Learning to "*Echar Ganas en la Escuela*" (Try Hard in School)

Meredith McConnochie Byrnes
Rutgers University

1. Introduction

An extensive body of research has examined the production of Mexican students' academic identities in US schools. Previous studies have demonstrated how policies, discourses, and ideologies in schools or communities restrict Mexican children's capacity to identify and be identified as academically successful students based on their language, ethnicity, race, gender, etc. (Gallo, Link, Allard, Wortham, & Mortimer, 2014; Pease-Alvarez & Vásquez, 1994; Valenzuela, 1999; Wortham, Mortimer, & Allard, 2009). Yet studies of academic identities have been largely limited to school settings with little attention on the construction of academic identities in the home. Seeking to fill this gap, this study explores how ideas about whom and what exemplifies academic success travel across home and school. This study also contributes understanding of the ways in which academic identities are expressed and learned through behaviors and social roles during language and literacy practices. While a primary objective of this research is provide insight that can inform education policy and practices that will better serve immigrant families, it is also intended to expand the ongoing conversation about the socio-political context in which US Latinos live, work, and learn more broadly and the methodological approaches offered by sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropologists for carrying out this research (Mendoza-Denton, 1999). Specifically, this study addresses the following research questions: 1. How are second-grade students from Mexican families socialized to develop "frames—interactional and social context surrounding individual utterances" (Rymes, 2009)—for displaying academic competency during literacy practices across home and school? 2. What behaviors and social identities or social roles are equated with academic literacy competency based on the frames they are socialized to construct? 3. What policies, ideologies, and discourses shape the frames they are socialized to adopt?

2. Theory
Language Socialization

A language socialization research is rooted in the fields of cultural and linguistic anthropology and language development (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). Consequently, a language socialization approach integrates a focus on the acquisition of language structures with an ethnographic examination of the beliefs and values that organize social interactions within a cultural community. A language socialization approach examines how individuals learn *to use* language in ways deemed acceptable by the specific cultural community in which they seek membership, and how they learn to do so *through language* as community members interact in culturally specific ways to

facilitate their language acquisition. While language socialization research assumes that social structures shape language socialization patterns, it also assumes that individuals are agents capable of sustaining or changing those patterns. Language socialization, thus, is bi-directional in the sense that individuals, including experts and novices, may resist socializing attempts and gradually alter social structures and relationships in a community.

Language Socialization research also posits that discourse features are "indexical" of culturally and socially constructed notions of communicative competency (Hymes, 1971). In other words, discourse features— "phonological and morphosyntactic constructions (pronunciations and grammar), the lexicon (the words used), speech-act types (such as an insult or a directive), conversational sequencing, genres (such as narratives), interruptions, overlaps, gaps, and turn length" (Ochs, 1986, p. 3)—index the norms for participating competently in the event or activity in which the discourse features are used. Discourse features of routine activities serve as "communicative cues "(Gumperz, 1983) for participants to know how to competently convey their intended message. LS studies also recognize the role of structures for routine activities within that community. Each activity or event, such as listening to a lecture, telling a story, writing a lab report, or acting in a play, are structured by social expectations about what discourse features can and cannot be used to display competency in that event. For example, while listening to a lecture, the teacher may constitute the only speaker, while the students do not interrupt or question the teacher. But while eating lunch, students may interrupt and critique one another.

Discourse features also index the "social identities", or the "social statuses, roles, positions, relationships, and institutional and other relevant community identities" (Ochs, 1986; Ochs, 1993, p. 288) that participants adopt. In the previous example, the social role and status of teacher, as opposed to student, determines the way in which an individual is expected to use discourse features. Discourse features also index norms for adopting affective stances (the type of feeling that an individual is expected to display) or epistemic stances (the degree of certainty an individual is expected to display) that vary based on the activity in which they engage or the social identities they express. If the social identity of a competent teacher is understood to depend on the adoption of an epistemic stance of certainty, a teacher will avoid the use of discourse features that index uncertainty, such as "I don't know."

Language socialization research examines the discourse features of routine activities in which one or more people are attempting to help another to learn how to understand or accomplish something (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). Discourse features employed during helping or learning activities may be distinct between the participants believed to be experts versus those believed to be novices (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). A mother or teacher, for example, may use certain language intended to socialize children to use language in a certain way. But socialization routines do not only consist of the adult expert socializing a child novice, but may also involve adults socializing adults, children socializing children, children socializing adults, or multiple adults or children socializing others (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). Of additional importance is the understanding that the individual or individuals who are being socialized to interpret and produce discourse features in a certain way may reject that socialization attempt (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). If an individual rejects the assistance or advice to one another, participants then renegotiate a shared understanding of the relationship between how and what discourse features align with certain activities, social identities, stances, and communities.

Frames

Language socialization research is grounded in many of the same theoretical assumptions as the field of LA. In the fields of LS and LA, the activity or event is placed at the center of the analysis, and language or discourse features are viewed as indexical of the structures within the micro and macro contexts of the activity (Gee, 1991/2012; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1986; Ochs, 1993). Consequently, the analytical

tools offered by scholars of LS and LA may be compatible when examining the relationship between discourse features and the micro and macro contexts they seek to understand. Rymes (2009) uses the term "frames" to describe the "interactional and social contexts that surround each utterance within an interaction" (p. 194). The way in which individuals understand the frames in which they participate shape how they rely on discourse features to interpret and display their communicative competence in a situation (Rymes, 2009). The interactional context refers to the discursive features of an activity that structure and facilitate interaction (Rymes, 2009). The social context includes the ideologies, or beliefs about how people of certain social identities— including racial, linguistic, gender, academic, or more— are supposed to act, speak, and communicate (Rymes, 2009). Ideologies within the social context get taken up, adapted, and used to structure the interactional context. The frames that individuals construct and adapt determine how, who, and when individuals get portrayed as holding competent or incompetent social identities.

The term "frames" derives from Goffman's (1981) analysis of how "production format units" function to frame an utterance. Production format units refer to the roles played by participants, non-participants, and their ideologies to produce an utterance in an interaction. Production format units are comprised of three principal participation roles: the "animator" or speaker, the "author" or original creator of the utterance, and the "principal" or the group, institution, or individual whose belief is represented through the utterance. A different individual or group may play each role or the same individual or group may play all of the roles simultaneously. It is also notable that non-participants, or those not even present may play a role in the production of an utterance. In the following example, if a child named Sara says to her mother, "my teacher says cats are boring," then "Sara" acts as the animator, and "my teacher" serves as the original author and principal of the belief that cats are boring. Thus, the teacher may not even be present in the exchange, but nonetheless, plays an influential role in the production of the utterance.

An analysis of production format units is important in that it reveals how ideologies that may derive from and permeate social contexts external to the activity get taken up in the negotiation of frames for micro interactions. But Rymes (2009) also describes how other discourse features index the way in which participants understand the frames in which they are interacting.   Drawing from the work of LA and LS scholars, she demonstrates how participation structures of an activity, including the quantity of participants and the sequence of participant talk (Phillips, 1976), such as the use of pronouns, word choices, and other discourse features, also constitute "framing resources" (Rymes, 2009; p. 193). Framing resources refer to the discourse features used by participants that invoke a certain frame, or understanding of the interactional and social context. In turn, the frame that participants invoke will inform their participation within it.

3. Methods
Setting

The data was collected as part of an 18-month ethnographic study of language socialization in homes and a public elementary school situated within a Northeastern Latino Diaspora context in which 42.9% of residents in the town identified as being Hispanic or Latino, and 32% identified as foreign born (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). I refer to this town as [1]Smithtown school district. From 1980-2010, the population of Hispanic residents in Smithtown increased from 4.6% to 42.9% (U.S. Census Bureau, 1980; 2010). The majority of incoming residents originated from Mexico, as the population of Mexican residents rose from .2% to 29.6% of the total population. Based on the rapid increase of Latino residents, Smithtown represents a region that Wortham, Hamann, and Murillo (2002) refer to as the New Latino Diaspora, as

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[1] All names of schools, districts, towns, and people are pseudonyms.

residents have only begun to construct systematic ways of interacting with and talking about what it means to be, work with, employ, and educate Latinos and immigrants. The recent demographic change contrasts with Latino Diasporas in which Latinos have resided for centuries.

The primary participants in this study attended second-grade during the 2014-2015 academic school year at [2]Warner Elementary School. In this school 65% of students are Hispanic, 23% White, 11% Black, and 1% Asian. Warner Elementary School is considered a Title 1 School that contains an English as a Second Language (ESL) program and a Bilingual Program. Of the total student population, 71% are entitled to free or reduced lunch (Public Schools K12, 2009-2010). The creation of these programs aligns with district policy that states that the school must offer a bilingual program when more than 20 students are LEP students and an ESL program for more than 10 LEP students.

Participants

The focal children included six students from Mexican immigrant families who were enrolled in second-grade at the same school during the 2014-2015 academic school year. Two "English Proficient" children, Angel and Óscar participated in the home as first- and second-grade students. The four "English Language Learners," Daniel, Romina, Juan, and Jessica participated in their homes and second-grade bilingual classroom. These children were chosen because their teacher had identified them as academically struggling students who could use my assistance in the home. While Angel, Óscar, Daniel, Romina, and Jessica were born in the United States to Mexican-born parents, Juan was born in Mexico and had only lived in the United States for approximately 8 months when he began participating in the study. Juan's mother was from El Salvador and his father was from Mexico. The second-grade bilingual teacher, Ms. Small and afterschool teacher, Ms. Cara—the primary teachers for Daniel, Romina, Juan, and Jessica—also participated during participant observation sessions in the school and their classrooms. The mothers, siblings, and peers of of focal children also participated in the study during all home or school visits. Additionally, three other teachers and two administrators were interviewed.

Data collection

I collected data through participant observation and informal interviews in the homes and school of the six focal children in the study between February 2014 and November 2015. I visited the homes of the two "English proficient" students on ten occasions over the entire 18 months of data collection. I acted as participant observer in the homes of the four "English Language Learners" on ten occasions over seven months and twenty-five visits to their classroom over a four-month period. The data includes field notes written for every visit, approximately 250 hours of audio and video-recordings, and artifacts discussed during observations and informal interviews in the home and school. One audio-recorder was consistently placed on the teacher's desk to record conversations between the teacher and myself and to record whole-class discussions and lessons. Several other recorders were routinely placed on the desks of focal children to capture student discourse in the absence of adults.

Data Analysis

During the first round of coding classroom data, I identified "effort" as a discursive theme of teacher, parent, and child interactions pertaining to school literacy assessment artifacts including standardized reading tests, writing, and homework. Then I noted interactional themes of "homework," "language," "intelligence," "parenting," "helping," and "independence" as topics that parents linked to the display of effort during the completion of the artifacts. Next, I analyzed the how participants conceptualized the display of effort in relation to other thematic concepts as they positioned themselves and others.

4. Data

The findings demonstrate how teachers, parents, and peers positioned second-grade children as students who need to "try harder in school" during the completion of assessment artifacts—standardized reading tests, homework, and writing. During peer-peer and peer-teacher interactions, the second-grade children were socialized to display the effort. Yet, the analysis reveals that student performance on tests and assignments was dependent upon child or parent knowledge of English orthography and phonology. While immigrant mothers sought to prevent the manifestation of problematic institutional labels by directing their children to *"echar ganas en la escuela"* (try hard in school), they positioned themselves as inadequate to support the completion of homework in English. As children sought to position themselves as hard-workers through the completion of assignments, they resorted to copying book texts' in their reading response journals and soliciting help from peers or siblings to dictate their writing. In the following section, I first analyze how teachers and parents constructed a frame of effort for positioning and socializing student and parent identities. Given the limit on space for this article, I focus primarily on positioning and socialization during interviews and routine interactions that involve Romina and her family.

Positioning Parents in a Frame of Effort

This section focuses on the ways in which teachers positioned parents within a frame of effort. The following excerpt comes from an audio-recorded discussion between myself and Ms. Small after she met with Romina's parents to discuss her academic progress. During this meeting, her parents expressed concern about Romina's ability to complete her reading response journal' for homework and their concern that Ms. Small was being too hard on her because Romina appeared to be so scared of getting in trouble for not completing an assignment. In reflection about this meaning Ms. Small explained: "She really I have to say is a self-made learner which breaks my heart because imagine if (the parents) just put a little bit of effort into her imagine how ((voice trails off))." In this statement, Ms. Small positioned Romina's parents as 'lazy' parents, which is presumably related to the parents' challenge of her authority. In the afternoon, Ms. Small extended this narrative about Romina and her parents:

> I've been trying to build up her self-esteem cause the speech therapist was saying to me- we were having a conversation about Romina- I don't know what you see- but we see her as an unloved child. We see- they may be giving her time but it's negative attention today. Her father spent all this time saying I'm this and I'm that. I've done nothing but build your daughter up. You showed me you can do it. That's a big difference wanting to and not showing it. So (the guidance counselor) said it's their parenting skills. They had the baby. The baby was crying and she just turned around and gave the baby the bottle without even looking at him and they just shuffled the baby back and forth, not interacting with him, not touching him. So my thought is that Romina didn't get any attention either as a baby.

In this narrative about Romina and her family, Ms. Small suggested that Romina was an "unloved child" and that Romina's difficulties' could be attributed to a lack of parenting skills. Analysis of Ms. Small's discourse reveals that the teacher and guidance counselor had attributed Romina's difficulty in school to parents' effort in raising their children. She justified this claim by explaining that "the parents were not looking at Romina's younger baby brother during the parent meeting." Yet, Ms. Small's evaluation of the parents is rooted in parenting and language ideologies regarding when and how one should appropriately talk to children. Parent-child

interactive structures in which parents engage children as conversational partners is not universal across cultural groups. Moreover, one of many plausible explanations for limited parent-child interaction during the meeting may be the parents' desire to devote full attention to the teacher, the guidance counselor, and the topic of their daughter's progress.

Socializing and Positioning Students within a Frame of Effort
    Teacher and parents used a number of strategies to socialize children to try harder in school. On the progress reports, Ms. Small commented that the children needed to "*poner más esfuerzo* (make more of an effort)" in reading, writing, and math, in addition to developing their basic skills. Graphic 1 displays Romina's March progress report.

Graphic 1: Romina's Progress Report

	Code	Comments	
Math 2	116 48	Nec. practicar materia de matematica basica Mucho descuido en su trabajo	Needs to practice basic math material Is very careless in his work
Reading 2	53 55	Necesita poner mas esfuerzo Necesita ser mas atento	**Needs to put in more effort** Needs to be more attentive
Work Habits 2	53 48	Necesita poner mas esfuerzo Mucho descuido en su trabajo	**Needs to put in more effort** Is very careless in her work
Writing 2	53	Necesita poner mas esfuerzo	**Needs to put in more effort**

During routine classroom literacy practices such as writing workshop and the distribution and submission of homework, Ms. Small also delivered lectures to students about the importance of effort. During writing workshop, Ms. Small equated the display of effort with the independent completion of assignments "in their own words," a high quantity of their writing, the clarity and punctuation of their writing, and a relatively fast pace of task completion. She also suggested that she pushed children to work harder because she believed they were intelligent enough to succeed. On visit #7, Ms. Small made the following comment to Romina after she had independently written a chapter of her non-fiction book about dogs.

> I think your mommy and daddy are full of bunk because I think you are such a smarty smarty and I think that you can do anything you put your mind to. You proved mom and dad wrong. ((Turns to the class)) You can give her an applause. Now if Daniel would work that hard what a happy woman I would be.

In this statement, Ms. Small socialized Romina to view her success as a consequence of her individual effort to "put (her) mind to" the completion of the writing assignment. By claiming that Romina "proved mom and dad wrong," Ms. Small suggested that Romina's parents did not believe that she was smart enough to succeed in school. Yet, the data does not reveal any evidence that Romina's parents did not believe her to be smart. Ms. Small also linked students' success to their individual hard work in a statement to the entire class in which she also expresses her desire for Daniel to work hard. Through this statement, Ms. Small positioned Daniel as a lazy student. It is also noteworthy that Ms. Smart represented intelligence and effort as the only plausible explanations for student difficulties. This discourse is emblematic of ideologies in which individuals (rather than collectives) are held responsible for successes and failures.
    Students were also socialized to associate the display effort with performance on standardized benchmark tests for reading level and the completion of homework assignments. In order to support the improvement of reading comprehension, Ms.

Small created a weekly homework assignment for which students were required to read a book and write one-page summary of the book in their "Reading Response Journal." She also punished students by denying them recess if they had not completed assignments. On Visit #9, Ms. Small delivered the following lecture on the importance of their response journal for reading development. She began the lecture after discovering that several students had not completed the Reading Response Journal for homework.

1 Ms. Small:	[3]I want everyone to stop a minute and look. Do you remember I
told 2	everyone you have to leave second-grade on an M next week? Mr.
3	Tomatelli wants all of the teachers to start testing you all on where
4	your reading level is (.) I'm gonna be honest. Nelly can I share your
5	level? Nelly was on an H (.) when Nelly is doing her response
journal	
6	Nelly is writing and writing and writing. I know when I test Nelly
7	next week I bet Nelly will be able to get to a K or an L (.) I'm not
8	doing this because I want you to have a lot of homework(.) I'm
doing	
9	this because one of the things we need to work on is we have to
retell	
10	the story (.) We have to remember the details of the story.

This lecture provides an example of one way that Ms. Small socialized the students to complete their homework. While she didn't explicitly link homework to hard work in this lecture, she implies that the completion of the assignment depended on individual student effort by attempting to persuading them to mimic Nelly's behavior of "writing and writing and writing" (line 6). Yet, this discourse omits a discussion of the kinds of support or knowledge necessary for completing the assignment. Ms. Small also connected the importance of working hard on the homework to the Running Records reading level tests and a goal of reading at a level M as mandated by the superintendent (lines 1-3). By drawing a link between effort in homework and academic success, Ms. Small revealed how assessment policies shape the frame of effort she constructed. Graphic 2 displays the artifacts to which Ms. Small refers—the Fontas & Pinnell Running Record and the Columbia Teachers College Reading and Writing Project Benchmark Reading Levels and Marking Period Assessment. Ms. Small highlighted the benchmarks for second grade in September and November. The goal of an M reading level by June—that Mr. Tomatelli had requested—is aligned with a predicted score of 3 out of 4 on the ELA, English Language Arts Exam—the standardized reading test in NY. The school's reliance on this benchmark as a measure of achievement is noteworthy because the predicted outcome is undoubtedly based on models of monolingual language and literacy development and, therefore, it is questionable whether the benchmarks and predicted scores are appropriate for bilingual learners like those in this class.

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[3] I use the following transcription conventions, noting that punctuation marks are used to communicate the social features of talk instead of the conventional rules of Spanish and English usage:

(.)	micropause
.	falling final intonation contour
?	rising intonation
(( ))	transcriber's description of events

Graphic 2: Assessment Artifacts

Fontas & Pinnell Running Record   Benchmark Reading Levels


Student Self-positioning as Hardworker

In this section, I examine how students and parents interpret the discourse and narratives of effort to position themselves as hard-workers attempting to achieve, or support academic success. One of the ways in which parents positioned themselves was as 'inadequate form of support for their children when they are required to read and write in English. As a result, I found in many homes that the children read and completed their response journal independently. This next excerpt provides insight into ways in which children attempted to complete an assignment in order to position themselves as hard-workers within the school-based frame of effort. The excerpt begins when Romina turned towards me while completing math homework to say:

1 Romina: You know in the response journal I have the same books (.) but I copy it
2 Author: You copy the books
3 Romina:No I copy what I write
4 Author: The whole thing? You'll have to show me
5 Romina: But it's lo::ng
((Ramira finishes math and spelling and removes response journal from backpack))
6 Author: now what's next?
7 Romina: My response journal. my last last homework.
8 Author: Reading response journal (.) can you show me how you normally pick a

9   book
10 Romina: Yeah (.) I copy it all (.) This is all the same things (.) This is the same
11   this is the same this one is different
12 Author: I want to be princess
13 Romina: Yeah this one this one ((hitting page))
14 Author: So you are saying they are they are different books
15 Romina: No they are the same book
16 Author: The same book (.) the same exact book?
17 Rachel: Yep but the teacher doesn't get mad
18 Author: You should change it up though because you want to get   better at reading.
19   you can do it sometimes if she doesn't mind but you should switch it up
20 Romina: Yeah she did a happy face (.) and a check.

This excerpt is noteworthy in that it illuminates how Romina had figured out how to display effort by copying the words of her text onto the page of the response journal. Graphic 3 show Romina's response journals #23 and #24 that she had written a month before this home visit. They corroborate Romina's description of copying the words from same book. Journal entries 23 and 24 are almost identical from another. They also include exact words written in the book, "Say Please" by Virginia Austin. She justified the act of copying by explaining that her teacher "doesn't get mad" (line 18) and that "she did a happy face (.) and a check" (line 22) in her homework agenda page. Through her interpretation of the teacher's response, Romina suggested that copying text was acceptable for expressing her identity as a hard-working student.

Graphic 3: Reading responses #23 and #24
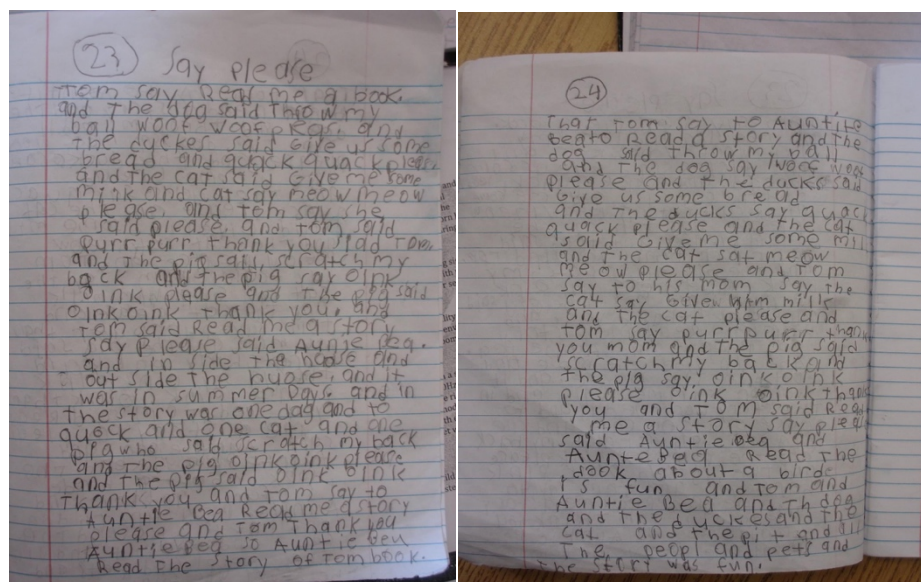
Parent Positioning of Students and Selves
Romina's mother, Ramira also talked about Romina's progress and the need for Romina to work hard in school. However, she revealed ways that Romina, herself, and the father were, in fact, exerting effort in Romina's school work and progress. On visit #3 to Romina's house, her mother, Ramira approached Romina and I while Romina completed her response journal. She provided the following explanation when Romina prompted me to share her perfect score on a recent spelling test:

Échale más ganas (.) el papa dice si no le echa- no te voy a dar tu cumpleaños.
dice porque no lo pones- todos los años quiere vestirse de princesa de todo y
luego- le dice te lo hago pero tú también cúmplame con la tarea la escuela.
Obedece
She is working harder (.) her father says if she doesn't work hard- I'm not going
to give you her birthday because you don't put- every year she wants to dress like
a princess of everything and then- he says to her I will make it for you but you
have to achieve for me with homework school (.) obey

One line 8, Ramira provided a rationale for Romina's newfound success on a test
by declaring that she is working harder. By constructing a narrative of effort to
describe Romina's improvement and high test performance, Ramira suggested that
academic success is dependent on effort. This narrative of a hard-working student
aligns with that of Ms. Small. However, Ramira constructed a different representation
of her and her husband's role in Ramira's success than did Ms. Small. Without
explicitly using the word effort, on lines 11-14 Ramira described behavior that could
be considered a display of effort in their child, and in their children's school work—
the act of threatening to cancel Romina's birthday party if she fails to do well in
school.

5. Discussion

This paper shows how children and parents were socialized to construct frames of
effort through narratives of hardworking students whose hard work could be evaluated
based on test performance, report cards, and homework and classroom artifacts.
Within these frames, teachers positioned children who failed to complete artifacts as
lazy or culturally deprived by unsupportive or lazy parents. The findings also show
how parents and children resisted labels as 'low' or 'lazy students by adopting roles
and behaviors to express hardworking identities within a socio-culturally constructed
school-based frame of effort or their own frames of effort. Additionally, this paper
demonstrates how school policies of language and literacy assessment based on
standardized benchmarks of English literacy development were linked to this
construction of effort in school literacy practices. In this paper I argue that this
school-based frame of effort is problematic in that it conceals how children from
immigrant families are restricted in pathways of academic success and social mobility
in four primary ways: the privilege granted to English in language policies for
instruction and assessment in only English; the suppression of their Mexican
immigrant families' voices; families' exclusion from meaningful learning activities by
focusing evaluations on completed artifacts and overlooking the interactions through
which they are accomplished; and assessment policies and practices that rely on
monolingual models of literacy development that consequently place unduly pressure
on Mexican families in the pursuit of academic success.

The findings also draw attention to the process through which a cultural
"borderland" (Mendoza-Denton, 1996) is constructed and adapted across home and
school, as teachers, immigrant parents, and students socialize one another to interpret
documents that travel between the two settings. The borderland takes shape as frames
encourage the movement of certain documents, languages, forms of knowledge, and
perspectives into the classroom, while suppressing others. This study also contributes
understanding of the role of school assessment policies and routine classroom
evaluation practices in the production and circulation of language ideologies across a
community, and relate to ideologies of academic success, hard-work, intelligence.

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