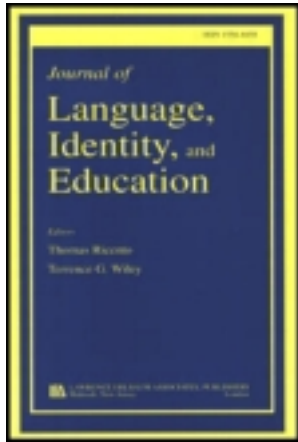


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### **“I Have Papers So I Can Go Anywhere!”: Everyday Talk About Citizenship in a Mixed-Status Mexican Family**

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## ARTICLES

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### “I Have Papers So I Can Go Anywhere!”: Everyday Talk About Citizenship in a Mixed-Status Mexican Family

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This article draws from ethnographic data collected during a 23-month–language socialization study of mixed-status Mexican families living in the New Latino Diaspora. The analysis focuses on the ways in which siblings in one family talk about citizenship during a discursive event that I call the Planning for the Future Routine. The findings show that siblings communicate two key understandings during everyday conversations: first, the relevance of migratory status to their day-to-day lives and second, their family’s shared conventions for talking about citizenship status in the home. As children and youth demonstrate the social norms for talking about citizenship, they also express their understanding of the ways that being a United States or Mexican citizen shapes their future opportunities. A nuanced understanding of intrafamily diversity and learning experiences can strengthen educators’, researchers’, and policy makers’ ability to advocate for Latino communities’ well-being and educational equity.

Key words: citizenship, language socialization, Mexican, migration, mixed status, siblings

While controversy surrounding the presence of Spanish-speaking migrants residing in the United States is as old as the U.S.–Mexico border (Bartolome & Macedo, 1997), children and adolescents are playing new roles in contemporary debates over immigration. Republican members of the U.S. Congress have recently proposed repealing the 14th Amendment, which grants citizenship to children born in the United States, a group derogatively referred to as “anchor babies,” in the hopes of deterring their undocumented parents from crossing the southern border into the United States (Lacey, 2011).<sup>1</sup> Last summer, the governor of Alabama signed a law requiring public schools to verify students’ immigration status upon enrollment and denying undocumented

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<sup>1</sup>This proposal is being introduced to state governments by legislators across the country; state representative Daryl Metcalfe is advocating for it in Pennsylvania (Preston, 2011, January 5).

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students the opportunity to attend public colleges in the state (Preston, 2011, June 3). Meanwhile, undocumented adolescents have taken center stage in grassroots mobilizations for immigrants' rights by marching alongside their parents in the 2006 boycotts calling for amnesty (Bloemraad & Trost, 2008) and leading national advocacy efforts supporting legislation that would provide a pathway to citizenship for undocumented youth (Gonzales, 2008).

In these national discussions over the rights and responsibilities that should be accorded migrants and their children from the cradle to college and beyond, advocates for both restrictive and liberal immigration reforms have drawn the public's attention to a growing demographic of mixed-status families (Passel & Cohn, 2009). Mixed-status families include members who are residing in the United States without legal resident status (who may be in the process of applying for their U.S. citizenship) and U.S.-born citizens (Fix & Zimmerman, 2001). The number of mixed-status families continues to increase, despite slowing rates of migration from Mexico to the United States, because undocumented migrants are giving birth to children in this country at higher rates than in previous decades (Pew Hispanic Center, 2011). In 2009, 8.8 million people residing in the United States lived in mixed-status families; 3.8 million were undocumented adults and 0.5 million were undocumented children and adolescents. The remaining 4.5 million individuals were migrants with legal resident status or U.S.-born children (Passel & Cohn, 2009). Among U.S. public school students, 6.8% live in mixed-status families (Passel & Cohn, 2009). While we know that students' migratory status can affect their motivation to graduate from high school and pursue college study (Abrego, 2006; Perez, 2009), we know less about the ways in which dispositions toward future opportunities are developed in the course of everyday life. This article focuses on one mixed-status Mexican family in order to shed light on a phenomenon that has remained largely invisible to policy makers and educational researchers—how members of mixed-status families understand and talk about their migratory status during routine conversations.

This article takes up a call in language socialization research to attend to the ways that migration processes shape the discursive practices of diasporic speech communities (Baquedano-López & Kattan, 2007). I draw from field notes, recordings, and correspondence gathered during a 23-month ethnographic study of an emerging Latino community to track the ways in which juridical categories of citizenship inform mixed-status family members' socialization to identities within the domestic sphere and in relation to public institutions. I focus on one family's talk about citizenship during a routine discursive event that I call the "planning for the future routine" (PFR). The PFR is a recurrent type of exchange in which family members of all ages talked about the family's upcoming plans and indexed one another's migratory status when offering explanations for their ability or inability to participate in the anticipated activities. I address two questions: (a) How do siblings demonstrate that they have learned to talk about citizenship according to shared cultural conventions? and (b) How are beliefs about citizenship expressed when siblings in mixed-status families describe their social positions in relation to other family members?

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### Undocumented Latino Youth, Language, and Identity

Educational research on undocumented Latino youth living in the United States tends to focus on the ways in which migratory status limits undocumented students' opportunities for

post-secondary study. This important body of work chronicles the ways in which some undocumented students, confronted with financial barriers to higher education, become politically active in U.S. society (Gonzales, 2008; Rogers, Saunders, Terriquez, & Velez, 2008). Studies of these students' participation in immigration and education reform efforts show that youth co-construct a shared set of norms about how and when it is appropriate to display their vulnerable migratory identities in public forums (González, Plata, García, Torres, & Urrieta, 2003; Seif, 2004). By focusing on the activism of exceptional young people in exceptional circumstances like marches and protests, such work can give the impression that citizenship discourses only arise in extreme instances. We know comparatively little about the material and discursive impact of citizenship on students' daily lives.

However, there is a growing body of research that identifies critical moments across the lifespan when being undocumented shapes individuals' and families' incorporation into U.S. economic and social life (Chavez, 1998). Ethnographic research has shown that undocumented parents living in New York City endure poor working conditions, are afraid to access social services, and are socially isolated—all factors that negatively impact the cognitive and social-emotional development of their U.S.-born children during early childhood (Yoshikawa, 2011). Studies of Latino students in California have found that high school graduation marks a transition for adolescents who realize that their migratory status prohibits them from accessing education and employment opportunities available to their U.S.-born counterparts (Abrego, 2006; Gonzales, 2011; Perez, 2009). This work provides a nuanced understanding of the material and psychological impact of citizenship status by showing how individuals experience the contradiction of both belonging to and being excluded from U.S. life (Gonzalez, 2011; Zavella, 2011). Researchers in this area have called for studies that account for the ways that a "parent's or a child's own unauthorized status might affect development in middle childhood" (Suárez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, Teranishi, & Suárez-Orozco, 2011, p. 452). This article helps to fill this gap by showing that undocumented and U.S.-born siblings, 6- to 13-years of age, talk about and understand the relationship between migratory status and their participation in U.S. systems.

Research that foregrounds Latino youth and children's language use as a constitutive part of their social identities tends to focus on young children's socialization to home and school discourses or routine interactions among adolescents at school or within peer groups. Ethnographic studies of everyday interactions among elementary-aged children, parents, and teachers draw on a language socialization approach to identify mismatches and alignments between home-language and school-language use that shape children's learning (Schechter & Bayley, 2002; Vásquez, Pease-Alvarez, & Shannon, 1994; Zentella, 1997). Studies that have specifically examined the migratory context in which Latino children are raised provide rich insights into mothers' border-crossing experiences (González, 2001; Valdés, 1996) and detailed descriptions of transnational relationships between children and adults (Dreby, 2010; Farr, 2006). Bhimji's (2005) analysis of teasing in a Mexican family living in California offers a rare glimpse of a child's participation in a socialization routine that explicitly references migratory status. Close examinations of Latino adolescents' talk highlight the ways in which students' narratives inform their academic and social identities (Rymes, 2001), conceptions of national identity impact peer relationships and perceptions (Valenzuela, 1999), and peer talk indexes gendered and ethnic identities in and out of school (Bucholtz, 2009; Mendoza-Denton, 2008). I build on this research by analyzing mixed-status siblings' interactions at home to show

how their socialization to ethnic, national, and academic identities is linked to talk about citizenship.

### Language Socialization in Mixed-Status Families

Language learning is a process that entails both gaining proficiency in the grammatical conventions of a linguistic code and becoming competent in the social norms for communicating with others in a cultural context (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984). Socialization is the process by which “children and other novices in society acquire tacit knowledge of principles of social order and systems of belief . . . through exposure to and participation in language-mediated interactions” (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986, p. 2). A longitudinal ethnographic approach permits language socialization researchers to document the various communicative resources (verbal and gestural, for example) and socialization strategies (such as implicit or explicit instruction) that participants’ employ when teaching one another and demonstrating their learning. This article shows that undocumented adolescents and U.S.-born children in mixed-status families learn local and culturally situated conventions for speaking across codes (Spanish and English) and for referring to themselves and others (who have or do not have U.S. citizenship).

As Ochs’s ethnographic studies of language socialization processes in Western Samoa have demonstrated, talk and childrearing are influenced not only by local cultural norms, but also by transnational processes of colonization and imperialism (Ochs, 1988; see also Duranti, 1994). These processes are registered in demographic shifts and political or economic changes but they are also embedded in social contexts and encoded in everyday talk (Zentella, 1997). This is evidenced, not only in the U.S. context where this study was conducted, but also in Western Europe where the growing number of Muslim children and youth attending public school has engendered novel pedagogical approaches and linguistic practices that reflect the intersections between global migrations and identity formation (García Sánchez, 2010; Tetreault, 2008). Children are agentive social actors who participate in the co-construction of cultural practices as they interact with peers and elders (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2008; Whiting, 1980). As a result, children’s talk can teach us a great deal about the way that macro contexts shape beliefs and practices across the lifespan. This language socialization study of citizenship features children as central interlocutors in conversations about migratory status, providing insight into a population absent from most studies of undocumented migrants or mixed-status families.

Through this process of pragmatic socialization, individuals in different developmental stages who occupy distinct social roles demonstrate their social and linguistic competence during interaction (Li, 2010). A speaker’s indexical language use signals membership in a community (Gumperz, 1982) and demonstrates her mastery of competent behaviors appropriate for use in a particular social group like a classroom or family (Ochs, 1996, 2002). Deictic reference is a kind of indexicality in which individual talk establishes relationships between the speaker and her surroundings that are laden with power and status (Hanks, 1990). By examining participants’ use of indexical language in everyday talk, I learned much more than a set of abstract terms for describing migratory status; I was able to understand local ways of talking about family, place, identity, and the value of U.S. citizenship.

## ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELDWORK IN THE NEW LATINO DIASPORA

## The New Latino Diaspora

In their introduction to *Education in the New Latino Diaspora: Policy and the Politics of Identity*, Wortham, Murillo, and Hamman (2002) delineated three features of the New Latino Diaspora: first, it is located in non-traditional settlement areas of the southern and midwestern United States; second, Latino immigrants settling in these areas face "novel challenges to their sense of identity, status, and community" in unique contexts of reception (p. 1); and third, a range of formal and informal policy changes have been implemented at the state, county, or citywide level with varying success in meeting the social and academic needs of the growing Latino population. New Latino Diaspora studies have tended to focus on the Sun Belt region in the South and the southwestern United States that experienced steady immigrant growth in the middle of the 20th century due to flourishing technology, construction, and service industries.

The Rust Belt, in contrast, is known as a "former gateway" for U.S. immigration (Singer, 2008, p. 9) that currently has a declining native-born population, relatively low numbers of new immigrants, and a weak post-industrial economy (Ritzer, 2007). There are data, however, that indicate that the Latino population in the Rust Belt is growing. Millvalley, Pennsylvania,<sup>2</sup> the Rust Belt city where this ethnographic study took place, has recently become home to a growing Latino population. The 2006 American Community Survey reported that Latinos totaled 1.8% of Millvalley's population and Mexicans comprised 1,537 of the 5,466 Latino residents. Service providers in the emerging community estimated that there were closer to 10 or 15 thousand Latino residents and that the community was growing rapidly due to high fertility rates in Mexican families (D. Correa, personal communication, September 10, 2008). This is consistent with national trends in Mexican population growth (Duran, Telles, & Flashman, 2006). The 2010 Census indicates that the Latino population in the county where Millvalley is located grew by 71% in 10 years.

## Schooling in the New Latino Diaspora of Millvalley, Pennsylvania

Like other New Latino Diaspora locations, the potential for positive relationships between long-time Millvalley residents and newly arriving migrants exists alongside xenophobic perceptions of newcomers that negatively impact community interactions (Wortham, Mortimer & Allard, 2009). This tension is especially evident in local educational policy. Within the last five years, school administrators and teachers who considered themselves advocates for the growing population of Latino English language learners began to provide more and higher quality English as a second language (ESL) services. New policies have ranged from the formal development of ESL programs in neighborhood schools to the informal practice of hiring teachers who speak the home language of the students (Mangual Figueroa, 2011). At the same time, Latinos in Millvalley have reported being denied access to adequate educational and social services on the basis of their migratory status. These experiences have led to novel approaches to community organizing and childrearing in Millvalley, as they have in other areas of the New Latino Diaspora as families adapt to and resist those inequities (Murillo, 2002; Villenas & Moreno, 2001).

<sup>2</sup>The names of individuals and cities have been changed to protect the anonymity of the study participants.

During casual conversations in mixed-status families' homes and personal communications with Latino community organizers, I learned about the specific ways in which undocumented Latino students were denied educational services in Millvalley. Although the participants did not use the phrase *New Latino Diaspora* to describe Millvalley, our exchanges revealed the unique challenges that they faced as members of an emerging Latino community. Laura Castro, like other focal mothers, recounted the experiences of families who had trouble enrolling their undocumented children in local in public schools. As recently as a few years ago, the local high school that Laura's undocumented daughter would eventually attend refused to admit Latino students unless they could prove their U.S. citizenship. Laura explained that while local districts were more open to enrolling undocumented students in elementary school, migrant high school youth had been denied access to schooling.

This practice was confirmed through personal communication that I had with a local community organizer working in Millvalley's Latino community. In September 2008, while I was volunteering as a translator within the Latino community, the organizer sent the following e-mail to various community members and leaders. The suburb that he mentions, Riverview, is located within three miles of the Brickyard neighborhood where the focal families lived. The organizer wrote (in his original grammar and syntax):

I also would like to share with you another case that we have. The family that moved to Riverview and the public school district is denying to accept their children there to study since they are "illegal aliens" as well. The father has an A# and his process is going on on USICE. They are really worried that the director of the school there, threated them to call ICE if they would go to see a Lawyer and said NO ILLEGAL ALIEN CHILDREN would be able to get school at her district.

This e-mail asserts that local school districts were attempting to deny undocumented Latino families' enrollment, despite the U.S. Supreme Court's 1982 ruling in *Plyler v. Doe* granting all students access to a public education regardless of citizenship status (Petrinocolos & New, 1999). This failure to uphold the *Plyler* ruling has recently been reported in other Rust Belt locations (Bernstein, 2010). The father mentioned in the e-mail had an A#, or Alien Registration Number, that is assigned to non-citizens living in the United States by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (USICE). An A# is also assigned to undocumented migrants who have applied for a visa or a green card; this is the process that the organizer referred to when he stated that the father's "process is going on on USICE" [*sic*]. This is evidence of the discrimination that undocumented Latinos encountered, the fear they experienced, and the informal school policies and local grassroots efforts that shaped migrants' access to rights in and around Millvalley.

## Participants and Methodology

I recruited four focal families to participate in this study in order to collect rich interactional data over a sustained period of time in each of the homes. This is consistent with the language socialization approach of recruiting fewer participants, thereby permitting the researcher to spend more time with each one and to gather a larger amount of interactional data (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). The Mendez-Castro family that is the focus of this article and one other focal family had undocumented adolescents enrolled in grades 8 and 10, respectively, while the other two families had undocumented children in 2nd and 3rd grade. I focus on one family in order to

examine how siblings make sense of the diverse intrafamily experiences related to migratory status inherent in growing up in a mixed-status home. The Mendez-Castro family is the subject of this analysis because it included a greater number of siblings across a wide range of ages, providing insight into the ways that siblings in middle childhood and early adolescence talk about citizenship.

The parents and children in all four families talked about migratory status as it related to the children's prospects for social and economic mobility in the United States, and they commonly used some of the linguistic resources evident in the PFR. However, the exchanges examined here recurred often in the homes of the two families with undocumented adolescents, while the discourses of citizenship entered the everyday lives of families with undocumented elementary-aged children during routine educational activities like homework completion (see Mangual Figueroa, 2011). In the two homes with younger children, parents would use indexical language to initiate conversations about their children's future opportunities based upon migratory status. They might state, for example, "*No le hecha ganas a la escuela. Él no sé si el día de mañana va irse querer a lavar baños*" [He's not putting effort into school. I don't know if tomorrow he's going to want to go clean bathrooms]. In these moments, parents projected their own present realities living in the United States as migrants onto their undocumented children's future prospects. In the homes with older undocumented children, there was no need for a school document to prompt the conversation about migratory status, these occurred during casual conversation. Moreover, talk about citizenship and the future was not only initiated by parents but also by the siblings who participated in the PFR.

Figure 1 depicts kinship relations and migratory statuses of the Mendez-Castro family. A triangle represents a female and a circle represents a male relative. Two horizontal lines indicate a marriage bond while a single vertical line denotes a descent bond. A single, solid horizontal line indicates a co-descent bond (O'Neil, 2008). In addition to these traditional genealogical notations, I have added shading to indicate the citizenship status of the participants in this study. The shaded symbols denote U.S.-born children, and unshaded symbols denote undocumented migrant family members born in Mexico. This mirrors linguistic terms used by the Mendez-Castro family to refer to members who had or lacked U.S. citizenship.

After many conversations with the participants in all four families, I learned that the term *ciudadano* (citizen) implied American citizen and that family members rarely talked about being

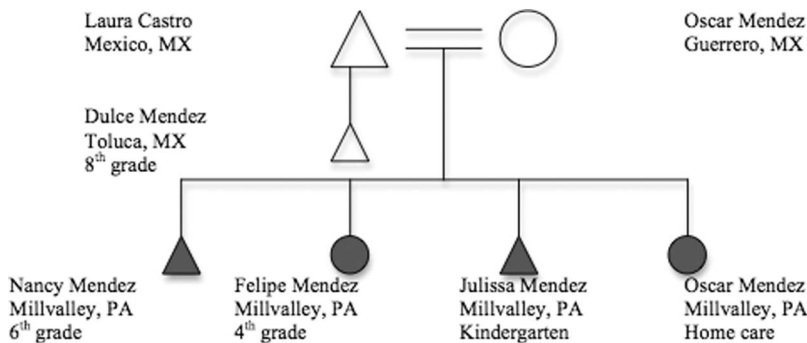


FIGURE 1 The Mendez-Castro family.

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Mexican citizens. A Mexican citizen was almost always referred to as lacking U.S. citizenship: they did *not have* papers or were *not* legal. For example, when the focal parents in this study referred to their children, they either mentioned the child's birthplace (*el que nació en México*, the one born in Mexico) or nationality (*los Americanos*, the Americans). While the parents could have used other descriptors such as hair color or age, their use of these appositive noun phrases and defining relative clauses—constructions used to express the defining attributes of nouns (in this case, *son* or *daughter*)—is evidence that the importance of citizenship status was linguistically encoded in everyday talk.

While the focal families had certain experiences that were particular to the New Latino Diaspora, they also shared several characteristics that mirrored the broader Mexican population living in the United States: family composition, parental language proficiency and educational level, and employment and socioeconomic status. The families typified national trends indicating that more than half of the Mexican population lives in two-parent households (Ramirez, 2004). Consistent with reports that 43.1% of Mexican migrants in the United States speak English less than “very well” (Ramirez, 2004), the focal parents reported low levels of English fluency. When they did speak in English, they often noted that they had learned the words or phrases at work. The focal parents were hesitant to speak English in public; they tended to ask their children or me to translate on their behalf. All of the focal parents completed primary schooling in Mexico; Mexicans are the least likely of Latinos in the United States to have a high school diploma (Ramirez & de la Cruz, 2003).

The focal parents were employed in the service sector of the Millvalley labor market. As a restaurant cook, Oscar Mendez was one of more than 1.2 million foreign-born Latinos working in food preparation; Laura Castro cleaned homes in Millvalley like more than 1.5 million foreign-born Latinos working in the cleaning sector of the service industry (Fry, 2008). Mexicans are one of the Hispanic groups most likely to live in poverty, second only to Puerto Ricans (Ramirez & de la Cruz, 2003). All of the focal families lived in low-income households and the four U.S.-born Mendez-Castro siblings were eligible to receive nutritional benefits known as food stamps as well as health insurance because they were U.S. citizens under 18 years of age. These four siblings received medical care at a local children's hospital; Laura, Oscar, and Dulce visited clinics for uninsured patients.

This 23-month study took place against this social and economic backdrop. I visited each focal family a minimum of 10 times during the spring of 2009. My weekly visits to the Mendez-Castro family would begin when I met Julissa and Felipe at Ridge Elementary School at 2:45 p.m. upon their dismissal from school. I would usually visit with the Mendez-Castro family until around 6:30 p.m. and would either eat dinner with the family or leave right before they did. I did not predetermine which activities I would observe; I documented the families' participation in whichever activities the parents and children routinely conducted after school. As a multisited ethnographic study (Marcus, 1995), I tracked families' experiences and conversations in their homes and in the public sphere as parents and children ran errands and attended appointments at schools, clinics, or social service centers.

I recorded more than 45 hours of interaction in the four focal families' homes, collected artifacts such as school correspondence, and wrote field notes for each visit. I also conducted interviews with school district employees and wrote field notes for parent-teacher conferences and community forums on immigration policy. I coded all field notes and video logs, specifically focusing on the multiple ways in which families referenced citizenship status through talk. I developed a series of theoretical constructs about how citizenship was understood and enacted in

everyday life. I triangulated these constructs with other data sources (Goetz & LeCompte, 1981) such as the interviews and artifacts. I employed Conversation Analysis transcription methods in order to focus attention on the ways in which the beliefs and understandings referenced through talk were developed over the course of unfolding social interactions (Schegloff, 2007).

## THE PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE ROUTINE

### The Routine

The PFR occurred during every weekly visit that I made to the Mendez-Castro family home in the spring of 2009. I present three focal examples that took place between January and May of that year. The first two examples were recorded through ethnographic field notes and the last example includes the transcript of a recorded interview. I provide additional samples to demonstrate the prevalence of the routine within a range of everyday activities that took place in the home, and to highlight its relevance within the discursive space in which siblings were being socialized and socializing one another to talk about citizenship. The PFR, which occurred when members talked about anticipated family activities, sometimes entailed a brief statement indexing a family member's migratory status and other times included a long conversation on the subject. While both adults and children participated in these routines, I focus on interactions that illustrate how siblings of all ages—ranging from the 6-year-old U.S.-born sibling to the 13-year-old undocumented Mexican-born sibling—expressed beliefs about citizenship.

The most stable features of the PFR were linguistically encoded; in other words, siblings used predictable pragmatic and syntactic constructions to talk about citizenship status. One striking feature of the PFR is that family members talked about how migratory status shaped their participation in upcoming activities without ever uttering the terms *citizenship* or *migratory status*. Instead, as siblings talked about their participation in public systems such as education, health care, and travel, they used metonymic language to refer to individuals who did or did not have papers (state-issued immigration documents such as a visa or passport). As we will see, they relied heavily on indexical language to establish the relationship between citizenship and behavior.

There were 3 syntactic features of the siblings' talk that characterized the PFR: verb tense and mood, conjunctions that established causal relationships between migratory status and behavior, and locative, temporal, and pronominal deictic terms. The siblings tended to use auxiliary verbs in the present tense (*can + go*) or simple future tense (*will + graduate*) to communicate their confidence in the subject's ability to perform the action described. They used conjunctions (*because* and *so*) to establish causal relationships between having or not having papers and being able to participate in particular activities. During the PFR, speakers situated the subject of the sentence (for example, *I* or *my parents*) within a particular time (*now* and *then*) or place (*here* or *there*). Depending on the subject's citizenship status, this "deictic field" (Hanks, 2005, p. 193) was imbued with a different social significance.

### The Mendez-Castro Siblings' Talk in the PFR

The first PFR occurred as the family gathered in the kitchen and living room after school. As I talked with Laura, I occasionally glanced into the living room to watch the children playing and

talking. At one point, Julissa stepped out of the play sequence to tell me about the trip to Mexico that she anticipated taking during her summer vacation from school. As Julissa talked about the travel plans, Laura chimed in to elaborate on who would be able to go on the trip and why.

**Example One:**<sup>3</sup>

- 1 Julissa: I'm going to Mexico this summer. I'm scared to go on a plane.  
((Laura explained to me in Spanish that Julissa, Felipe, and Junior would all go to Mexico and that she, Dulce, and Oscar would stay in the United States))
- 2 Julissa: I'm going to Mexico this summer but my sister can't go ((pointing at Dulce and
- 3 shaking her head no)) because she was born there.  
((Laura continued to tell me, in Spanish, that she, Dulce, and Oscar might go to Florida instead of Mexico because they could drive there instead of flying.))
- 4 Laura: *No podemos ir en avión porque no tenemos . . .* ((Laura turned to wash dishes))  
We can't go on a plane because we don't have . . .

As Julissa told me about her trip, she tried to reconcile her excitement about an upcoming family reunion with the fact that some family members could not participate. In so doing, she demonstrated her understanding of how birthplace shaped her siblings' participation in family vacations. Julissa juxtaposed her ability to travel to Mexico with Dulce's inability to travel there. Julissa punctuated this statement in two ways: (a) by pointing to Dulce, indicating that she could not go and (b) by shaking her head no, emphasizing the word *not* and the fact that Dulce could not make the trip. Julissa communicated her understanding that Dulce's being born *there* (a locative deictic referring to Mexico) was the direct cause of her inability to travel to her home country. Her omission of the term *citizenship* suggests that she had been socialized to talk about differences between U.S.- or Mexican-born relatives without mentioning migratory status.

Laura confirmed that these travel plans were underway and explained that the family had been considering alternate possibilities for those undocumented members who could not cross the border into Mexico. While it is true that it would have been risky for her, Oscar, and Dulce to cross the U.S.–Mexico border via any mode of transportation, her focus on airplanes indicates that she was responding to Julissa's specific comments in English about being scared to fly to Mexico. In line 4, Laura began to explain that she and the others could not travel by plane because they did not have U.S. citizenship. Although her sentence trailed off as she turned to wash the dishes, it is likely that she would have ended her sentence with the word *papeles* (papers)—the family's way of indexing their migratory status.

<sup>3</sup>I adhered to Conversation Analysis transcription conventions. Please note that “the punctuation marks are *not* used grammatically, but to indicate intonation” (Schegloff, 2007, p. 267).

(.)	“micropause”	CAPS	especially loud talk
.	falling, or final intonation contour	o	talk following it was quiet or soft
?	rising intonation	↑↓	sharper intonation rises or falls
::	prolongation of the preceding sound	(( ))	transcriber's description of events
–	stress or emphasis	-	cut off prior word or sound

Laura's affirmation of Julissa's position provided her and the other children with a model for how to talk about family members' future plans. While acknowledging the constraints that she and Dulce faced as undocumented migrants, Laura also envisioned alternative opportunities that they shared (such as visiting Florida instead of Mexico). For Laura, not having papers was not simply a hindrance to be overcome but was also an opportunity to find creative solutions to the particular challenges faced by the undocumented family members. The family would, for example, frequently drive to visit extended family living in other New Latino Diaspora locations such as North Carolina and Tennessee for special occasions like *quinceañeras* and weddings.

While Dulce enjoyed seeing family members living in other, more established, locations in the New Latino Diaspora, she also lamented not being able to visit the grandparents who cared for her in Mexico until she migrated to Millvalley at age 9. On more than one occasion Dulce told me that she "loved North Carolina because there are a lot of Mexicans there and there's always a party"—referring to the special events that the family would celebrate during her visits. But at the same time Dulce explained, "if I had *papeles* [papers] I would always go to Mexico because Mexico is beautiful and you're not like here *encerrado todo el día* [shut inside all day]." The restrictions that Dulce associated with living in the United States resulted in part from not having U.S. citizenship, but they were also shaped by her role as eldest sibling. During another conversation, Laura explained to me that her three oldest U.S.-born children (Nancy, Felipe, and Julissa) would make the anticipated trip to Mexico while her youngest child would stay behind because he was too young to travel. Dulce frowned when she realized that she would be charged with caring for Oscar, the toddler, while Laura worked and exclaimed "*¡ah yo me voy a quedar a ser babysitter!*" [oh I'm going to stay to be a babysitter!]. Not only did Dulce have to stay in Millvalley that summer, but she would also have to spend most of her time working for the family. As the eldest undocumented daughter, Dulce's choices about how to spend out-of-school time during the school year (weekends and summers) were more limited than her siblings'.

On another visit to the Mendez-Castro home, I conversed with Laura while the siblings gathered in the kitchen for an after-school snack. After I recounted a story about a recent doctor's visit, I asked Laura about where the family received medical care in Millvalley.

**Example Two:**

- 1 Author: *Adónde van ustedes?*  
Where do you (pl.) go?
- 2 Laura: *Yo voy a la Hillside, como yo no tengo aseguranza*  
I go to Hillside, since I don't have insurance
- 3 Author: *Algunos tienen* ((pointing toward the children seated at the table))  
Some have
- 4 Laura: *Todos menos Dulce. Yo la llevo a la clínica.*  
All of them except Dulce. I take her to the clinic.
- 5 Dulce: Yah. I go to the doctor and they speak Spanish!
- 6 Laura: *Dulce va a la clínica del doctor Correa*  
Dulce goes to doctor Correa's clinic
- 7 Felipe: I have papers so I can go anywhere ((gesturing firmly with his hand and moving  
8 his head from left to right)).
- 9 Laura: Mm hmm.

Like most PFRs, this began as a conversation about family activities without any mention of migratory status. However, within just a few exchanges, speakers referenced their own or others' citizenship as an explanation for why they had to make distinct plans for participation in a given activity. The family's talk about their ongoing practice of receiving routine medical care implied a shared expectation of making future visits to the doctor while also demarcating the different options available to family members based upon their migratory status. Laura's reference to Dulce's being uninsured (line 4) established that Dulce was different than her U.S.-born siblings and cousins; here, being uninsured was an index of not having papers. Felipe's mention of papers indicated his understanding of the social capital afforded U.S. citizens and an awareness that not all of his family members enjoyed the same kinds of access that he did.

When Felipe used the metonymic language of having *papers* that other family members typically used to index citizenship status (line 7), he conveyed a sense of privilege. His emphasis on the word *I* and on the first syllable of the word *anywhere* created a phonological parallelism that implied that those sounds (and their corresponding meanings) were linked. He communicated the idea that as a person with papers he had the freedom to go *anywhere* and perhaps, to get *anything*. Felipe used a taunting tone of voice sometimes used by children who, when in a competition, claim that "I'm better than you . . . so *there*." If Dulce's excitement implied that there was any positive social capital associated with having a Spanish-speaking doctor, Felipe trumped that by announcing that he had papers and could therefore visit any doctor at any location. Felipe's talk suggests that he employed a set of linguistic resources shared by his family (most notably using the phrase *I have papers*) for indexing citizenship and relating it to his ability to participate in certain activities.

The Mendez-Castro siblings puzzled through the relationship between migratory status (symbolized by documentation) and individual agency (reflected in the ability to travel freely across borders) in various ways. One afternoon, sitting at the kitchen table with Felipe and a cousin who were doing homework, Julissa drew a picture of a girl with a heart-shaped body and tears streaming from her eyes (see Figure 2). Holding it up, she said, "She's crying." When I asked why, Julissa declared that "her daddy left." I then asked Julissa where he had gone and she explained, "He went to Mexico. I'm gonna draw Mexico on the other side."

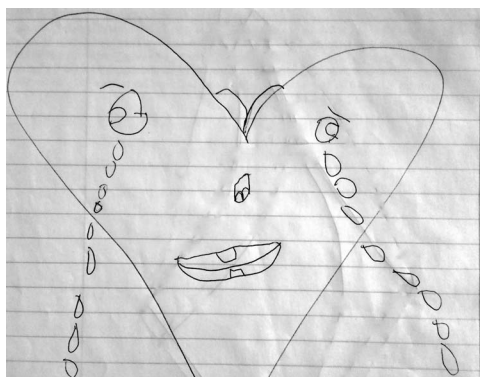


FIGURE 2 "She's crying."

The drawing depicted a sad child, powerless to change her father’s departure; Julissa’s concern was not surprising given that family separations resulting from deportation were not uncommon in Millvalley and that members of her family had recently been deported. Later in the spring of 2009, as reports of a swine flu epidemic in Mexico saturated the U.S. media, Laura expressed doubts about whether the long-awaited trip to Mexico would actually be possible. She worried that “*no van a permitir que nadie vaya de Mexico a los Estados Unidos*” [they are not going to let anyone go from Mexico to the United States]. Nancy, 11 years old at the time, asked, “*¿Cómo pueden cerrar la frontera cuando las personas just hop?*” [how can they close the border when people just hop?]. While Julissa’s picture expressed the despair children felt when family members were deported, Nancy’s question implied a sense of agency in which migrants could defy restrictive immigration laws and cross borders despite government policy.

### Dulce Plans for the Future

After many months of documenting the PFRs among the Mendez-Castro family members, I recorded an informal interview that I conducted with Dulce about her experiences as an undocumented migrant teenager living in the United States. I conducted this interview with Dulce in order to elicit the kinds of utterances that she expressed during naturally occurring PFRs, to clearly record her ideas, and to ask her follow-up questions about her beliefs about citizenship. This 2.5-minute sequence took place in May 2009 in Dulce’s bedroom (pictured in Figure 3).

The following transcript resembles the kinds of exchanges examined earlier in two key ways. First, the linguistic resources that Dulce utilized are typical of the pragmatic and syntactic constructions that her siblings deployed. Dulce’s reference to “papers” carries a similar semantic meaning as it does for her siblings because it also serves as a metonymic term for describing family members who have or lack U.S. citizenship. As we will see, however, Dulce’s concerns go beyond currently having or not having papers to include the future implications of applying for and obtaining papers as a high school student. Second, this conversation took place almost entirely in English, thereby resembling sibling talk during the PFR yet differing from adult-child



FIGURE 3 Dulce planning for the future.

interactions that usually took place in Spanish and English. Dulce often spoke to me in English; this was true on this day, as well. However, this dyadic interaction was markedly different from other PFRs because I mostly listened. I did not participate in the more rapid conversational turn-taking that I observed among family members.

### Example Three:

#### Sequence A:

- 1 Ariana: Do you think that um (0.2) you will ha::ve all the same opportunities in the future.
- 2 like as your brothers and sisters?
- 3 Dulce: Hopefully I will ((smiles and nods as she looks down))
- 4 Ariana: What do you want to do then, in the future?
- 5 Dulce: If I'm like, if I'm like, uh, if I get like *papeles* before I like graduate I'll probably
- 6 just be like um, um, what are they called<sup>o</sup> ((looks up)) If I'm not uh a like
- 7 compu::ter, 'cause I wanna be a comp- 'cause I love computers, and I know
- 8 everything about them? and I wanna be like one of those persons that works with
- 9 computers. or if I don't. I wanna . . . what are those people that like do hai::r and
- 10 everything called?
- 11 Ariana: Oh::: like um, I think they're called estheticians=
- 12 Dulce: Estheticians. Them=
- 13 Ariana: =beauty uh huh
- 14 Dulce: =cause there's this like, there's this school that you can go there and they give
- 15 you scholarships for that<sup>o</sup>

I initiated this exchange by asking Dulce a question that I had heard her, her parents, and other adult relatives discuss before—whether she would have the same future opportunities as her brothers and sisters. While the question presupposed that there were differences between Dulce and her siblings, it did not specify that they resulted from their different citizenship statuses. Dulce's hopeful response about having the same opportunities as her younger siblings (line 3) is particularly striking since she was wearing an Obama t-shirt. This could be construed as a material sign of the family's optimism about immigration reform; they often discussed *la reforma* (immigration reform) and their desire to be granted amnesty under an Obama presidency. When I asked her what she wanted to do in the future (line 4), Dulce explained that her future plans depended upon whether or not she got *papeles* before graduating from high school (line 5). Like other PFRs, this sequence began without an explicit mention of migratory status, yet Dulce quickly indexed her migratory status when talking about her future prospects.

Dulce explained that obtaining *papeles* before she graduated from high school would afford her multiple opportunities for postsecondary study in the United States. She rehearsed two ways of framing her response. She started with the conjunction *if*, expressing uncertainty, coupled with the verb *to be*, communicating that this uncertainty was linked to her juridical status and identity (*If I am*, implying *If I am a citizen* in line 5). Dulce then completed the sentence with the phrase “if I get *papeles* . . . I'll probably be.” By starting to say “If I'm a citizen” and instead selecting “If I get *papeles*,” Dulce demonstrated that she had been socialized to her family's linguistically sanctioned way of referring to migratory status.

Dulce became animated as she talked about her desire to work with computers (line 7). However, her confidence began to waver as she stopped referring to herself in the first person and began talking about "one of those persons who works with computers" or "those people that do hair" (lines 8 and 9). She talked in vague terms about receiving the scholarship that she would need to attend a local cosmetology school. The pronouns *there*, *you*, *they* convey Dulce's doubt about whether this course of study would become a possibility for her (lines 13 and 14). This shift away from the first- to third-person pronouns indicated a waning sense of her prospects for assuming that role. As an undocumented student who hoped to obtain legal resident status prior to high school graduation, Dulce could not take her participation in scholarly or professional activities for granted.

**Sequence B:**

- 16 Ariana: Um hm. So you said right now, that would be things you'd want to do if you got
- 17 *papeles* before you graduate. So what do you think will happen if you don't?
- 18 Nancy: Dulce, mom's here! ((calls from downstairs))
- 19 Dulce: I'll just like work ((looks away and then back at me, shrugs her shoulders,
- 20 frowns))
- 21 Ariana: Uh huh
- 22 Dulce: And then like, I just like. Like. Like. This is my plan ((wipes the left side of her
- 23 face)). I'll just like work and get money and then go to Mexico and live my life
- 24 there ↓ and make a family<sup>o</sup> ((rocks away from me))
- 25 Ariana: Uh huh
- 26 Dulce: If I don't get married here ↓ ((rocks toward me)). That's gonna be with a
- 27 Mexican guy ↓. That's what I said I'm not gonna marry no one else. I'm not
- 28 tryin' to be racist? but ((rocks left and right)) Mexico=
- 29 Ariana: Uh huh
- 30 Dulce: =like hh ya<sup>o</sup>.
- 31 Ariana: Why? What do you think- Why is it important to you?
- 32 Dulce: It's important for me ((raising her eyebrows and looking into camera)) to marry a
- 33 Mexican guy because like. I don't know hhh because I come from Mexico?
- 34 ((shrugs her shoulders and laughs)) and I like Mexican people ((rocks back and
- 35 toward me and wipes her right eye)).
- 36 Ariana: OK, fair enough, fair enough ((laughing with Dulce))

Dulce indicated with certainty that the post-secondary option for an undocumented adolescent was to seek employment (line 19). Throughout this sequence, Dulce once again spoke in the first person. She described two very different plans for herself depending on whether she got *papeles* in the near future: obtaining U.S. citizenship and pursuing a career (Sequence A, lines 5–10) or remaining a Mexican citizen and starting a family (Sequence B, lines 22–24). She portrayed these as mutually exclusive alternatives that depended upon her migratory status. Dulce explained that one possible path for gaining legal status in the United States would be to marry someone. She pictured herself marrying a "Mexican guy" because of their shared cultural and national identity, however, she did not indicate whether she knew that in order to obtain a green card, this imagined husband would have to be a U.S. citizen



and she would have to comply with U.S. immigration laws for requesting citizenship through marriage.

*Sequence C:*

- 37 Ariana: What do you think you have to do in order to get *papeles* before::: you graduate?  
 38 ((Dulce bites her nails))  
 39 Dulce: They ((furrows brow)) were gonna do this thing? like if you live here like more  
 40 than. like my ((points to herself)) parents like live like 14 years? already  
 41 here. And they don't have like. ((crosses her arm)) they never been in jai::l, they  
 42 always like pay the re::nt. And like now ((gestures with open hand)) we own a  
 43 hou:::se.  
 44 Ariana: Mm hmm  
 45 Dulce: And like that's like ((rocks away from me)) the things they're looking for ((rocks  
 46 toward me and sits up straighter)) for like people that actually deserve it=  
 47 Ariana: Mm hmm  
 48 Dulce: = and are d- doing good. That's what they're ((furrows brow)) saying  
 49 Ariana: Mm hmm. And is that the like thing that like, that people keep talking about like,  
 50 *la reforma, reforma?*  
 51 Dulce: Ah ha, mm hmm=  
 52 Ariana: Uh huh  
 53 Dulce: = like. like. they check ((glances left and right)) on all your records and if  
 54 you're good and you're actually doing good in here ((nods head)) they'll give 'em  
 55 to you =  
 56 Ariana: Mm hmm  
 57 Dulce: = and like my parents. Like been like. really good ((shakes head))  
 58 Ariana: Yah yah  
 59 Dulce: ((shakes head yes)) And so like now we own a house so that means like we're  
 60 good and everything.

In the final section of this sequence, Dulce conveyed increasing anxiety about getting *papeles* before her high school graduation. According to Dulce, her and her parents' candidacy for U.S. citizenship would be evaluated according to the amount ("14 years already") and also the kind ("we're good") of time that they had spent in the United States. She explained that "they" (possibly the government or politicians) were "gonna do this thing," indicating that the process of obtaining U.S. citizenship was out of her control and quite ambiguous (line 39).

As she spoke, Dulce furrowed her brow, crossed her arms in defiance, and gestured with an open hand as though she were firmly stating her case in an argument. She explained why her parents, and by extension she (pointing to herself in line 40), deserved consideration in the migratory reform. Since they have "never" been in jail (line 41) and they "always" pay their rent (line 42) they had proven themselves to be eligible for U.S. citizenship. Dulce summarized her justification by bringing us back to the present: "now" that her parents owned a house they demonstrated being worthy of citizenship (line 42). As she finished making the case for why she and her parents deserve *it*, she sat up straight as if someone were judging her posture (line 46). Dulce's use of

"they" (for the government) and "my" and "they" (for her parents) erased her from the narration and rendered her powerless in a situation that would determine her future.

In lines 49 and 50 I confirmed that the "thing" that Dulce was talking about was "*la reforma*." She affirmed my use of the phrase using a Spanish language affirmative "ah ha, mm hmm" (as opposed to the English "uh huh"), replicating the speech used when she discussed these topics in Spanish with adult relatives. In the final segment of the sequence, Dulce elaborated on "*la reforma*," explaining that while she was under strict surveillance within U.S. immigration and social policy (line 53), she was also optimistic about being on the path toward citizenship because of her good behavior. Our conversation marked Dulce's identity within her family—on the one hand she was an undocumented migrant like her parents and on the other hand she was a student like her siblings. And yet, as the only undocumented student in her family, she had to have a contingency plan for what would happen if she did not get *papeles* in time to apply for college and financial aid in the state of Pennsylvania.<sup>4</sup> Dulce understood that getting or not getting *papeles* was a high-stakes activity on which her entire future rested.

The Mendez-Castro siblings' talk during the PFR offers us insight into a discursive domestic space in which Dulce and her siblings grappled with the symbolic and material consequences of having or not having U.S. citizenship status. Julissa, Felipe, Nancy, and Dulce all learned a shared set of conventions for talking about citizenship, and their exchanges reveal the linguistic resources used to both assert and question their identities as members of a mixed-status family. The learning that took place at home shaped the siblings' dispositions toward public institutions including school, health care, policy, and travel. These findings suggest that such dispositions, along with policies that support or limit siblings' ability to participate in public institutions, will impact their future educational and social opportunities in the United States.

## CONCLUSION

This article helps show how talk about citizenship saturates the everyday experiences of one mixed-status Mexican family. A language socialization approach to the study of interaction captures the way that macrosocial phenomena are registered in the everyday language use of communities living in the New Latino Diaspora and deepens our understanding of the ways that family members negotiate beliefs and identities across the lifespan. As Zentella (2005) cautions, "Without these insights, gatekeepers in schools, health facilities, and social service offices may impede Latino children's access to a solid education, decent jobs, and good medical care because they misconstrue the values and practices of the home" (p. 14). Understanding intrafamily diversity can counter deterministic views that assume that Latino involvement in public institutions is shaped by a static cultural perspective rather than a dynamic interplay between individual behaviors and institutionalized possibilities or constraints (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003).

The findings presented suggest that restrictive immigration policies do not solely impact undocumented migrant students. As we have seen, a family's understanding of citizenship actually shapes the identity formation of all siblings. Research that considers migrant children and youth in a complex sociocultural context has the potential to provide a robust understanding of

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<sup>4</sup>There are 10 states where undocumented students who meet certain criteria can pay in-state college tuition (see Russell, 2007); Pennsylvania is not included among them.

learning across developmental stages and social settings. Positioning the migrant family as a central social unit of analysis shows that they are more than simply a “backdrop or afterthought to the politics of inclusion” (Arzubiaga, Noguerón, & Sullivan, 2009, p. 248) and that children are more than passive, unknowing objects of national policy. The examples provided in this article provide a portrait of a family that does not fit neatly into demographic categories of migratory status, national identity, and generation. In doing so, it hopes to contribute to a body of research that explores how students and families that defy conventional typologies forge new identities arising amid globalizing processes (King & Ganuza, 2005; Suárez-Orozco, 2001).

Ethnographic studies that examine how citizenship status determines a young person’s sense of his or her future opportunities have implications for policy makers and educators in the present. Such research is particularly urgent in a political context of increasing anti-immigrant policy and rhetoric; it demonstrates how such macropolitical discourses saturate the domestic sphere in which mixed-status siblings are coming of age. Students’ sense of their horizon of possibilities for educational and economic advancement will invariably influence their participation in civic life, and further research into the present effects of such future conceptions is called for, both in the United States and in other national settings (Motti-Stefanidi, 2008). This article hopes to lay the groundwork for such investigations by showing how young children and adolescents have sophisticated understandings of their own possibilities and limitations as the children of migrants. Instead of relying on blanket deficit models to explain (or dismiss) immigrant families’ attitudes toward education, we need to identify and address the impacts of national immigration policy and discourse on the situated cultural practices within Latino immigrant families.

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