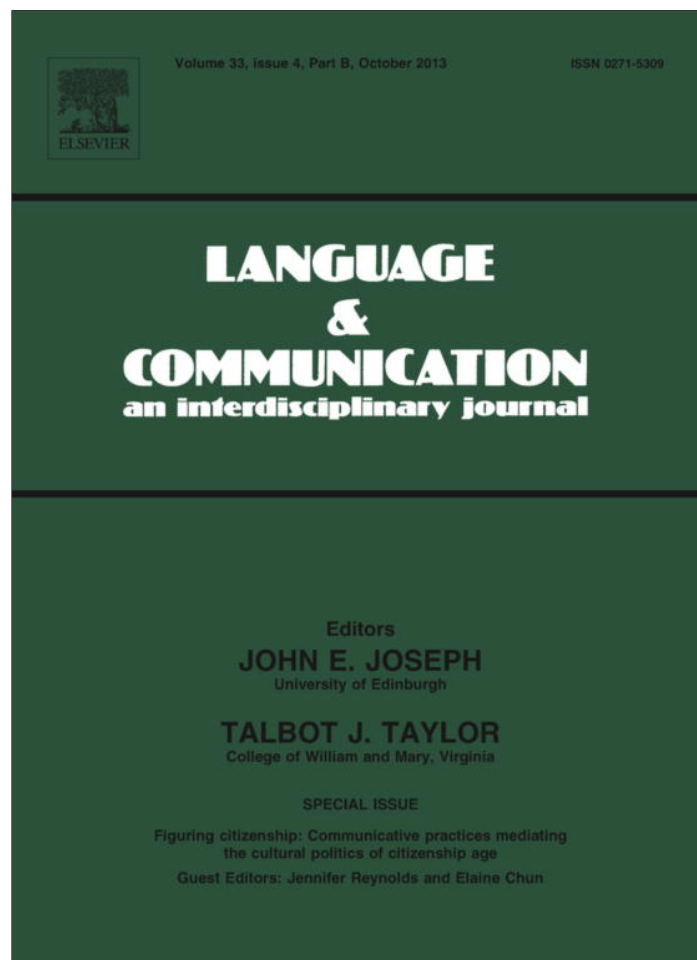


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¡Hay que hablar!: *Testimonio* in the everyday lives of migrant mothers



Ariana Mangual Figueroa*

Rutgers University, Graduate School of Education, 10 Seminary Place New Brunswick, NJ 08901, United States

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ABSTRACT

This article, which draws from an ethnographic study of mixed-status Mexican families living in the New Latino Diaspora, examines how two undocumented mothers both rehearse for and perform the act of giving *testimonio* during everyday conversations that take place in their home. The analysis identifies discursive and semiotic features of *testimonio* used by the mothers to develop an emergent narrative form situated within an increasingly anti-immigrant context. The findings indicate that giving *testimonio* is a symbolic and strategic substitute for participation in a legal system that affords migrants certain due process rights but denies them the civil rights afforded US citizens.

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1. Introduction

This article presents a series of exchanges between two undocumented mothers and the author in order to examine the social and linguistic attributes of the narrative act of giving *testimonio*. In mixed-status families—families in which some members are undocumented and some are US-born citizens—*testimonio* can serve as a form of symbolic and strategic participation in a legal system that affords undocumented migrants certain due process rights but denies them the civil rights afforded US citizens. The emergence of novel forms of civic engagement in immigrant contexts of reception is significant because it shapes the domestic and public space in which children and youth are being raised and because it provides insight into the lives of families that have become increasingly central in the national conversation about immigration reform. Even the most progressive positions articulated in mainstream debates have tended to characterize undocumented parents as criminal offenders and children as innocent victims of their parents' wrongdoing (Lopez et al., 2013). This article hopes to recover the humanity of undocumented parents by examining how the process of delivering and recording *testimonio* created the possibility for social and political engagement between the researcher and participants, a process I will attempt to situate within their broader struggle.

Testimonio is a narrative form that details an individual's participation in a community-wide struggle for human and civil rights. Often this *testimonio* is recorded and disseminated because a member of a privileged class is able to transmit the narrative beyond the local context of struggle. This process has led to scholarly debates about authorship that have tended to focus on the authenticity of the published text rather than examinations of the process by which the narrative is created by speakers and recorders. This article draws our attention to the interactional accomplishment of *testimonio* to highlight the socializing potential of the narrative form in the context of mixed-status families and to underscore the way in which giving and sharing *testimonio* can serve to counter the criminalizing and dehumanizing discourses now dominant in the US.

* Address: 121 Saint Marks Place #3 Brooklyn, NY 11217, United States. Tel.: +1 917 270 7901.

E-mail address: amf@gse.rutgers.edu

During the exchanges analyzed in this article, Marta Utuado and Luz Durán¹—undocumented mothers who participated in my ethnographic study of mixed-status families living in Southwestern Pennsylvania—talked with me about giving *testimonio* at an upcoming public forum on migrants' rights. Over time, as Marta and Luz became participants in my study and granted me permission to record and transcribe our interactions, we established a narrator and compiler relationship typical of *testimonio*. Our relationship was based on trust and solidarity as well as the contradictions resulting from our distinct social roles. Our joint engagement in grassroots activism did not erase the differential power relations inherent in delivering, recording, and publishing *testimonio*. In fact, we were acutely aware of the ways in which our different roles constituted the social conditions that made the production and circulation of *testimonio* possible.

One afternoon, as I set up the recorder at the start of the interactions presented in this article, Marta turned to Luz and said: '*Ahí te está filmando, Luz... para recopilar los más importante que es... lo de la tesis*' [She's filming you there, Luz... to retrieve what is most important... for the thesis]. Marta acknowledged the 'testimonial contract' we had established in which I had editorial control to write about what I perceived to be the most valuable aspects of our interaction (Pratt, 2001, p. 42). Her focus on the process by which I would compile and present her everyday experiences indicates the importance of audience in the context of giving *testimonio* and of my role as someone who had the ability to circulate her narrative among a broader audience. In the course of our exchange, multiple audiences were referenced—beginning here with an implied and imagined readership for the thesis and, later in the exchange, including the more proximal group of fellow migrants and local law enforcement authorities who Marta hoped would listen to her narrative. Marta and Luz's rehearsal of a narrative they hoped to share orally in public, coupled with my ability to publish the narrative here, resulted in the instantiation of *testimonio* within the private space of their home. I hope that this account will contribute a more nuanced understanding of the intersections between the personal and the political as well as the formal and functional attributes of this narrative event.

My interactions with Marta and Luz formed part of a 23 month multi-sited ethnographic study (Marcus, 1995) of four mixed-status Mexican families living in the New Latino Diaspora (Murillo and Villenas, 1997; as cited in Wortham et al. (2002)) in which I sought to understand how parents and children made sense of juridical categories of citizenship status during everyday conversations. Mixed-status families include undocumented migrant members residing in the United States (US) and US-born citizens, as well as members applying for US citizenship (Fix and Zimmerman, 2001). In 2008, 8.8 million people belonged to mixed-status families (Passel and Cohn, 2009). An individual's undocumented status hinders access to healthcare, social services and educational opportunities (Yoshikawa, 2011) and deportations resulting in family separations negatively impact the psychological wellbeing of parents and children alike (Chaudry et al., 2010; Suárez-Orozo and Yoshikawa, 2012). While we have some evidence of the effects of immigration and social policies on mixed-status families, we have little ethnographic data detailing the ways that institutional practices shape and are shaped by family members' interactions in public and private spheres.

National debates about immigration reform tend to assume that undocumented parents are criminals. Anti-immigration reforms that aim to deter migrant parents from crossing the border into the US seek to deny both parents and children access to basic services in the states where they currently reside. We see evidence of this deterrent approach in calls by Republican members of Congress to repeal the Fourteenth Amendment granting citizenship to children born in the US, a group derogatively referred to as 'anchor babies' (Lacey, 2011).² The proposal reifies nativist and xenophobic views of migrant mothers as calculating individuals who engage in the criminal activity of border crossing in order to take advantage of social services in the US. This narrative ignores the fact that these 'anchors' cannot assist their parents in applying for legal residence until the children are 21 years of age (Chavez, 2008). It also ignores the fact that migration from Mexico to the US has reached a historic low point (Pew Hispanic Center, 2011). Moreover, the proposal focuses on the alleged criminal decisions made by individual parents while ignoring the historical economic and social policies that have led to the migration and deportation of millions of Mexicans to the US since the US–Mexico border was forcibly created in 1848 (see De Genova and Ramos-Zayas, 2003).

Even more 'progressive' immigration reforms oriented towards supporting children's upward mobility tend to dichotomize migrant family members into innocent migrant children and their criminal parents. The landmark Supreme Court ruling *Plyler v. Doe*, which protects all children's rights to a public education in the US regardless of migratory status, is based on the idea that denying undocumented children access to public schooling would create a 'lifetime hardship on a discrete class of children not accountable for their disabling status' (*Plyler v. Doe*, 457 U.S. 202 [1982]). This argument is repeated in justifications for the proposed Dream Act and recently passed Deferred Action legislation that would provide undocumented youth who migrated to the US before the age of 16 with pathways for integration in US systems like higher education and the workforce. Recent immigration debates, therefore, tend to focus on whether or not the guilt of the parents should be visited on the child—not on whether or not undocumented parents should be afforded protections or be offered an efficient pathway to citizenship. It is against this backdrop of criminalization and invisibility that the mothers' practice of *testimonio* takes place as an alternative mode of political expression and advocacy.

This article takes up a call for research on migration to examine how families understand, contest, and reproduce social policies during instances of everyday talk (Baquedano-López and Kattan, 2007; Bhimji, 2005; Orellana et al., 2003). I specif-

¹ All proper nouns referring to focal people, organizations, and locations in this study are pseudonyms.

² 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). Given recent evidence this kind of proposal ignores demographic reality and instead signals a response to nativist fears about the growing Mexican population already residing in the US.

ically focus on the ways in which two undocumented mothers both make plans to deliver *testimonio* in public and, at the same time, practice *testimonio* within the private space of their home. As we will see in the examples that follow, Marta and Luz shifted subtly between rehearsing future acts of *testimonio* and using my presence as a researcher to perform it. In the following section I review interdisciplinary perspectives that inform this study. I then situate Millvalley, Pennsylvania, the city where this study was conducted, within the New Latino Diaspora and describe my ethnographic approach. I present the findings and conclude by discussing the implications of this research.

2. Interdisciplinary perspectives on *testimonio* and narrative

While *testimonio*-like texts can be traced as far back as indigenous communities' chronicles of the colonizing practices of Spanish *conquistadores* in the 15th century (Zimmerman, 1991) and California's accounts of displacement during westward expansion in the 19th century, *testimonio* was not defined as a literary form until the 1970's (Zimmerman, 2004). Scholarship on *testimonio*, grounded in literary criticism, outlines the unique sociopolitical and textual features of narratives recounted by revolutionary leaders such as Che Guevara and Rigoberta Menchú. From this perspective, *testimonio* is the first-person account, delivered by a member of a historically marginalized group, of an individual's participation in a community-led struggle challenging the social and economic order that denies his or her fundamental human and civil rights (Beverley, 2004). In order for *testimonio* to reach an audience beyond the local community, someone with access to the means of publication must codify the narrative; this person is often affiliated with a university or cultural institution.

Menchú's famous yet controversial narrative is an example of the way that *testimonio* can be used to both to depict social change on a national scale and to further it by establishing the voices of local activists as a legitimate medium of political participation (Arias, 2001). As Beverley (2004) notes, 'testimonio is a fundamentally democratic and egalitarian form of narrative in the sense that it implies that any life so narrated can have a kind of representational value' (p. 34). The first-person testimonial account should be read as a realistic depiction that vacillates between the narrator and her community's lived experiences in a particular historical moment (Warren, 2001). By focusing on three discursive features of *testimonio*—direct participant account, metonymy, and I-shifters (Beverley, 2004)—this article demonstrates the ways in which individual speakers project multiple roles and index their relationships to a broader community which they define through talk. The 'expressive power' of *testimonio* arises from 'its coarticulation of aesthetic, narrative, ethical, and emotional dimensions, its ability to evoke a history and a country, and also a cosmos' (Pratt, 2001, p. 40). While the multiplicity of individual voices and perspectives encapsulated in *testimonio* have become the object of contemporary debates over power, truth, and collective representation, this article treats this multivocal characteristic as a starting point for examining how the narrative is co-constructed through face-to-face interaction.

Educational researchers have broadened the scope of who can give *testimonio* to include students, organizers, and academics. Within a Latina/o critical race framework, *testimonio* is defined as 'a verbal journey of a witness who speaks to reveal the racial, class, gendered, and nativist injustices that they have suffered as a means of healing, empowerment, and advocacy for a humane present and future' (Pérez Huber, 2009, p. 644). Chicana/Latina Feminist scholars have demonstrated that *testimonios* are not only rich narrative products worthy of scholarly attention, but also constitute a socially significant process called '*testimoniando*' (Pérez Huber, 2009, p. 644). This process can foster the development of academic identity and community (Burciaga and Tavares, 2006; The Latina Feminist Group, 2001) and strengthen educational research by enlisting study participants as active members in the process of narrating, collecting, analyzing, and using *testimonio* data to advocate for themselves and others.

Empirical work on *testimonio* in US educational settings highlights two important phenomena: first, the way that recording young peoples' 'life histories' (Erbstein et al., 2010, p. 23) helps researchers document students' perspectives on how institutional oppression in public institutions limits their access to equitable opportunities. Second, research shows that *testimonio* forms part of undocumented students' grassroots strategy to reform education and immigration policy in the hopes of eliminating barriers to postsecondary study based upon migratory status (Gonzales, 2008; Rogers et al., 2008). As undocumented youth give *testimonio*, they co-construct a set of norms about when it is appropriate to display vulnerable migratory identities in public forums (González et al., 2003; Seif, 2004). This article builds on these important studies by examining moments when undocumented mothers give *testimonio* within grassroots efforts to challenge locally sanctioned institutional forms of 'citizenship policing' (Villenas and Moreno, 2001, p. 671). Constant police surveillance and the threat of deportation both constrained and enabled the focal undocumented mothers' ability to advocate for their children's integration in public systems—for example, they did not register their children for library cards because of the fear of being asked for documents that might incriminate them, yet they delivered *testimonio* in their children's presence in order to advocate for more opportunities for the family. As previous work on *testimonio* has shown, learning and participation in non-formal educational settings like homes and community organizations are rich sites where children and youth are socialized to advocate for themselves and each other.

Narratives shared amongst Latina women reveal how they integrate multiple intersecting aspects of their identity—including kinship bonds (mother, daughter), national or ethnic ties (Chicana, Latina), economic roles (*campesina*, migrant worker)—as they develop and organize communities in the US and Latin America (Andrade and González Le Denmat, 1999; Trinidad Galván, 2001; Villenas and Moreno, 2001). As Stephen has shown in her detailed portrayal of women activists across Latin America, *testimonio* 'underscores how different and conflicting pieces of individual identity interact with structural conditions to influence the evolution of political commitment and strategy' (1997, p. 23). *Testimonio* is a narrative that foregrounds the multifac-

eted nature of identity, where establishing solidarity does not assume a priori allegiances among members of a particular community but instead constitutes a situated interactional accomplishment achieved through movement building and everyday interaction. The *testimonios* presented in this article constitute a unique narrative form and provide two key insights into migrant women's lives: first, the ways in which face-to-face talk that is inflected by a shared history—while contingent upon the immediate social setting—provides clues into the 'significance of speech as social action' (Bauman and Briggs, 1990, p. 65); second, how women's talk reveals their metalinguistic awareness of the social significance of the unfolding narrative.

The domestic space of the home where caregiver interactions occur is a central site for co-constructing and transforming social relations through talk (Delgado Bernal, 2001; Elenes et al., 2001; Ochs and Schieffelin, 2008). In this setting, 'conversation is the most likely medium for airing unresolved life events' and a site for apprenticing interlocutors into a shared set of discursive practices and approaches to addressing social problems (Ochs and Capps, 2001, p. 7). The routine interactions that occur within homes reflect and reproduce the larger social, economic, and political characteristics of the society (Bourdieu, 1977; Hanks, 2005) and these macro phenomena are encoded in micro instances of talk and interaction (Ochs, 1996; Ochs et al., 2005). In an era of globalization in which rapid societal changes are reshaping our understanding of concepts like nation and community, face-to-face interactions are a communicative medium where we can track shifts in social relationships that are consequential for rethinking macro-micro, public-private, and temporal dimensions of everyday life (Collins and Slembrouck, 2005). This article shares concerns with other research on *testimonio*: discovering what narratives can teach us about global phenomena that transcend one individual or study (Fernández, 2002; O'Leary et al., 2008) and re-centering our attention on historically marginalized voices for the benefit of a greater good (González et al., 2003).

3. Ethnography in the New Latino Diaspora

Millvalley, Pennsylvania, the city where this study took place, forms part of the New Latino Diaspora of the Rust Belt. The 2006 American Community Survey reported that Latinos totaled 1.8% of Millvalley's population while the 2010 Census indicates that the Latino population is the fastest growing ethnic group in the surrounding county, increasing by 71% during the last decade. I recruited four mixed-status families from Millvalley's Latino community to participate in this study; the Utuado-Alvarez and Peña-Durán families are the focus of this paper. As has been documented in previous studies of newcomers' experiences in the New Latino Diaspora, the focal families in Millvalley faced 'insistent questions about who they are, who they seek to be, and what accommodations they merit' (Hamman et al., 2002, p.1). Such questioning was particularly acute when families sought out housing; on several occasions, Marta Alvarez (the mother in the Utuado-Alvarez family) recounted difficulty finding landlords willing to rent apartments to undocumented migrants.

For example, one afternoon Marta explained that long-time residents of the neighborhood where she lived tried to deter undocumented migrants from moving into the community. Although established residents in Millvalley tended to identify closely with a history of European migration to the city at the turn of the twentieth century, many distanced themselves from and discriminated against the newly emerging community of Latino migrants from Mexico and Central America. Following rumors that Latinos exacerbated the local drug problem, long-time residents of the neighborhood decided that Latinos should be barred from living there. Marta explained that, during monthly meetings held by the neighborhood's Concerned Citizens Organization, the 'citizens' made a concerted effort to deny undocumented migrants access to housing by requiring them to furnish proof of US citizenship when signing a lease, documentation they anticipated the migrant community could not provide.³

Against this backdrop, grassroots efforts to advocate for the rights of undocumented migrants living in and around Millvalley intensified during the 2 years when this study took place. Local organizing focused on Millvalley Police Department's (MPD) collaboration with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to identify and deport undocumented migrants, reflecting national controversies over local law enforcement's implementation of federal immigration laws. There was growing fear among Millvalley's Latino community about the tendency of police officers to initiate detention and deportation procedures when stopping undocumented migrants for routine traffic violations such as running a stop sign or driving a car without proper registration. Grassroots organizers and community members worked within a local organization called the Immigrant Advocacy Network (IAN)⁴ to pressure the MPD to institute a 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' policy for migrants in the region.⁵

³ This trend is similar to what Modan (2007) calls 'restrictive housing covenants'—formal and informal policies of discrimination against non-white residents in order to maintain racial segregation in urban areas (p. 50). Marta's reports of Millvalley's 'citizens' resemble the actions taken by the Citizens Association in the Mt. Pleasant neighborhood of Washington DC. Where Modan conducted her fieldwork, after World War II, housing segregation was legally abolished but locally promoted by members of the association who encouraged white landlords to agree to deny housing to 'anyone not of the Caucasian race' (p. 54).

⁴ IAN was founded in the year 2000 by religious leaders representing a range of faith-based organizations in and around Millvalley. At the time of the study, its members included 25 congregations who shared the goal of ameliorating the social and economic inequalities faced by their members. These goals were reflected in IAN's campaigns for immigrant civil rights, healthcare reform, and access to housing and public transportation. Through its local, national, and international partnerships, IAN organized community members within a social justice, faith-based framework. The group provided community-organizing training for clergy, adults, and youth focused on building relationships and sharing personal narratives as a vehicle for articulating community needs and advocating for change on a societal scale.

⁵ IAN presented its list of demands on local law enforcement as part of a broader effort to advocate for migrants' rights and to make 'Millvalley a safer and more immigrant friendly region' (excerpt of text from the agenda for an action held on September 9, 2008). The group's efforts prompted the city's police chief to hire two Latino, Spanish-speaking officers with the goal of developing a trusting relationship between the Latino community and the police despite the rise in detention and deportation. Like other police departments across the country, the Millvalley police chief understood that the Latino community's fear of police might prevent them from reporting domestic or public threats to safety that could affect all of Millvalley's residents.

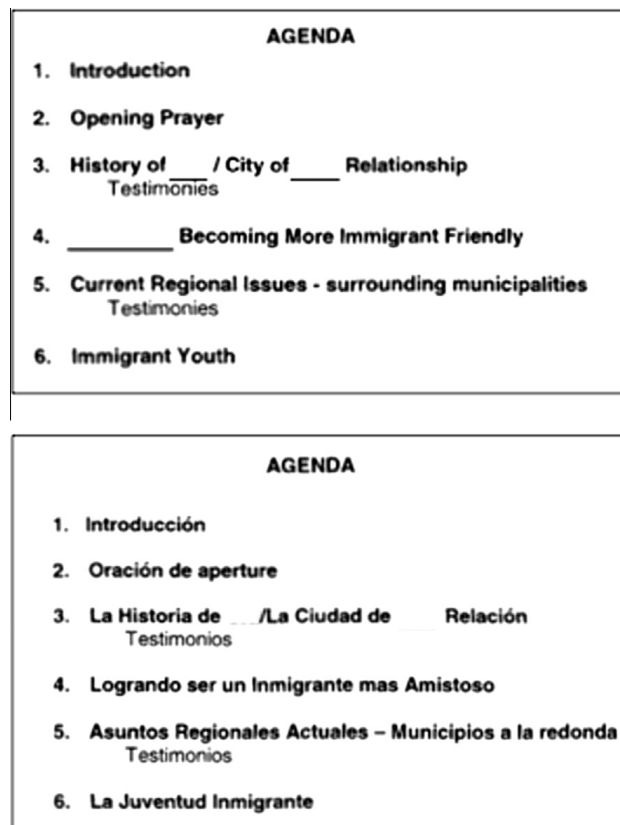


Fig. 1. IAN ACTION agenda.

I first met the focal families in June 2008, when I began attending a series of meetings organized by IAN. During these ‘actions,’ as IAN organizers called them, Latino community members gave what they referred to as *testimonio* by speaking out about the negative impact of immigration and law enforcement policies on their families in order to encourage public officials to institute policy changes. The IAN action held late in the summer of 2008 marked the first of many meetings where I served as a simultaneous translator for Spanish-speaking families and English-speaking public officials. This action—and the central role of *testimonio*—was representative of other events that I attended. The overall theme for the event was ‘Making Millvalley a Safer and More Immigrant Friendly Region’ and the first half of the agenda, printed in Spanish and English, is reproduced above⁶ (Fig. 1):

Testimonio was an integral part of IAN’s organizing strategy in which undocumented parents and youth publically recounted the positive experiences they had working in IAN (agenda item 3) and described the challenges they faced as undocumented migrants, topics typically spoken about in private (agenda item 4). All of the IAN actions that I attended included both adult and youth speakers and they often shared complementary narratives (Fig. 1). The adults tended to talk about migrating in the hopes of finding work and providing educational opportunities for their children while the youth often described a sense of belonging based upon migrating to the US as children and feelings of frustration when they were denied access to higher education because of their migratory status. Printed at the bottom of the agenda in large bold lettering was the phrase: **¡Sí se puede! [Yes we can!]**. By including this well-known motto—coined by Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez during the United Farm Workers strike of 1972—IAN organizers situated this action within the broader historical and contemporary struggle for migrants’ rights in the US.

Marta Utuado stood before a podium and delivered her *testimonio* on this and other evenings—describing situations in which she or her husband had been stopped by the police while driving and recounting one occasion when she, her young children, and an IAN organizer were pulled over after an event. She described the terror that her young children experienced while she was questioned and threatened with detention. This narrative reflected a larger theme in the speakers’ testimonios that evening—an increasing police presence and rise in detentions as immigrants were racially profiled during everyday activities such as driving, arriving to and leaving from local events, and working in public spaces (especially in the case of gardeners and construction workers). Audience members held up signs and cheered, punctuating Marta’s testimony with

⁶ While item 4 of the English translation reads ‘Millvalley becoming more immigrant friendly,’ the Spanish translation actually reads ‘Successfully becoming a more friendly immigrant’ (translation mine). This error in translation can symbolize a larger tension in IAN actions between advocating for structural change that would grant civil rights to all immigrants and reproducing an image of a model, non-threatening immigrant to be included at the expense of other, less desirable foreigners. I will revisit these issues in the conclusion of this article.

calls for justice for migrant families; included among the audience were her husband and two sons. After both adults and youth delivered their *testimonios*, public officials were asked to offer a response and publically pledge to work towards making Millvalley safe and 'immigrant friendly.' The action closed with a prayer and IAN organizers and community members gathered to plan their next steps in working to ensure that Millvalley officials honored their promises.

After months of attending and translating at IAN events, members began referring to me as *la traductora* [the translator]. I asked IAN leaders, heads of families, and youth if they knew of families who might want to participate in my study and I recruited four families through the 'snowball method' facilitated by families' recommendations (Ritchie et al., 2003). I conducted participant observation in public spaces, the families' homes, and neighborhood schools that the children attended. The home visits lasted around 5 h, starting when I met the parents or children at school and ending after dinnertime. I quickly learned that kitchen table conversations with mothers were a central site for observing the production of discourse and knowledge about everyday life (Elenes et al., 2001; Trinidad Galván, 2001). This is also the site where women discussed, rehearsed and, in my presence, practiced the act of giving *testimonio*.

I recorded over 45 h of interactions in the homes, wrote field notes for each visit, and collected artifacts such as school documents, children's drawings, and pamphlets distributed at IAN meetings. I coded the field notes and video logs for grammatical patterns, recurring topics, and themes in the participants' speech and then triangulated these schemas (Goetze and LeCompte, 1981) with other data including interviews and artifacts. Conversation Analysis transcription methods focused my attention on the ways that ideas referenced through talk develop over the course of unfolding social interactions (Schegloff, 2007).⁷ I also use conversation analytic symbols to capture the speakers' tone, emphasis, and pitch—these communicative resources are important for demonstrating the mothers' affect and the positions they took up in relation to one another when rehearsing and performing their *testimonios*.

4. Testimonio in everyday life

Domestic activities like cooking and conversing were opportunities for participants to discuss exigent concerns and engage in joint problem solving. For the mothers in the Utuado-Alvarez and Peña-Durán families, giving *testimonio* in grassroots forums was one approach to resolving their personal fears about deportation within a community setting. Before analyzing their *testimonios*, I will briefly introduce the two mothers and their families in more detail. This forms part of my broader ethnographic project of humanizing mixed-status families and contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the population (while simultaneously protecting their anonymity).

The Utuado-Alvarez family shared a two-bedroom duplex apartment with the Durán-Peña family in a neighborhood at the outskirts of Millvalley. Marta Alvarez and Carlos Utuado (the parents) and José Utuado (their 8 year-old son) were undocumented migrants from Mexico and 4 year-old Igor Utuado was a US-born citizen. Marta's eldest child, Anaya, lived in Chiapas with Marta's parents; although she talked about bringing her to Millvalley, Marta feared that Anaya would not be able to pursue postsecondary study without legal citizenship. Luz Durán and Tomás Peña, a Honduran couple who had also migrated to the US without visas, had a 2 year-old daughter named Irma who was a US-born citizen.

Marta, Carlos, and Tomás worked in Millvalley's service industry. Carlos and Tomás worked from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the same industrial facility, cleaning linens from local hospitals and hotels. Carlos would return home in the afternoon and Tomás would go directly to his nighttime restaurant job in a suburb of Millvalley called Hebron. By 4:30 p.m., Carlos would go to sleep in preparation for his next work shift. As Carlos slept, Marta would converse with Luz, cook for the families, and help José with his homework. At around 8 p.m., Marta would put José and Igor to sleep; she and Carlos would then leave for their nighttime jobs cleaning movie theatres while Luz looked after the children. Marta and Carlos would return home in the morning in time to get their sons ready for school. Marta slept during the day while Luz cared for Irma and the boys attended school.

The following sequence of exchanges form part of an extended conversation that occurred in the spring of 2009 in the common room of the apartment shared by the families. Marta had just picked up her children from school, Luz was home with Irma, and I had just arrived. Fig. 2 depicts the common space that we inhabited on visits that I made to the home. While Marta, Luz, and I sat at the table conversing, the children vacillated between playing around the table with their toys and watching television in the adjacent bedroom.

References to family members' belonging to particular nation-states were linguistically and spatially encoded in the Utuado-Alvarez and Durán-Peña home. As I have shown elsewhere, the parents in this study tended to distinguish between their

⁷ I use the following transcription conventions. It is important to 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	°	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	> <	fast or rushed talk
[a point of overlap onset	=	continuous utterance



Fig. 2. Common space in a shared home.

undocumented and US-born children by referring to their nationality (Mangual Figueroa, 2012). When Marta's sons asked her to account for their different experiences (for example, standing in different lines for insured and uninsured patients at the medical clinic), Marta would explain that this resulted from José's having been born in Mexico and Igor's having been born in the US (Mangual Figueroa, 2011). The American flag hanging in the main room in the Utuado-Alvarez family home (pictured above) also evoked questions of citizenship and nationality in advance of any conversation. This prominently displayed icon signaled the nationality of US-born family members and represented a bid for belonging by those parents and children who aspired to become US citizens in the future.

A few nights before this visit, while driving Tomás and his co-workers home from the restaurant in the neighboring city of Hebron, Luz was stopped by police officers who asked her to show her Pennsylvania driver's license and vehicle registration. Unable to produce these documents and fearful of detention or deportation, Luz called an IAN organizer who arrived to mediate the interaction between her and the police officers. Luz, Tomás, and the other occupants of the car were not detained that night, but Luz was scheduled to appear in Hebron municipal court within several weeks time. On this day, she anxiously prepared for the pending court date.

The following examples identify the discursive and semiotic resources employed by Marta and Luz to develop their narrative of daily life in the increasingly anti-immigrant context in which they lived. Throughout the analysis, I will indicate the ways in which the mothers and I co-constructed an emergent form of *testimonio* situated within their home but rehearsed for a public audience. Example 1 begins after Luz summarized her phone conversation with a Puerto Rican lawyer volunteering in the emerging Latino community who was preparing Luz for the hearing.

Ejemplo Uno:

- 1 Marta: Entonces (.) e::so es > lo que dijo el abogado.<
 2 Ariana: Ah ha (.) [Ya:::
 3 Luz: [No↑, no más hable con Marta. Yo no entie::ndo na↑da de
 4 esto le digo^o (.) yo (.) la verdad-
 5 Ariana: [Marta sí conoce =
 6 Luz: [Es que ésta conoce más de leyes.
 7 Ariana: =[todo el siste::ma
 8 Marta: [Sí yo ya conozco aquí↓ ya. gracias a Diós^o y es que a mí↑ me interesa
 9 saber todas las leyes de aquí↓ más que nada^o saber↑ > cuáles son mis
 10 derechos y cuáles no son<. Está↑bamos pensando con Ariana que
 11 vaya::mos a la ju::nta.

Example One:

- 1 Marta: So (.) tha:::t's >what the lawyer said.<
 2 Ariana: Uh huh (.) [Yah:::
 3 Luz: [No↑, no just speak with Marta. I don't understa::nd a↑ny of this I
 4 tell her^o (.) I (.) truthfully-
 5 Ariana: [Marta does know=
 6 Luz: [It's that this one knows the laws better.
 7 Ariana: =[all about the system
 8 Marta: [Yes, now I know about this place↓. thank God^o and it's that it interests me↑
 9 to know all the laws here↓ more than anything to know↑ >what are my rights
 10 are and what aren't<. We were↑ thinking with Ariana that we:: could go to the
 11 mee::ting.

Marta confirmed that Luz accurately reported her phone conversation with the lawyer (line 1) and Luz immediately positioned Marta as the expert in the exchange. Luz claimed not to understand what was happening, offering a vague summary comprised of deictic adjectives that encoded her uncertainty (as in, 'that's what the lawyer said' and 'I don't understand any of *this*' in lines 1 and 3). This uncertainty posed a problem for Luz, who needed to understand exactly what was at stake in the upcoming hearing for her, Tomás, and their daughter. In an attempt to enlist someone's help in resolving the communicative problem of understanding the lawyer's advice, Luz nominated Marta to play the role of trusted expert (lines 3, 4, and 6).

Marta accepted this role and asserted her expertise by explicitly stating that it was important for her to learn 'all' of the laws. This claim illustrates that, despite being denied access to juridical citizenship, she had developed a sense of 'cultural citizenship' by learning about opportunities for political participation and using that knowledge to challenge 'existing power systems' (Flores and Benmayor, 1997, p. 12). One way that Marta participated in Millvalley's civic activities and pushed for changes in the status quo was by attending IAN meetings on immigration reform (lines 10 and 11). Marta's turn not only confirmed that there was a process of peer socialization unfolding as the women assumed expert and novice roles in relation to one another, but it also transitioned the exchange into socialization within the specific interactional and social boundaries of *testimonio*. As the referential content of the exchange became more explicitly linked to concerns about the law (line 9) and rights (line 10), Marta established two key parameters of *testimonio* performance. First, Marta's assertion of her expertise not only ratified Luz's claims about her knowledge, but it also provided metalinguistic commentary on the validity of the claims that she would subsequently make (and that I would continue to record and ultimately report upon). Second, Marta implicated me in the action by concluding that we would go to the meeting, suggesting that my access to social capital and her knowledge of the laws would facilitate her ability to assert her rights in Millvalley.

The expert and novice roles that Marta and Luz assumed continued to develop as Marta apprenticed Luz into a set of shared norms for rehearsing and performing *testimonio*. After deciding to bring their children to the meeting, Luz explained that she had been hesitant to talk about her experience with the police until Marta encouraged her to speak out.

Ejemplo Dos:

1 Luz: yo (.) porque YO no lo iba a hacer↓ pero ésta me dice, no es que [hay-
2 Marta: [No es
3 que hay que habla:::r↑
4 Ariana: Yo he ido con cuá::ntas mamá::s? con como dos o tres mamás que ha::n
5 tenido é::sta experiencia? (.) hemos hecho cita co::n la policía? y yo::
6 les traduzco. Cuando estamos allí↑ en la [junta?-
7 Marta: [Pero es que nosotros
8 queREMOS es ir a una junta donde estén todos los Hispanos↑. porque
9 hay mu::chas Hispanos trabajando en Hebrón^o >que se tienen que
10 quedar< en LA calle durmie::ndo en LOS basurero::s.

Example Two:

1 Luz: I (.) because I wasn't going to do it↓ but this one tells me, it's that you [have to
2 Marta: [No it's
3 that one has to speak ou:::t↑
4 Ariana: I have gone with how:: many mo::ms? with like two or three moms that ha::ve
5 had thi::s experience? (.) we've scheduled a meeting wi::th the police? and I::
6 translate for them. When we're there↑ in the [meeting?-
7 Marta: [But it's that what we
8 WANT is to go to a meeting where all of the Hispanics↑ are present
9 because there are ma::ny Hispanics working in Hebron^o >that have to stay< in
10 THE streets slee::ping in THE du::mpsters

Here, Marta began modeling what it would mean for Luz to give *testimonio*. She shifted away from her use of I-statements in example 1, line 8 ('yo ya conozco aquí' [I know about this place]) and from Luz's personal account ('yo no lo iba hacer' [I wasn't going to do it], example 2, line 1) to an unspecified subject ('hay que' [one has to], example 2, line 3). The tacit pronoun 'one' removed Marta from the subject position, replacing her with a generic subject who Marta implied had a moral obligation to speak out. The use of I-shifters—a 'reference [that] 'shifts' regularly, depending on the factors of the speech situation' (Silverstein, 1987/1995, p. 197)—is a defining feature of *testimonio* through which the narrator links her personal account to the experiences of other members of her community. The shift in subject also communicates a change in the narrative content—Marta signaled that she was no longer referring specifically to her personal, subjective experience but was instead conveying a generalizable truth about migrants in Millvalley. This keyed a switch in the narrative frame (Bauman, 1977; Goffman, 1974) from talking about *testimonio* into actually delivering *testimonio*. A multi-layered exchange ensued as Marta and Luz began to rehearse for the public act of *testimonio* while also performing it in my presence. My access to means of transcription and publication helped transform the exchange into an instance of giving *testimonio* within the private space of their home.

This exchange exemplifies a central characteristic of *testimonio* in which the narrator implicates the reader in her testimony and invites the audience's participation in the struggle (Beverley, 2004). At the same time, it incorporates features of oral performance in which the audience must take an active role in ratifying the speakers' assertions (Bauman, 1977, p. 11). By linking her ability to share knowledge with my attendance at the meeting (in example 1), Marta had already enlisted me in the act of speaking out. In example 2, I responded affirmatively by sharing that I had some experience in this area, and that I would gladly do so again (in line 6). I was compelled to speak in support of the two women and I began to describe how I was qualified to do so (lines 4–6); but before I was able to suggest a plan, Marta rejected my depiction of *testimonio* (line 7). Providing metalinguistic commentary on *testimonio*, Marta asserted that it should not be delivered by one mother to local authorities but should instead be shared in the presence of all Latinos living in Millvalley. Marta continued to speak from her expert position, teaching me about the ideal format for this event. She shifted from speaking for her and Luz ('*lo que nosotros queremos*' [what we want], line 8) and began referring to the Latino community ('*todos los Hispanos*' [all of the Hispanics], line 8; '*hay muchas Hispanos*' [there are many Hispanics], line 9). The lack of gender agreement in the adjective and noun pairing in line 9 suggests that Marta may have first intended to use a more general noun '*personas*' (people) but then switched to the specific group label '*Hispanos*' in order to situate her experiences within this particular group. In doing so, Marta enacted a characteristic of *testimonio* in which 'each individual testimonio evokes an absent polyphony of other voices, other possible lives and experiences' (Beverley, 2004, p. 34). While she could have chosen other nouns to describe this community—undocumented workers, immigrants, or parents—she selected race as the defining feature (a point which she underscores below in example 3). She evoked a set of realities that she knew well and that she argued were shared by undocumented Hispanic workers who, returning home from work in the late night and early morning, spent long hours waiting for transportation and had no choice but to seek safety and shelter in dumpsters along the side of the road (line 10).

The conversation proceeded in the *testimonio* frame as Marta and Luz co-constructed their narration and I served as their audience. The intensity of the performance mounted as the women reinforced one another's stories, filling in details from their and their husband's firsthand experiences.

Ejemplo Tres:

- 1 Ariana: porque no hay transporte[
 2 Marta: [en los BASureros↑ porque no hay transporte
 3 >o se quedan en casa de otras personas<
 4 Luz: Porque mi marIDO se quedó↑ (.) en un basurero?=
 5 Marta: DurMIENdo↑
 6 Luz: =dos DIAs↑. Se acuerda? Cuando este:: llegó a cinco grados↑ (.) el frío
 7 y llegó una madrugada (.) Bueno esa vez↑ se quedó allí↓
 8 Ariana: Wow. Por qué?(.) A esperar que las guaguas empiecen a-
 9 Marta: [a empezar
 10 a las
 cinco de la maña↑na.
 11 Luz: lle::gó al trabajo a las cinco y media di↑ce y era un sá↑bado. Entonces
 la
 12 Marta. Hay que hacerlo, hay que hacerlo, hay que hacerlo.
 ((Each time Luz says hacer, she slaps one hand against the other.))
 13 Marta: >es que< hay que HACERlo no hay que huir::: ↑ porque esto es trato=
 14 Ariana: mm hmm
 15 Marta: = de raci::smo↑tengo que ir a traer a mi esposo porque (.) quién por
 él?
 16 Nada más que yo.
 17 Ariana: Ya (.) exacto (.) yup^o No y ustedes aquí trabaja::ndo, vivie::ndo,
 mantenie::ndo=
 18 Marta: PAga:::ndo re:::nta, mante- o sea TODO.
 19 Ariana: =impue:::stos (.) de todo.
 20 Marta: TODO, TODO. Noso::tros no mandamos dinero ni a México. A
 Hondu::ras
 21 Por qué. Por qué? Por que [
 22 Ariana: [((inaudible))-
 23 Marta: Ah ha .Porque no alca:::nza. Que lleve todos
 24 los documentos↓ lo qué e:::s, cuánto se paga
 y to↑do.
 25 Ariana: Ya. >no no< no está bien.

(continued on next page)

- 26 Marta: *Entonces* >por eso le digo a *ella* que vaya::mos hoy a la ju::nta<
 Example Three:
 1 Ariana: because there isn't transportation[
 2 Marta: [in *the* DUMpsters† because there is
 no
 3 transportation >or they stay in other people's homes<
 4 Luz: Because my *hus*BAND slept† in a dumpster?=
 5 Marta: SleepING†
 6 Luz: two dAYS†. Do you remember? When um::: it fell to *five* degrees† (.)
 the *cold*
 7 and he arrived one *dawn* (.) Well that time† he stayed there↓
 8 Ariana: Wow. Why? (.) To wait for the buses to start at to start-[
 9 Marta: [to start at *five*
o'clock in
 10 the mor†ning.
 11 Luz: he go::t to work at *five thirty* he tells† me and it was a Sa†turday. Then
 Marta.
 12 One has to *do it*, one has to *do it*, one has to *do it*.
 ((Each time Luz says do it, she slaps one hand against the other.))
 13 Marta: >it's that< one has to DO IT there's no need to ru:::n† because this
 treatment=
 14 Ariana: mm hmm
 15 Marta: =is ra:::cist† I have to go bring my husband because (.) who else
 would?
 16 Noone else but *me*.
 17 Ariana: Ya (.) exactly (.) yup°. No and you all here wo::rking, li::ving,
 maintai::ning=
 18 Marta: Pay::ing re:::nt, maint-in other words EVerything
 19 Ariana: =ta:::xes (.) everything
 20 Marta: EVerything EVerything. We don't send money, not to Mexico, to
 21 Hondu::ras. Why. Why? Because[
 22 Ariana: [((inaudible))-
 23 Marta: Uh huh. Because it's not enou:::gh. To have all of your documents↓
 what it i:::s,
 24 how much one pays and a†ll.
 25 Ariana: Ya. >no no< it's not right.
 26 Marta: So >*that* is why I tell *her* that today we go:: to the mee::ting<

Now in the performance frame (lines 1–11), Marta and Luz took up equal roles in recounting their and their husband's experiences. They continued to vacillate between descriptions of individual and collective experiences, exhibiting the direct participant account, pronoun shifting, and metonymic quality of speech typical of *testimonio* (Beverley, 2004). In addition, other structures of speech—including parallelism, paralinguistic features like tone and pitch, and an appeal to tradition—emerged and heightened the women's conversation into a kind of performance (Bauman, 1977, p. 16). When Marta repeated '*en los basureros*' [in the dumpster], Luz specified that Tomás had slept in one, reinforcing the validity of each other's *testimonio*. The parallelism in the women's tone and rhythm was similar to the kind of chanting that I had heard during public rallies I had attended where repetition added emphasis and a sense of commonality across speakers through chant-like performances that allowed various speakers to dramatize their stake in a common story. This repetition across turns also brought Luz's past tense description of the problem (he slept for two days) into the present continuous tense coupled with a generalizable truth claim (a generic subject is *still* sleeping). In so doing, Marta not only affirmed that sleeping in dumpsters is a key issue for undocumented Hispanic workers in the Millvalley area, but also that it was an ongoing problem that needed to be acknowledged and addressed.

Luz momentarily stepped out of the performance frame and back into the planning frame when she reported Marta's directive—'*entonces la Marta. hay que hacerlo*' [then Marta. one must do it, lines 11–12]—and repositioned Marta as the expert who encouraged Luz to share her narrative. Still performing *testimonio* and speaking with raised pitch, Marta reiterated the urgency of speaking out against the racist policing faced by migrants on a daily basis (line 13–15). Marta explained that undocumented migrants living in Millvalley were not the only ones to suffer the consequences of these local practices; their effects reverberated across borders by stifling Marta and Luz's ability to send remittances to family members in Mexico and

Honduras (lines 20–21). Marta closed with another metalinguistic commentary on the significance of *testimonio*, saying that the way to combat oppressive institutionalized practices was to give *testimonio* and unite with others by attending the community meeting that she referred to as *la junta* (in example 2, line 11 and example 4, line 26).

When Marta left, Luz became the sole expert narrator. Luz described her interaction with the IAN organizer who helped her on the night that she was stopped by the police. The final example is representative of four other times in the longer exchange in which Luz reported on her own desire to give *testimonio*.

Ejemplo Cuatro:

1 Luz: yo qui†ero le digo:: una cita con >el jefe de policía de He†brón<
 2 la qui†ero le digo (.) porque me urge. No solo Tomás trabaja allí (.) y yo
 3 no quiero que le pase a otra gente lo que a mí me pasó° le digo. Tal vez lo
 4 vayan a deportar a e:llos y >a mí no me deportaron<. Gracias a Diós°

Example Four:

1 Luz: I wa†nt I tell him an appointment with the chief of police of Hebron I
 2 wa†nt it I tell him (.) because I need to urgently. Tomas is not the only one who
 3 works there (.) and I don't want otr people to go through what I went through°,
 4 I tell him. Maybe they'll deport them and they did not deport me. Thank God°.

Luz had a story to tell, but needed individuals with more access to social capital in institutional settings to arrange a way for her voice to be heard. Luz's repetition of the phrases '*la quiero*' [I want it, line 2] (referring to the meeting) and '*le digo*' [I tell him, lines 1, 2, and 3] (referring to her pleas for the meeting to be arranged quickly) underscore her urgent desire to give *testimonio*. Luz identified her target audience and described her motivation: she believed that sharing her experience with the chief of police could prevent other undocumented migrants from being deported. As we have seen throughout examples 2 through 4, the verb *decir* [to talk, infinitive] followed by *le* [pronoun, 3rd person] was a metalinguistic refrain that functioned at two levels: first, it activated the testifying mode when the speaker reported her own or someone else's speech; and second, it conveyed the speakers' reasons for testifying when they justified why they were speaking out. Example 4 demonstrates both levels—in the first line Luz recounted something she said (requesting the appointment) to the community organizer and in the second line Luz justified why she said what she did (requesting the appointment because it was urgent since her husband and others like him were in danger of deportation).

The tense and aspect of the verbs contained in the parallel clauses in example 4—'*tal vez vayan a deportar a ellos*' [maybe they will deport them, line 3] and '*a mi no me deportaron*' [they didn't did deport me, line 4]—underscored Luz's sense of the arbitrary nature of deportation and her vulnerability within the anti-immigrant climate of Millvalley. On the one hand, her use of the subjunctive to refer to the possible deportation of those community members contrasts with the past completive verb that she used to indicate that she was not deported. On the other hand, the parallel framing suggests that she thought she might have been deported like her counterparts in the larger Latino community. The ambiguity conveyed in the context of our conversation and Luz's pending trial—coupled with the fact that she offered no explanation of why she might have been spared while others had not been—indicates an ongoing experience of uncertainty and instability. At the time of this incident, Luz was given a fine for driving without a license and was issued a court date; 6 months later when she appeared in court Luz was issued an order for voluntary deportation. Tomás was detained at work and deported from the US to Honduras. Marta and other IAN leaders have since reported that Luz and her daughter Irma disappeared from Millvalley in the hopes of avoiding deportation.

5. What is at stake in giving *testimonio*?

This article has codified Marta and Luz's *testimonios*, entering their speech into the corpus of *testimonio* narratives that have been recorded, transcribed, and published with the goal of rendering visible those experiences that often remain invisible and unheard. In these exchanges Marta and Luz both planned for future acts of *testimonio*, when they would recount their experiences at a public forum, and performed *testimonio* by utilizing my presence as a person with access to the means of transcription and publication. This focus on *testimonio* positions mothers as active subjects and not just objects of study, and strives for a more interactional ethnographic approach that challenges that static observer/observed dichotomy.

In their metalinguistic commentary, Marta and Luz indicated how they sought to utilize my access to the resources of transcription and publication in order to transform their home into a site of *testimonio*; this clarifies the degree to which the three of us co-constructed the conditions for our exchange, as opposed to my simply observing it from a distance. While the formal features of Marta and Luz's narratives mirror the characteristics of the longstanding textual form known as *testimonio*, the sociopolitical context in which these *testimonios* are being constructed and reinterpreted remains in flux.

Testimonio is a grassroots tactic for political advocacy and community formation that compensates for and reacts against the limited opportunities for civic participation afforded non-citizens. As I've attempted to show, in the act of giving *testimonio*, undocumented mothers define their community, integrate themselves into a larger temporal framework of immigrant struggle, and define the social and moral imperatives that have given rise to their act—and that should inspire

further acts of *testimonio*. While giving *testimonio* constituted a new form of social and political agency for undocumented women in Millvalley, it was also a site for the reproduction of discourses about what roles are permissible for migrants in the US. In example 3, Marta and I participated in an 'ethnicizing' discourse, indexing Marta and Luz's assimilability by describing them as consumers in and contributors to the US economic system (Urciuoli, 1994). Marta presented herself and Luz as 'acceptable' *others* who should be granted citizenship because they pay rent and maintain their household, an image that I contributed to by adding that they also pay taxes. This raises questions about whether IAN also reproduced this discourse in choosing which national, gendered, and generational identities to feature in their public actions. By inviting mothers and youth to give *testimonio* instead of single men or fathers, did IAN attempt to portray migrants as family-oriented and vulnerable and thereby 'acceptable'? Would they have had a harder time making the case for 'immigrant-friendly' policies if they gave single, migrant men center stage? Is this an ethical strategy when working towards migratory reform in a region where many longstanding residents are resistant to it? The findings raise broader questions about what constitutes democratic participation and the ways in which figurative and juridical notions of citizenship highlight or obscure those bids for engagement made by immigrant and undocumented migrant communities (Flores and Benmayor, 1997; Levinson, 2012).

The interactions, narratives, and experiences presented in this article also raise questions about what is at stake when undocumented mothers give *testimonio*. Undeniably, the case of narrating *testimonio* to someone who will codify and publish it in the hopes of strengthening the narrator's political cause is different than testifying about migratory status in public gatherings where the audience may not share the speaker's beliefs about the rights that should be accorded migrants. Studies of Latina victims of domestic violence—those who provide legal testimony to paralegals redacting first-person accounts filed in court—show that women place themselves at risk of being misrepresented in court and being hurt by partners who may use violent means to silence them (Trinch, 2010). When Marta and Luz testify and call for migratory reform, or when undocumented youth speak out and call for support of the Dream Act, the stakes are high because these speakers address their testimonies not only to advocates and allies, but also to politicians and policemen who enforce the policies and practices the speakers oppose. In interactional settings where the audience is ideologically distinct but physically proximal, the risks of giving *testimonio* are extremely high. The calculation involved in risk-taking for the undocumented mothers in my study, however, was not viewed as an individual equation, but instead a collective one that involved their community and children.

Giving *testimonio* in domestic and public contexts was a way of pushing for policy change that could affect their children's futures, and, because children were present in the exchanges presented and described in this article, it was also a way of socializing children into social and linguistic norms for advocating for themselves and those around them. In other everyday conversations in their home, Marta and her husband Carlos prompted their sons to speak out about a range of topics relevant to their everyday lives (such as recounting their school activities and accounting for their decisions). These prompts often included directives to explain a series of events '¿por qué pasó esto?' (why did this happen?) or to respond to a question from an adult 'contestale pues, ¡habla!' (answer her well, speak!). The parents' consistent focus on talk and speaking out can be seen as a reaction to a climate that promotes invisibility and silence through criminalization; as one of the few opportunities for undocumented parents to participate in a larger discourse, *testimonio* also provides an opportunity to socialize children to the importance of advocacy for themselves and their community.

A myriad of possibilities for solidarity and resistance arise out of existing economic and political constraints, and newly emerging forms of agency are encoded in everyday talk and enacted in day-to-day interactions. How these possibilities will lead to changes in communities and schools remains an empirical question, but the goal of this paper has been to show how attending to language use in daily interactions allows us to better understand the ways in which migrant women co-construct emerging funds of knowledge and socialize one another to new forms of political participation. Educational anthropologists have a central role to play in providing answers to these questions, as well as an obligation to consider both the possibilities and constraints that attend working in solidarity with non-dominant communities.

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Ariana Mangual Figueroa is an Assistant Professor of Language Education in the Graduate School of Education at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey. Her research examines the language socialization experiences of multilingual immigrant communities living in the United States. Her most recent ethnographic study of mixed-status families tracks how parents and children talk about citizenship in their everyday lives, exploring how learning and language use are shaped by immigration and educational policies. Her work has been published in *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* and in the *Journal of Language, Identity, & Education*.