and mostly in the present tense. I have access to the powerful standard English that has marked my educational attainment. Linguistically, I’m self-conscious of my L2 Spanish accent. And when I speak to Spanish speakers, I censor myself in fear.

The challenge I had faced researching my parents and their educational histories dealt with connecting to my Mexican identity, what I knew of myself, who I’d become, and, of course, where it was I would go, and how MANOS helped me with some identity work. Like Spanish, being Mexican American in the academy had been another challenge, but in ways different from the challenge that many Mexican Americans faced, and by this I mean various forms of discrimination. Some social privileges came with being an assimilated American of Mexican

descent: recasting my challenges of my diminished Mexican identity and lack of Spanish as gifts was one such privilege. My “deficits” have guided me in my scholarship, and as challenges that I worked toward to better understand myself in a larger picture, to dialogically frame my immediate experience: a Mexican American struggling to maintain and negotiate my Latino and American cultural identities under constant cultural and linguistic insecurities of being a *pocho*.

Pocho was a term I had been accustomed to as I learned more about the strange “betweenness” variety I experienced. My “more Mexican” cousins used it as an insult against me when we played soccer. I thought of *pochismo* as someone between two cultural identities, but leaning more toward the dominant culture. *Pochismo* is a generational disconnect from the emigrating culture, a self-alienation, and sense of division. For Mexicans and Mexican Americans, the *pocho* is regarded with suspicion treacherous to the *Mexicano* community in both Mexico and the U.S.A. In the short story “Pigeons” by Luis Rodriguez, cultural changes in accent and language connect to names and assimilation. Rodriguez narrates the Lujan family, their name changes, and the *pocho* ways: “[. . .] Guillermo becoming Bill; Gilberto, Gil; and Bonafacia being called Bonnie [. . .] They talked without accents and with limited Spanish. [. . .] [T]he less Mexican they were—nobody seemed to act like there was anything different about the ‘Lujans’ as people called them” (168-169).

Likewise the *pocho* was the subject of José Antonio Villareal’s novel, *Pocho*. The protagonist Richard Rubio felt different from his parents, smarter, upwardly mobile, and powerful. His English contributed to this power, to his sense of superiority to his parents, and his education was a wedge of power struggles between his parents, his home culture, the dominant culture, and his place in each. The conversation between Richard and his mother early in the

novel illustrates the sense of helplessness she felt in her inability to participate in her son's intellectual development in English or Spanish. Villareal writes,

“Look, little son,” she said. “Many times I do not answer you when you ask me things, and other times I simply talk about something else. Sometimes this is because you ask things that I should not be talking about, but most of the time I am ashamed that I do not know what you ask. You see, we are simple people, your father and I. We did not have an education, because we came from the poorest class of people in Mexico [. . .] We cannot teach you the things that you want us to teach you. And I am deeply ashamed that we are going to fail in a great responsibility—we cannot guide you, we cannot select your reading for you, we cannot even talk to you in your own language. (60-61)

I couldn't help but feel some remorse when reading *Pocho*, feeling something that my parents must have felt with their parents, and the cultural disconnect that happened between generations during migration. Hearing the interviews of the MANOS parents, and becoming a mentor for the youth, I also heard similar complaints.

Richard Rubio, the hero of *Pocho*, had a profound respect for English as a language of power, but at the same time he understood the importance of Spanish for maintaining his Mexican identity, and preserving it despite assimilation's seductions. As a *pocho* I had a command of English which included native accentuation. At the same time, I spoke first an accented English, that is, Chicano English, though a rural form from southern Arizona—largely influenced by a Texan drawl. Standard English for me came from over ten years of study after high school, and also some self-conscious reflection on my limited vocabulary and also public shyness. Through study and experience, I learned to command several codes or dialects of

English and could do agile code-switching to fit certain situations—all part of my linguistic repertoire common to class climbers and ethnic migrants.

In Robert's and Anna's accounts, the guilt of immigrant, language minority parents for their children's hardships, were enacted in—and reinforced by—the dominant, standard language. Translation meant more than language, but also cultures, and embodied experiences within and around the dominant culture of the new nation. Mentoring at MANOS I saw this as well, and I found the linguistic power of translation—a form of bilingual power—compelling. I became attuned to how language differences limited my communication in the Spanish contexts, despite my fluency in the dominant, institutionalized form of standard English.

Conclusion: English as Symbolic Capital in Immigrant Families: Brokering Dominant Languages and Literacies at Home

This chapter explored my family's language loss over a generation through migration and assimilation into the U.S. mainstream. My parents both recounted their relations to their families and their heritage languages, and offered a window into why my research at MANOS was a personal endeavor. This turn toward my family history turned the mirror of this dissertation research into language brokering on myself as researcher and my motives for conducting the MANOS ethnographic project.

Of course, one of my main intentions in the study at MANOS was sharing my information with the organization in order to better serve the families who participated in the program. The hope was that my research would help better shape the English as a Second Language program for parents at the program, as well as to better understand how the program can more effectively involve both parents and older siblings as mentors—potentially as volunteer

assistant English as a Second Language instructors. I hoped that the poetics and power of bilingualism and translation would also become more apparent, and that perhaps this would be considered as an important part of bilingual curricula. Certainly the ethnographic project had been involved with sharing and organizing data for MANOS. As my project came to an end, a Mentor Coordinator has taken over records for MANOS. An institutional growth plan also looks fundable for the next ten years with secured funding. I would like to claim that my research had something to do with this, but the truth was that Carlos Portales's extensive networking is what accounted for MANOS's success and standing in the community.

Marjorie Faulstich Orellana recognizes that in linguistic exchanges, "social class standings, as imputed by racialized ethnicity and language [. . .] shape translation encounters" (73). Recognizing the official language's legitimacy has nothing to do with belief in the norm of a mainstream way of speaking or writing. Rather the ideological dispositions and preferences communicated through discourses inculcate over a long and slow process acquisition and sanction of the linguistic market (Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* 51). One significant social effect is to "reproduce inequalities by emphasizing the use of acquisition of standard English, at the expense of the home language, as the only way out of one's marginalized condition" (Chung 7). Min Zhao argues that English mastery is the most important prerequisite for academic success and socioeconomic assimilation of immigrant children.

According to Orellana's extensive longitudinal study of language brokers, children may see their families treated in racist and xenophobic ways in public encounters, and they themselves may be the ones who have to respond in those situations. This may lead them to feel responsible when their families are mistreated. Orellana argues that such encounters in the contact zone are "crosscultural encounters, [where] differences in beliefs, values, and practices

may become more visible and heightened to participants as well as to onlookers” (Orellana 20). Anna’s remarks about when her mother or father spoke to “gringos” revealed her reading power inequalities between her language minority parents and English speakers: “I know what those *gringos* were thinking because I was thinking it too. ‘Why don’t you speak better English?’ I would think. ‘Why don’t you learn English?’ I would say that to myself. ‘Why don’t you speak it?’ I would think it, but I would never say it. I was embarrassed because of the way they talked. But there was nothing I could’ve done, I was just a kid.”

Racism and class-based prejudice happen through language, and language is often—as Ana Celia Zentella describes in *Growing Up Bilingual*—a “smokescreen” for extensive social and cultural inequities. The accent is one such linguistic smokescreen that disguises a classification hierarchy based on a dominant sector’s standard. Accents connected to the “third world” have low symbolic value in the linguistic marketplace (Lippi-Green). In the cases of the second-generation students “becoming” American through the New York school system and involved with MANOS, U.S. literate values were emphasized at school. The MANOS mentees learned the importance of being able to read and write English. At home, however, and at the MANOS center on Foraker Street, students spoke Spanish to parents and Spanish and English to mentors and one another, thus reinforcing the importance of maintaining the ability to verbally communicate in Spanish, something not emphasized in my family along the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. As MANOS mother Linda Fernandez mentioned to me, it was important for her that her children speak Spanish because it was the only way she could communicate with them. She thought it a shame that her children were unable to read and write Spanish, but being able to read and write English well was better in the United States than reading and writing only in Spanish.

Conclusion:

Metas, Community, Language, and Confianza

I asked each MANOS parent in our initial interviews what their educational goals were for their children. Their responses became the basis of Chapter 3 on the aspirations of MANOS youth and parents. The MANOS parents generally echoed Juana Uribe Sanchez and Tomás Rivera Altamirano. Juana thought ahead for her eleven-year-old Luis and four-year-old Pablo, “tengo las mejores metas que se graduen en la universidad” (I have the highest goals that they will graduate from the university) (9 Feb. 2010). Tomás responded that for his son nine-year-old Edward “mis metas son que mi hijo estudia y se supere cada día en la escuela y sus necesidades” (my goals are that my son study and meet his needs at school) (11 Dec. 2009). The *metas*, or goals, for these two parents charted futures toward the university. They were *metas* that MANOS and its mentors supported, but they were uphill battles for all involved. The immigrant bargain and the promise of the American dream both predicated an intense work ethic with promises for future success. The truth for such youth in New York City in 2012 was that two-fifths would not graduate high school and only one in twenty would pursue college (Semple). Compared to New York City’s major immigrant groups, Mexicans were faring the worst educationally. For Jamaican, Guyanese, and Chinese students, these numbers were reversed, with one in twenty not graduating high school and over half pursuing college.

The playing field was not equal for Mexican immigrants in New York City. The immigrant bargain naturally played out in all families, but within the Mexican communities, the immigrant bargain’s pressures for upward social mobility took found few models from which to draw. This was of course where the need for mentors in the community became an important

project to rectify disconnects in Mexican families, by aligning expectations and access as resources for educational mentorship communities.

Reina Molina Vasquez, another MANOS mother, spoke to the difficulties of achieving these *metas* because of her uncomfortable relationship with English in contrast to her children's increasing command of it. As she reported, lack of English limited her involvement in her children's educational success. Interviewing this mother on the steps of San Juan Bautista on Foraker Street, just outside the basement that housed MANOS, her daughter Samantha jumped rope repeating a rhyme in English as she skipped from foot to foot. The incentive for second-generation youth to become English-dominant and English-only was apparent in the jump-rope game. With her mother on the steps, I conducted the interview without a language broker in English and Spanish, asking questions in English while she responded in Spanish. Our command of each other's language was just strong enough to enable this exchange. My Spanish improved over the years at MANOS as had Reina's English. Common in bilingual exchanges, we comprehended the meaning of the other's utterances without being able to generate those utterances ourselves.

Reina had command of her children's needs despite her limited English. She was the only MANOS parent who had withdrawn a child from a public school because of what she deemed its institutional neglect. Reina was disappointed that her son Felix's reading and writing was not improving in his L2 curriculum, and she wanted him to study in a regular English class, "un clase de inglés regular" she said (3 Aug. 2010). She learned about a charter school close to her apartment from a more informed mother she met at MANOS, typical of the intense word-of-mouth networking in immigrant communities, and she decided it a better option for Felix and Samantha both. She was told that at this school parent requests were followed. In addition, Reina

heard that her informer's children were progressing well in English. This was sufficient to convince Reina.

At her son's regular public school, she had a meeting with the principal and guidance counselor, facilitated by a translator. According to Reina, they advised her not to enroll Felix in another school and they became irate when she said she was not pleased by the education her son was receiving. Against their protestations, she withdrew Felix from the public school to another slightly more distant, and the next year she enrolled him in the charter. Reina also enrolled her daughter in the charter school.

Reina could not speak English well enough to negotiate in English with the public school principal, but like many monolingual immigrants, Reina knew more English than she admitted. Despite being limited, her stumbling command of the second language still helped both her children. She worked in the Upper East Side as a nanny and housekeeper, and she spoke English to her employers and their children, a desirable job skill which helped her find employment. She said on the steps of San Juan Bautista that when speaking to her children Felix and Samantha,

Nos comunicamos más en español ya que estoy muy orgullosa de mi lengua nativa. También quiero que mis hijos se expresen correctamente en español, así como en escritura y lectura. Estoy enseñándole a Samantha a escribir y a leer en español en la casa. Ya que me doy cuenta que ella se inclina más por el idioma inglés. Es su idioma favorito. Felix sabe escribir y leer en español y . . . el se expresa más en español que en inglés. Su idioma favorito es español. Aunque entiendo lo que ellos hablan en inglés prefiero decirles que no entendí enseguida ellos lo repiten en español.

Y Felix está asiendo muy bien aunque me doy cuenta que le falta más vocabulabio al momento de expresarse. Samantha está muy enfocada en el idioma inglés y prefiere hablar todo el tiempo en inglés. Muy bien. Aun así se que ellos seguiran aprendiendo cada dia más y más.

We communicate more in Spanish, and I'm proud of my native language. Also I want my kids to express Spanish correctly, in their reading and writing. I'm teaching Samantha to write and read in Spanish in our home.

But it gives me stress because she's more inclined toward the English language. It's her favorite language. Felix knows how to write and read in Spanish and . . . he's able to express more in Spanish than in English. His favorite language is Spanish. However among themselves, they speak English. I prefer to say to them what I don't understand, that they repeat it for me in Spanish.

And Felix is fine, but I give myself some stress because he lacks some vocabulary to express himself. Samantha is very focused on the English language, and she prefers to speak most of the time in English. Very well. It seems that they are learning more and more each day. (3 Aug. 2010)

Reina's "muy bien" or "very well" above could be read as resignation to the inevitable Anglo-assimilation of her children in a social process that will pull the generations apart. Those words served as a stoic expression of defeat of nurturing Spanish for her daughter, a language that her

mother proudly used in her day-to-day life. As an adult, Reina understood more than did the children what was being lost and gained in these linguistic transitions.

Predominantly monolingual LM parents faced distinct agonies of assimilation when it came to their children's development as citizens of the new culture. Their college aspirations for their children were constrained by their subordinate racial and class positions in the U.S. linguistic, ethnic, and occupational marketplaces. The weak position of these immigrant parents gave them little authority to credit the native language and culture of the old country left behind, compelling these tragically hopeful and stoically ambitious parents to surrender things they highly valued.

As I argued throughout this dissertation, the "social negotiation" of brokering in the linguistic marketplace happens in contact zones where languages intersect with one another in political struggles of dominance and subordination. Questions of access and restrictions in language also came to the fore, and how these were structured by relations of linguistic power and rules of conduct among language brokers who developed certain social tactics in regulating linguistic inequalities. For MANOS youth, these tactics developed in the course of everyday practice.

Early in Porfirio Loeza's study of Mexican votive *retablo* art as a literacy practice, he argues for "literacy brokers" (7). The *retablo* is a devotional altarpiece painting using Roman Catholic iconography with an inscribed message, relating to a vow. The *retablo* image and text more often than not depict the event that led to its commission from the artist, or literacy broker. Building on the work of Judy Kalman's study of a community of scribes in Mexico City, Loeza agrees that literacy is always participatory and social in nature, but also always mediated, with brokers maintaining positions of intermediary in complex triadic-based formulations. He makes

the claim that, “[i]n every society, these intermediaries exist and provide access to the restricted practice called reading and writing” (7). Intermediaries open access around restrictions; in the case of *retablo* literacy brokers, into the practices of reading and writing Spanish for customers who don’t know how to read or write. Literacy brokers in Loeza’s study maximize the mediating power of language and social negotiation facilitated by orality by providing greater access to *retablo* literacy and artwork and by extension to the divine audiences of the altarpieces. The literacy broker moved between textuality and orality to connect clients with textual products, or *retablos*. Loeza’s use of the term “broker” rightly conceptualizes the literacy practice of the Mexican *retablo* as an economic model in nature, but what he doesn’t account for in his study are some of the rhetorical implications involved in translating intentions from orality into print by the broker.

Moving from *literacy broker* toward *language broker* in my study highlights the intermediary nature of translation as embedded in *rhetorical tactics* of bilingualism. These tactics shape or inform language practices which can be observed as actual utterances situated in diverse contexts and power relations (Hanks “Bourdieu and the Practice of Language” 74). Linguistic power differences emerge from already-existing social relations of power which discourses in events confirm and constitute. From these material co-constitutions of discourse and/in society, we can see convergences of rhetorical studies, literacy studies, and second-language acquisition studies.

With this central theoretic frame of linguistic practices as social practices, my research at MANOS explored how language brokers shaped, disrupted, and redistributed linguistic power in exchanges among monolinguals. The uneven distribution of language skills among immigrant generations, situate youthful bilinguals in positions to gain much experience mediating power

relations among monolinguals (Galindo and Gonzales; Gee; Hymes). Building on the strengths of youthful bilingual brokers means finding links between the profound resources for universities involved in community outreach, multilingual teacher training, and student mentorship programs for future teachers. Mentors could also conduct fieldwork to gain rich qualitative data for discourse analysis and theorizing pedagogical methods.

Student-teachers in this model would develop their own educational skills by using ethnographic fieldwork, from which they derive the themes and words of special consequence to the targeted population. Ethnographic methods as developed by Ralph Cintron, Marcia Farr, Juan Guerra, Shirley Brice Heath, Marjorie Faulstich Orellana, and Brian V. Street, among others, demonstrate pedagogical value of local language uses and theoretical rigor. For future instructors, ethnography is clearly a valuable learning tool. From a critical point of view, student researchers would come to note how dominant and minority languages interact through the bilingual practices of agents moving between languages, especially at the family level, but also in communities. Speculations into how power dynamics function between children's and adults' access to—and possession of—the dominant literacy would necessarily extend the scope of teacher training to examine how and why families sharing a common situation coalesce to address their interests and needs. This also would offer important insight to future instructors about the strengths of students and their families bring to classrooms, complicating a one-dimensional stereotype of low-income immigrants as dependent vessels of deficits needing to be filled with the official language.

Ethnography is by its social nature a project in the genre of “Life Writing” which teaches its practitioners that we study something because we already know something. It teaches us about what we need to know in order to know more, and that we actively participate in our

learning as we collect, sort, and theorize about data and artifacts. The substances of the ethnographic interrogation are the lives, or *bios*, that make social life. Composing ethnographic research as a localized discourse frames, categorizes, interprets, and critiques social life, but also its own discourse and the position of its researcher's life (Bourdieu, *The Weight of the World* 607-608; see also Foucault, *The Order of Things* 377). The researcher's position becomes something like a broker between untheorized practice and practical theory, producing new knowledge from raw data collected in the field. In this regard, Shirley Brice Heath and Brian V. Street argue in *On Ethnography* that

Ethnography is a theory-building and theory-dependent enterprise. Ethnographers construct, test, and amplify theoretical perspectives through systematic observing, recording, and analyzing of human behavior in specifiable spaces and interactions for the co-occurrence of language, literacy, and multimodalities for any situation or context selected as field site. (38)

The ethnographer's engagement with a field produces the raw data and subsequent theorized practice which are also shaped by the positions, orientations, and modes the researcher brings to the site. The outcome sought is a discourse that describes the "fully sensuous human form believably grounded in and articulated with structural forces, structures and processes" (Willis 353). Scholarship at the local, critical ethnographic level is diametrically opposed to the quantitative and the experimental approaches to educational research. Further, much research favored by governmental agencies tends to homogenize the multiple experiences of local Latino communities as well as to under-examine the ways in which English language hegemony negatively affects individual language minority families. In contrast, ethnography from the bottom up, as Heath and Street practice, "enable[s] educators and policymakers to value the

language resources of immigrants and the intergenerational patterns of communication in families and neighborhoods” (xiii).

As researcher and participant, I brokered my interrogation of myself through questions of representation and biases originating in my social location. For such a research project which folds the context of the researcher into the material of the research, I envisioned an audience of activists, researchers, educators and policy makers, as well as organizations serving communities like MANOS. By writing with multiple audiences in mind, I faced similar rhetorical and translation challenges that language brokers encounter: How do I explain ideas to audiences who have different sets of values and assumptions? How can I balance the text between my participants and myself?

Another ethnographic route is possible, one in which practitioners remain distant from their subjects (Clifford and Marcus 23). In this report, however, I integrated my stances of researcher and participant. Doing so, I pinpointed linguistic encounters as “biliteracy events.” Biliteracy events were my manner of treating all bilingual communication, including interviews, as “communicative events” or “social practice[s] negotiated by the interview[s] and informant[s]” (Farr and Dominguez 21). This method mediated theoretical assumptions of literacy as social practice with bilingualism as actually practiced in a specific social site recorded in fieldwork. My ethnographic task, thus, was in reconstructing these biliteracy practices as I observed them unfold at MANOS, narrating them, and circulating them beyond the bounds of Foraker Street and into a specialized conversation conducted in academic discourse as practiced within the university (Smith, *Social Literacies* 74). A stage removed in my language dealings with monolingual parents because of language barriers, and therefore in need of translation in order to make a practical connection with mentees and their monolingual parents, I theorized that

such brokered social translations were both poetic and rhetorical rather than linear conduits of meaning. I argued in this dissertation that such practices at MANOS happened in mentored sessions doing homework, when playing games, when asking questions, and when describing the social uses of language in ways both aesthetic and functional. I theorized the events as contexts lived and experienced, and I recorded them for analysis of potential pedagogical interventions into the lives of LM immigrant families.

As for final claims, number one, I firmly contend that youthful family brokers are unacknowledged actual assets to families learning to navigate the school and class systems of the United States. Analysts and educators would serve this diverse society well by penetrating the “language smokescreen that obscures ideological, structural, and political impediments to equity” (Zentella 9) to examine the macro picture of Spanish as a historically thriving language in the United States. Zentella’s research had been extremely influential in this regard. The anthro-political perspective—as Zentella terms it—is strongly allied with the precepts of critical or applied anthropology, as well as with critical discourse analysis and a Freirean pedagogy of empowerment from the bottom up. Like Shirley Brice Heath and Brian V. Street, Zentella advocates research to understand marginalized local practices and how they conflict with the mainstreaming process of language education. These scholars assert that conflict arises from miscommunication, and miscommunication arises from misdirected audience expectations and configured social contexts (Conley 263). To address this conflict, schools should research the language and literacy practices of students as diverse pedagogical resources from which to draw. Following the anthro-political motivations for scholarly research set forth by Zentella, one hope for my research is to open teachers and parents to the existence of multiple routes to bilingualism, biliteracy, and language education.

Secondly, and related to the previous, there is an urgent need to make connections between schools and programs that exist off school campuses. Community programs such as MANOS deserve institutional support, while at the same time maintaining operational distance from those institutions providing support. Off-site organizations ought to promote tutor training with teacher training while also engaging with community needs. I propose that tutors/mentors also conduct ethnographic case studies of families learning languages and navigating the school system. A university course implementing ethnographic methods with volunteer service learning in communities like MANOS is one way to connect colleges to local communities. This solves the problem of offering quality personnel for the community program. What this does not solve, however, is sustained engagement with community programs after the semester ends. The goal in the end would be to extend the relations between college students learning to be teachers with their potential students and their families. Future teachers will learn and analyze students' funds of knowledge (Moll et al.), or the bodies of their everyday knowledge learned through participation in home and community practices. One of Paulo Freire's first tenets was for critical educators to prepare themselves for critical teaching in a community by first researching the language and conditions of students from which the lessons and themes of the syllabus will be generated. An extension of this, I propose, is also a personal connection with the communities one teaches, or a two-way sense of *confianza*.

Finally, more focused research on the gender dynamics of literacy and family engagement would reveal incredible data for research. A team of female and male ethnographers collaborating in fieldwork of gendered rhetorics and literacies in the immigrant generation would uncover valuable layers of language learning and how the social dynamics of gender function in LM families. The roles of mother and daughter as power brokers in families, as I briefly touched

on in this dissertation, have central importance to the educational well-being of Mexican families. More research into language brokering and gender dynamics will uncover deeper layers into the roles of fathers and sons as well.

The sense of *confianza* I discussed in Chapters 1, 4, and 5 supported the MANOS mentorship program's contributions to connecting my educational research with the trust of families. My years of involvement with MANOS helped me build *confianza* and this was important because having trust from the community allowed me to become a part of it, and to participate in a worthwhile and satisfying way (see Guerra; Hidalgo; Hondagneu-Sotelo; Smith; Valdes). *Confianza* within the community, however, happened through extended periods of mentorship, and not simply because of my fortuitous ethnic identification. Being Mexican American can be a distinct advantage in this context, though by itself it may not acknowledge rapport with MANOS families; but my involvement in the well-being of their children did, as well as getting to know the community on a personal level. When my Spanish improved, I noticed more parents came to me in *confianza* for direct advice. Nevertheless, in order for me to participate in the MANOS linguistic community, and to gain *confianza* with families, I had to demonstrate my weaknesses with Spanish, and also my willingness to learn Spanish through my own errors. The same youth I mentored, then, became mentors for my development in my L2 acquisition, like they did for their parents. In the end, this complex relationship was nurtured by a shared sense of establishing and pursuing *metas*, and for me as an educator to understand that schooling is not an individual affair, but rather a family effort and a community project.

Appendices

At the end of her dissertation studying identity formation among undocumented Mexican immigrants in New York, Jocelyn Solís theorized compelling questions about future research into the city's emerging Mexican immigrant population: "How do levels of literacy at home affect children's literacy in school? Does formal schooling prepare Mexican children to become cultural brokers between their families and mainstream society?" (304). With her future research questions as starting points, I designed my project focusing on the language and literacy practices of Mexican immigrants at MANOS. The project unfolded in this manner: after gaining approval from founder Carlos Portales to conduct the study of the organization, I advertised publicly in both Spanish and English at the center for volunteer mentors and families as subjects for my research (Appendix A, B). Encouragingly, there was great interest from all the center's families and mentors. I then informed all interested participants of the potential risks and benefits, and also of respect for privacy. I also emphasized that participation did not affect MANOS membership. Because several volunteers did not possess legal citizenship, the anonymity of these individuals of course needed to be securely reassured. Two of these individuals gave me oral consent but chose not to sign any release forms. I respectfully accepted their chosen compromise, and I was thankful that these individuals had enough trust in me to take part in the study. The potential benefits I assured all participants would be greater understanding of languages and the importance of family participation in children's academic lives, and the best routes toward understanding the significance of bilingualism within the immigrant generation.

Those selected for the study were from a steady base of active participation with MANOS over the years. After narrowing the interested participants to ten families and ten mentors—and after receiving signed or oral releases from participants—I distributed questionnaires (see Appendix B and C) in English or Spanish for both children and adults. I conducted my first round of formal family interviews in homes during the summer and fall of 2010, though I had conducted informal interviews since the fall of 2008. All interviews were conducted in both Spanish and English with children or MANOS mentors serving as translators when needed. I digitally audio-recorded these interviews, as well as interactions with parents, children, and myself when working through homework, or when speaking, writing and/or reading at the MANOS center in the basement of San Juan Bautista. The semi-structured interviews began from questions I gathered from different scholarly texts, with impromptu follow-ups. Interview location was left for parents and children to decide, and as it happened, all invited me to their homes. Several families and mentors had also visited my home. As a general research practice, the participants chose location and time, setting the tone for comfort.

My data consisted of digitally recaptured images of texts produced by MANOS children, as well as transcripts from semi-structured and structured in-person interviews. Since late 2006 I had begun visiting homes of MANOS mentees on occasional weekend days in order to tutor. From the families, I also requested and collected as many pieces of writing as possible, treating these as literacy “artifacts” in order to examine how formal and informal literacy practices in the families happened and what they looked like. I also audio-recorded homework tutorials involving other mentors, parents, and children. I gathered and transcribed the information, organizing transcriptions into scenes of “literacy events” (Heath; Purcell-Gates) and searching for patterns in linguistic transactions as data for “literacy as social practice” (Kalman; Loeza).

My first priority was to collect as many pieces of writing as possible, from both parents and children. I categorized these artifacts on the basis of formality, accounting for audience, genre, and attention to the formal aspects of written communication and rhetoric as understood by the writer. Ethnographic fieldwork in this manner closely followed that elaborated by Shirley Brice Heath in her study *Ways With Words*, focusing research attention on identifying, mapping, and understanding the nature of out-of-school language and literacy practices of immigrant families (369). I was searching for communicated information in less institutionalized settings; for contexts of more familiar or practical literacy experiences where one need give less attention to formal elements. My hope was to find pieces of writing that fell between categories which I think would largely define connections between home- and school-related literacies, and potentially a homework model for bilingual families. Movement between oral and written languages was also taken into account, as well as the act of translation.

For the interviews conducted with Robert and Anna Alvarez, I followed the same protocol as I did with the MANOS participants. Both signed consent forms, and both allowed me to digitally record our conversations. I loosely based the questions on Appendix C, but I also asked impromptu questions. While I did collect pieces of writing from each, I chose not to include them for the sake of brevity. I relied on their narratives and thoughts on schooling, family, language, and mainstreaming.

Appendix A

Recruitment Advertisement for Volunteers, English

VOLUNTEERS

A literacy researcher at The Graduate Center, City University of New York (CUNY) requests your participation in a research study about literacy and bilingualism in the homes of Mexican and Mexican American families living in New York City. The study will help schools and various educational programs serving Mexican and Mexican American families identify the varieties of literacy practices and bilingual interactions occurring between children and parents in households. The study will potentially be of use for educational institutions and scholars developing programs for language acquisition. The Mexican American Network of Students (MANOS) will also use the study to plan better tutoring, mentoring, and English as a Second Language programs that will encourage bilingual interaction among parents and children when reading and writing.

Participants will fill out two questionnaires and conduct several interviews with the researcher about their experiences over the course of several months. The time commitment is not great, and the researcher will work around participants' schedules and at their convenience.

Interested parties should contact Steven Alvarez at (123) 456-7890 or

salvarez@gc.cuny.edu. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Appendix B

Recruitment Advertisement for Volunteers, Spanish

VOLUNTARIOS

Un investigador de alfabetización de el Centro de Graduados de la Universidad de la Ciudad de Nueva York (CUNY), atentamente solicita su participación en un estudio acerca de la habilidad de leer y escribir en Inglés y en español, en un hogar Mejicano o Mejicano-estadounidense. Dicho estudio esta dirigido a familias que vivan en la ciudad de Nueva York.

El estudio ayudara a las escuelas y a los programas educacionales que sirven a las familias Mexicanas y Mexicano-estadounidenses, a identificar las diferentes practicas de aprendizaje de lectura y escritura y las interacciones que ocurren entre padres e hijos en los hogares. El estudio será potencialmente usado para instituciones educativas y escolares, desarrollando programas para la adquisición de lenguaje.

El Mexican American Network of Students (MANOS) tambien usara el estudio para mejor planear programas de tutoría e Inglés como Segunda Lengua, los cuales promoverán la interacción bilingüe entre padres e hijos cuando escriben y leen.

Los participantes deberán llenar dos cuestionarios y hacer parte de varias entrevistas, conducidas por el investigador acerca de sus experiencias. Esto tomara lugar en el transcurso de varios meses. El investigador trabajara de acuerdo a los horarios y conveniencia de los participantes.

Las personas interesadas por favor contactar a Steven Alvarez a cualquiera de los siguientes:

teléfono: (123) 456-7890

e-mail: salvarez@gc.cuny.edu

Su participación será muy apreciada.

Appendix C

Initial Survey (English/Spanish), Youth/Child Informant

- Name / Nombre:
- Date of Birth / Fecha de Nacimiento:
- Place of Birth / Lugar de Nacimiento:
- What grade are you in? / ¿En que año escolar te encuentras?
- What school do you go to? / ¿Cual es el nombre de tu escuela?
- Have you ever taken ESL classes? How did you like those classes? / ¿Has tomado clases de ingles como segunda lengua? ¿Que tal te parecieron las clases, te gustaron?
- Do you like your school? Why or why not? / ¿Te gusta tu escuela? Cuéntame porque si o porque no.
- Do you like to read? Why? / ¿Te gusta leer? Cuéntame porque.
- Do you like to write? Why? / ¿Te gusta escribir? Cuéntame porque.
- Why do you come to the MANOS program? / ¿Por que vienes al programa de MANOS?
- How long have you come to MANOS? / ¿Cuanto tiempo llevas viniendo a MANOS?
- How is your reading and writing in Spanish? / ¿Que tal son tu lectura y escritura en español?
- How would you describe your reading and writing in English? / ¿Como describirías tu escritura y lectura en ingles?
- Which language do you prefer to use at home? Why? / ¿Que idioma prefieres utilizar en casa? Cuéntame porque.
- How do you communicate with your parents? / ¿En que idioma te comunicas con tus

padres?

- How do your parents help you with your homework? / ¿Como te ayudan tus padres con la tarea?
- Do your parents speak English? / ¿Saben tus padres hablar ingles?
- How do your parents communicate with your school? / ¿Como se comunican tus padres con tu escuela?
- Have you ever had to translate from English to Spanish for your parents? Please give an example. / ¿Has tenido alguna vez que traducir algo del ingles al español para tus padres? Por favor dame un ejemplo.
- Who helps you with your homework? / ¿Quien te ayuda con la tarea?
- How do you think MANOS could help you more? / ¿Como consideras que MANOS te puede ayudar mas?
- How are your grades? Do you think they have improved after coming to MANOS? / ¿Que tal son tus notas? ¿Han mejorado desde que empezaste a venir a MANOS?
- What do you want to be when you are an adult? Why? / ¿Que quieres ser cuando crezcas? Explícame porque.
- Do you plan on going to college? / ¿Tienes planes de atender a la Universidad?

Appendix D

Survey Questions (English/Spanish), Adult Informant

- Name / Nombre:
- How long have you been involved in the MANOS program? / ¿Cuanto tiempo llevas en el programa de MANOS?
- What sorts of benefits do you feel you have gained from the program? / ¿Que tipo de beneficios crees que has obtenido de este programa?
- In what ways do you help your children with his/her homework? / ¿De que manera le ayudas a tus hijos con su tarea escolar?
- What are some of the challenges you face helping your children with their homework? / ¿Cuales son algunas de las dificultades que enfrentas a la hora de ayudar a tus hijos con su tarea?
- How could MANOS help you more to help your children with their homework? / ¿Como puede MANOS ayudarte mas a asistir a tus hijos con su tarea?
- How would you describe your involvement in MANOS? How do you help the program function? / ¿Como describirías tu involucimiento con el programa de MANOS? ¿Como colaboras tu para hacer que el programa funcione eficientemente?
- How would you describe the involvement of all the people at MANOS? / ¿Como describirías el involucimiento de la gente que hace parte de MANOS?
 - How would you describe MANOS? What is it? / ¿Como describirías a MANOS? ¿Que es MANOS para ti?
- How has MANOS affected your children's school performances? / ¿Como ha afectado

MANOS el desarrollo escolar de tus hijos?

- How do you think MANOS could improve? / ¿Como consideras que MANOS podría mejorar?
- What are the benefits you have gained from coming to MANOS? / ¿Cuales son los beneficios que tu has obtenido al atender el programa de MANOS?
- In your opinion, how do the children who attend MANOS get along? / ¿En tu opinión, como se entienden los niños que hacen parte de MANOS?
- In your opinion, how do the parents who attend MANOS get along? / ¿En tu opinión, como se entienden los padres que hacen parte de MANOS?
- How do you get along with the different mentors? / ¿Como te entiendes con los diferentes mentores/tutores de MANOS?
- How do the mentors get along with your children? / ¿Como se entienden los mentores o tutores con los niños de MANOS?
- Have you ever had problems with any of the MANOS mentors? If so, please describe the situation. ¿Has tenido algún problema con alguno de los mentores de MANOS? Si, si por favor describe la situación.
- Have you ever had any problems with MANOS? If so, please the describe the situation(s). / ¿Has tenido algún problema con MANOS en general? Si, si por favor describe la situación.
- How did you hear about MANOS? / ¿Como te enteraste de MANOS?
- Where do you live? How long have you lived at your current address? / ¿Donde vives? ¿Cuanto tiempo has vivido en esta dirección?
- How did you find your children's schools? / ¿Como hallaste la escuela de tus hijos?

- What are some of the difficulties you face in dealing with your children's schools? /
¿Cuales son algunas de las dificultades que enfrentas a la hora de lidiar con las escuelas de tus hijos?
- Has coming to MANOS improved your English? How? / ¿Venir a MANOS a mejorado tu ingles? Si, si explica como.
- How do your children help you when dealing with English? / ¿Como te ayudan tus hijos con asuntos en ingles?
- Do you speak to your children in English? Why or why not? If you do, when do you speak to your children in English? / ¿Le hablas a tus hijos en ingles? Porque si o porque no. Si, si cuéntame cuando.
- How do your children respond to you in English? / ¿Como responden tus hijos cuando les hablas en ingles?
- Do you have friends or other relatives who speak English? How often do you communicate with them? / ¿Tienes amigos o familiares que hablan ingles? ¿Que tan seguido te comunicas con ellos?
- What languages are spoken most in your neighborhood? / ¿Cuales son los idiomas mas hablados en tu área?
- What are your biggest concerns for your children's educations? / ¿Cuales son tus mayores preocupaciones con respecto a la educación de tus hijos?
- What do you consider your children's strengths? / ¿Cuales consideras que son las cualidades de tus hijos?
- Are there differences in the ways Americans raise children and the ways Mexicans

raise children? What are they? / ¿Consideras que hay diferencias en la formas en que los estadounidenses educan a sus hijos y las formas que los Mejicanos educan a sus hijos?

¿Cuales son estas diferencias?

- How often do you communicate with your children's teachers? / ¿Que tan seguido te comunicas con los profesores de tus hijos?

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