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En Los Dos Idiomas: Literacy PractIces Among Chfcago Mexicanos

MardaFaIT
UnIversIty* o/ DlInols at *ChIcago

INTRODUrnON

Background

Most studies of Mexican-origin people in the United States have taken place in the southwest, especially in the border states of California, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. Although these states have by far the largest numbers of Mexican-origin people in the United States, the midwest, and particularly Chicago, has experienced remarkable growth in this population within the last several decades. Unlike the southwest, Chicago and the midwest were never part of Mexico; consequently, the Mexican-origin population here originated and has increased largely from immigration, not through incorporation as a result of war.

This historical fact may account for a difference in orientation between many midwestern and southwestern Mexican-origin people, a difference primarily reflected in an "immigrant" orientation. In terros of Ogbu's cultural ecological theory (1987), most Mexican-origin people in Chicago would constitute an "immigrant minority" (Le., people who have moved, more or less voluntarily, to the United States) rather than a

"caste-like or subordinate minority" (i.e., people who were originally brought into the United States involuntarily through slavery, conquest, or colonization). In the southwest, of course, both types of Mexican-origin groups currently exist, those whose predecessors were incorporated into the United States through war, and those whose families migrated more recently from Mexico. Recent immigrants in California (Delgado-Gaitan, 1987), for example, evidence the same qualities of optimism and belief in the future that I have observed in my fieldwork among Mexican immigrants in Chicago.

In this fieldwork, at least three major subgroups of the Mexican-origin population in Chicago have been identified: *mexicanos* (immigrants born and/or raised in Mexico), Mexican Americans (those born and/or raised in the United States, primarily in Chicago or elsewhere in the midwest), and *tejanos* (those whose families carne to Chicago from Texas). The terminology used here for these three groups is in keeping with local usage (Elías-Olivares & Farr, 1991). The data reported in this chapter are part of a study of one social network within the first group, *mexicanos;* it is hoped that future studies will focus on Mexican Americans and tejanos in Chicago.

A study of these latter two groups would be able to determine, among other things, whether these Chicago groups see themselves as belonging to Ogbu's "castelike" or "immigrant" minorities, that is, whether their orientation is more refiective of one group or the other. There are sorne indications (D. Horowitz, 1985) that Mexican-origin people in the midwest share charaderistics (e.g., voting and residential pattems) with other immigrant groups in the United States, rather than with African Americans, whom Ogbu refers to as a "castelike" minority. Another study of Mexican Americans in Chicago (R. Horowitz, 1983), however, examined gang activities, a feature sorne would consider more reflective of castelike status. It may be that different subgroups of the larger Mexican-origin cornmunity in Chicago hold either castelike, immigrant, or, indeed, other types of orientations; that is, those who were bom and/or raised (and enculturated) in Chicago (especially second and third or later generations) may hold different beliefs, values, and attitudes from those who were bom and/or raised (and enculturated) in Mexico or in the U.S. southwest. Because these are questions that can be answered empirically, future studies can either validate or invalidate these assumptions.

This chapter focuses on one aspect of a study of *mexicanos,* or Mexican immigrants, in Chicago[1]. The research program of which this

[1] We are grateful to the National Science Foundation, Linguistics Program, for supporting the first year and a half of this study. 1 am additionally grateful to the Spencer Foundation for continued support through August 1993 and to the Office of Social Science Research at UIC for both financial and administrative support during the entire course of the project.

analysis is a part was initiated by Lucía Elías-0livares and me and carried out by the two of us and Juan Guerra, while he was an advanced PhD student in the English department (Language, Literacy, and Rhetoric speeialization) at the University of Illinois at Chicago.[2] The larger research program is exploring both orallanguage patterns (Elías-0livares, 1990; Farr, 1993) and literacy practices (Farr, 1989, 1990, 1994; Guerra, 1992) among one social network of families living in the two most concentrated (and contiguous) Mexican-origin neighborhoods in Chicago.

As indicated aboye, Chicago has experienced tremendous growth in the Mexican-origin population within the last several decades. A study of the history of this population (Kerr, 1977) dates the first large-scale Mexican immigration to Chicago in 1916, with a recruitrnent of railroad workers. In ensuing years, Mexicans carne in increasing numbers to work in the railroad, steel, and meat-packing industries. By 1930, there were 20,000 Mexicans and Mexican Americans in Chicago, thereby establishing it as a major city for Mexican settlement in the United States. By 1940, this population was somewhat smaller (16,000) due to repatriation (both voluntary and invoIuntary) during the Depression years. During and after the Second World War, however, Mexican immigration (and Mexican American in-migration) again increased, resulting in a second major wave of migration. The third large wave of migration has occurred in the last several decades.

The 1980 Census showed Chicago to have the fourth largest Hispanic population in the United States and the third largest when only a central city's population (as opposed to an entire metropolitan area's population) is counted: 422,061 out of 3,005,072 (Acosta-Belén & Sjostrom, 1988; Chicago Fact Book Consortium, 1984). Out of the total "official" number of Hispanics in Chicago, Mexican-origin people constitute 60% *(Al Filo,* 1986). In addition, estimates of the undocumented Mexican-origin population in Illinois, most of which is in Chicago, range from 135,000 (Warren & Passel, 1987) to 300,000 Ouárez-Robles, 1990), which adds a substantial number of "uncounted" persons to the official count. In terms of the offidal count alone, the Hispanic population in Chicago *doubled* from 1970 to 1980, and preliminary results from the 1990 census indicate that between 1980 and 1990 it may have doubled yet again in the Chicago metropolitan area *(La Raza, 1991).* There is every indication, moreover, that this population will continue to grow due to both migration and immigration patterns, as well as to fertility rates *(Al Filo, 1986).*

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Rationale for Study

What has been termed the "literacy crisis" in U.S. society was part of the stimulus for initiating this study. Definitions of literacy vary markedly over time and across contexts, and studies have reported a range of "illiteracy," generally between 23 and 30 million adults in this country. A variety of daims and research reports is reviewed by Kozol (1985, pp. 7-12) that lead him to condude that 1 of every 3 adults (60 million out of an adult population, in 1984, of 170 million) is "illiterate in terms of U.S. print communication at the present time" (p. 10). Depending on how literacy is defined, this estimate may be excessive, especially in view of the wide range of literacy practices used by the families in this study. This issue is discussed more fully in later sections of this chapter.

On a variety of standardized measures, however, culturally nonmainstream groups show higher "illiteracy" rates than do middle-dass "mainstream"[3] populations. For example, the Mexican-origin population (approximately 57% of the national Hispanic population), like other "minority"[4] populations, consistently scores lower than the "white" population on literacy scales (NAEP, 1986, 1989a, 1989b). It should be noted that in the aboye reports, *all* members of these ethnic groups are reported together, regardless of socioeconomic class or mainstream orientation. Because socioeconomic class, which includes educationallevel in most scales, may be a more decisive indicator of literacy attainment than ethnicity, these analyses misleadingly suggest that ethnicity itself is the correlate and possible explanation for the low rates of literacy. As more members of non-white ethnic groups join the middle-class mainstream, class differences will become even more apparent in this situation.

Currently, high school dropout rates, which correlate with low literacy achievement rates, are extremely elevated in high schools serving working dass, culturally nonmainstream populations; at Benito Juarez High School in Chicago, for example, which has a 98% Hispanic

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[3]I use the tenn *mainstream* following Heath (1983, p. 392): "Mainstreamers exist in societies around the world that rely on formal educational systems to prepare children for participation in settings involving literacy. Cross-national descriptions characterize these groups as literate, school-oriented, aspiring to upward mobility through success in fonnal institutions, and looking beyond the primary networks oC family and community for behavioral models and value orientations."

[4]Both the term *minority* and the term *white* are increasingly problematic because oC ongoing and expected demographic changes in this country, including growing numbers of persons of mixed ethnicity. The meanings oC these terrns at the level oC various local communities is a question to be answered empirically. For a description of problems with the race and ethnicity questions on the Census questionnaire among Mexican-origin populations, see Elías-Olívares and Farr (1991).

(and over 90% Mexican-origin) student *body,* the drop-out rate is over 50%. student language problems are often cited as a factor in high dropout rates *(Kyle,* Lane, sween & Triana, 1986). Language problems, of *course,* can refer to a lack of fluency in English or to *other,* more subtle differences between the ways a nonmainstream cultural group uses language (both oral and written) and the ways standard English is used in formal schooling.

Because even those who speak English fluentIy often have education and literacy problems *(e.g"* working-class African Americans and Native *Americans),* it clearly is not simply a lack of fluency in English that is at the heart of language problems. A number of studies have shown, in *fact,* that differen'ces in the way language is leamed and *used,* especially if those ways differ from language use in formal schooling, provide one explanation of low achievement levels in literacy and other aspects of schooling (Heath, 1983; Philips, 1983; Scollon & Scollon, 1981; among others). Thus it is crucially important to identify the cultural and linguistic differences between the standard English of formal schooling and the ways of communicating of particular nonmainstream groups; few studies have investigated what Hymes (l974b) called "ways of speaking" (or writing and reading) among Mexican-origin people in the United states, and none have been done in Chicago or the midwest.

Methodology and Focus of Study

The present study is carried out within the framework of the ethnography of communicatio'1 as conceptualized ..ed by Hymes (Hymes, 1974a; saville-Troike, 1989). This type of linguistic research emphasizes the importance of context and holistic analysis, and its aim is to understand meaning from tile point of vie;v of the members of a particular cultural group. Consequently, lOl\g-term participant-observation is deemed necessary for a valid understanding of cultural and linguistic pattems. My participant-observation so far has included five years in Chicago (primarily on weekends) and six weeks in Mexico. In addition to participant-observation, we carried out informal, open-ended interviews with the adult members of the families in the study and audiotaped informal discourse in the homes of members and in public settings in the neighborhood.

The families in the study comprise one social network of *mexicano* immigrants (approximately 45 people) who in the United States would be designated working class by virtue of their blue collar occupations and limited formal educational levels (years of schooling range from Oto 8). The concept of a social network has been developed within anthropology and used in sociolinguistic research (Hannerz,

1980; Milroy, 1987); a social network consists of one center person or family-the latter in this case-and aH immediate intimates in terms of kin and friendship. For linguistic research, one advantage of studying a social network is that normal group rules for interaction tend to prevail, thus minimizing the effect of the participant-observer and yielding more naturallanguage data (Milroy, 1987).

Social networks have been studied in various working-class communities around the world, and although they are probably important for many U.S. immigrant groups (as a support and survival mechanism), they seem to be particularly important for *mexicanos* because of *compadrazgo. Compadrazgo* refers to the Mexican system of godparentlike relationships that function as a reciprocal exchange network to facilitate economic survival and provide emotional and social support. This phenomenon is described by Horowitz (1983), and it matches that from my own participant-observation:

> *Compadres* and relatives usually rnake up an ernotional and social support group. Wornen rnove freely back and forth between hornes-cooking together, talking, taking care of one another's children, shopping, and going out together for entertainrnent. ...
>
> Holidays, birthdays, and other special occasions are usually celebrated with *compadres,* relatives, and their children. A special dinner is prepared, and people eat in several shifts if no table is large enough to accornrnodate aIl the guests....
>
> The strong network of intergenerational relationships provides a rneans by which traditions can be readily passed on (Horowitz, 1983, pp. 58-59).

According to Horowitz's references (Gibson, 1966; Mintz & Wolf, 1950), the *compadrazgo* system originated in 6th-century Mexico and was widely adopted during the colonial period, "when an epidemic caused significant depopulation and compadres became accepted as substitute parents" (Horowitz, 1983, p. 243, n. 5). There is sorne evidence that this system, although important in rural areas, becomes even more crucial (for economic surviva1) in urban areas such as Chicago (Lomnitz, 1977).

The present network of about 45 people is only a subset of a larger group of kin and *compadres* which numbers over 100 people; these 45, then, are the c10sest kin and *compadres* with whom interactions are much more frequent (at least weekly and, for sorne, daily) than theyare with other members of the larger group (whom we met infrequently on various occasions). One interesting aspect of this network is that it is essentiaHy binational. Movement is almost continual in both directions between Chicago and the two *ranchos* (smal1 rural communities) in Mexico, one in Guanajuato and one in Michoacán, from which the center

family's husband and wife emigrated. Sorne network members live in Chicago (visiting Mexíco from time to time), sorne live in Mexico (and visit Chícago every few months), sorne live for years in Chicago and then for years in Mexico, and others come to Chícago annually (for up to half ayear) to earn income. Moreover, whereas both men and women have emigrated to Chícago from the Michoacán *rancho,* only men from the Guanajuato *rancho* have emigrated to Chicago (their wives and children, up to this point in time, have remained in Mexico and receive financial support sent from Chicago).

Before turning to a description of literacy as learned and used by the members of this social network, I would like to consider briefIy how literacy has been variously defined, both by theorists and by empirical (primarily ethnographic) researchers.

Conceptions of Literacy

One goal of this study has been to identify the uses of written language, both Spanish and English, among Mexican immigrant families in Chicago. This necessarily involves a consideration of what "literacy" is. Guerra (1992) located no fewer than 35 different definitions of literacy from a range of literature. In general, though, literacy is seen in two primary ways; Heath (1987) terms these two ways *literacy skills* and *literate behaviors.* In the first view, literacy is seen as "the ability to read and write," that is, the ability to use the writing system (alphabet, syllabary, or other script) of a language. This, in fact, is the definition most linguists use because, as Graff (1981) has pointed out, it is the only definition that can be used universaUy, both over space (cross-culturally) and over time (historically). The second major way of viewing literacy involves ways of thinking, or cognitive style (Sco11on & Sco11on, 1981, for example). In this view, literacy (in Western cultural contexts) usually means thinking critically, "objectively," or analytícally; scholars who take this view of literacy disagree on whether or not the definition should be tied to the use of written language, that is, sorne claim that one can be "literate" with oral language alone (e.g., Gee, 1989; Vasquez, 1989), whereas others see literacy talk as occurring around written texts (e.g., Heath, 1987).

I have argued (Farr, 1994) for the "linguistic" definition of literacy (knowledge and use of a writing system) that spans cultures and historical periods and have suggested that "cognitive" definitions (Le., literate behaviors), especia11y those that focus on orallanguage use, can result in either denigration or patronization, rather than a more egalitarian respect for differences that may exist. This is not to deny that literacy is used in particular ways of thinking, nor even to argue against instruction in Western literate behaviors, but to avoid labeling people who in fact have literacy skills as either "illiterate" or "semi-literate" (Miller, 1988).

Given the cognitive importance many have attributed to literacy (Goody, 1977, 1986, 1987; Goody & Watt, 1963; Olson, 1977; Ong, 1982), the controversy that has surrounded the literacy "crisis"-and, particularIy, the attempts to define literacy-is not surprising. To sum up this controversy briefly: Sorne scholars argue that literacy itself, particularIy alphabetic literacy, changed, over the long term, human cognitive processes (see especially Goody 1977; Goody & Watt, 1963; Ong, 1982). This theory has been criticized for privileging the Westem "literate" cognitive style over other cognitive styles (Street, 1984). Moreover, evidence from anthropological studies has shown aspects of the Westem "literate" cognitive style in nonliterate peoples (Finnegan, 1988). Finally, Finnegan (1988) has demonstrated that it is not the technology itself that causes change in a culture but, rather, how the technology is used in particular social and historical contexts (see also Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1984), as well as what other social factors (e.g., the production of paper from trees) are present along with a particular technology (e.g., writing).

Hence, the use of literacy over many centuries (e.g., in Europe, China, and India) may act as an "enabling factor" (Finnegan, 1988) which, along with other social factors, can stimulate significant changes in a culture. Writing, then, although no "great leap," especially in the development of individuals, nevertheless is a significant human invention, primarily because of its ability to extend communication over space and time. Hymes (1980), in fact, pointed out that writing (in this sense the use of written symbols to represent speech) is quintessentially a cultural creation, a human invention, in contrast to oral language, which was not "invented" but presumably evolved over time. Because it is a cultural construct, writing is consciously leamed, and oral language (one's native language, that is) is unconsciously acquired. In a linguistic sense, then, writing, or literacy, is a technology, a system that can be abstracted from its contexts of use (see Coulmas, 1989; Sampson, 1985). Although Street (1984) and others have argued convincingly that literacy is never an autonomous technology in its *use,* that is, it is always a cultural practice embedded in particular social and historical (and politicaD contexts[S], there is nevertheless a sense in which writing systems *are* "something apart," cultural tools that are taught and learned explicitly. This conception of literacy, in fact, is held by the members of the Mexican immigrant families with whom I have been working.

Literacy, among these families, is seen as connected to schooling,

SIn this sense written language is no different from oral language, which also always is used in a particular social, historical, and political contexto Many descriptions of literacy in the literature, in fact, ascribe qualities to literacy that are actually characteristic of humanistic discourse in general, whether oral or written, for example, the ability to raise consciousness, or empower.

either directly or indirectly. That is, those who read and write are respected for being especially "intelligent" and usually for being more formally educated, although a number of the men from one of the *ranchos* in Mexico leamed how to read and write outside of school from those who did leam literacy in school. Thus, whether literacy is leamed in school, with books, or *Urico* (informally, orally, without books), it is ultimately connected with schooling and is seen as a cultural tool, like mathematics.

Thus far I have provided an overview of the larger study of which this chapter is a part-background information relevant to the particular group of people whose literacy has been studied-and a brief discussion of conceptions of literacy. In the rest of this chapter I focus on sorne results of the study, first dealing with the leaming of literacy by different network members, both as a part of formal schooling and *Urico,* or outside of formal schooling. Then I turn to a description of the literacy practices of network members within both the public and private domains of their lives.

LITERACY LEARNING

Most members of this social network leamed how to read and write as part of formal schooling. Others, however, experienced very little formal schooling (in sorne cases virtually none at all), either because when they were young their *rancho* in Mexico did not yet have a school or because they had to work in order to help support their families. These individuals, in this case the adult males over 35 years old from the Guanajuato *rancho,* leamed to read and write, as they say, *lírico,* or on their own outside of formal schooling. In what follows I describe pattems in both kinds of literacy leaming, paying most attention to the interesting *lfrico* phenomenon.

The level of formal schooling among those who leamed literacy in school is largely a function of generation, which in tum is related both to the availability of schooling and to the opportunity to attend. Por the older adults, schooling usually meant attendance (variously from 2 to 6 years) at the public elementary school in their *rancho;* for the younger adults, it meant either public schooling in Mexico (sometimes including both *primaria,* grades 1 through 6, and *secundaria,* grades 7 through 9) or a combination of schooling in Mexico and in Chicago.[6] Por the youngest generation, it usually meant schooling, often through high school, almost entirely in Chicago. Among the older adults, older female

[6]It is important to point out that *secundnria* is sometimes referred to as "high school" and that education beyond that level *(preparatoria)* prepares one for a specific career or for eollege. Thus, not eontinuing one's formal education after *secundnria,* or ninth grade, may not be seen as "dropping out," but simply as "finishing."

siblings often had fewer years of schooling because they had to help their mothers maintain their homes; older male siblings, similar1y, often had to work on the land to help support the household. Younger siblings in this older generation, in contrast, frequent1y were more expendable in terms of household labor and thus were able to attend school for more years.

The subsequent "one and a half" generations (younger adults and the first generation born and/or raised in Chicago) have increasingly higher levels of formal schooling, as the opportunities for attending increased, again for reasons of availability and sufficient household income. After "finishing" their formal schooling, a number of the younger adults, in addition to working full time and frequently being parents as well, have attended English, literacy, and CED (general equivalency diploma) c1asses at a community-based organization or at the church they attend, which often houses an educational program in the basement. In the youngest generation, most are finishing high school, although sorne have not done so, and sorne are attending college; one young woman has attended graduate school.

In general, literacy skills correlate with the number of years of schooling, as would be expected, but there are interesting exceptions, all of which have to do with personal motivations to learn and use literacy. These motivations inc1ude the use of literacy for religious reasons (discussed in a later section on literacy practices in the religious domain) and for "personal obligations" to maintain correspondence with network members in Mexico. The latter motivation led a number of men to learn how to read and write *lírico,* outside of formal schooling. In these cases especially, literacy skill has little correlation with years of formal schooling.

Leamlng uteracy Lírico

Lírico es. . . puro hablado   que no hayan libros ni nada.
Lyrical is purely spoken   there are no books or anything.

Puede ser tambien con maestro, pero que no haya nada de libros.
It also can be with a teacher, but with no books.

La voz, pues, nada mas pura voz.
The voice, then, nothing more than pure voice.

La voz y la palabra.
The voice and the word.

As often happens in ethnographic studies, an interesting but unexpected phenomenon emerged early in the study. A number of the men in their mid-30s and beyond from the Guanajuato *rancho* became

functionally literate essentially without formal schooling. They report that they learned literacy *lfrico;* that is, they "picked it up" informally from others who used only spoken language-not printed materials-to pass on knowledge of the writing system. The teaching and learning process, then, proceeded through oral language, from one person to another, in informal arrangements.

This pattern of learning literacy *lírico* is not restricted to the families in the network under study; I have been told basically the same story by other men in this community-who are not part of this network-from other *ranchos* in Mexico. The pattern is not, however, typical of the men in this network from the *rancho* in Michoacán. The differences between the two *ranchos* account for the fact of informal education in literacy in the one case and school-Iearned literacy in the other. The *rancho* in Michoacán is located immediately off a highway, and the local *municipio* (township center) is less than 2 kilometers away-a walkable and easily drivable distance; during recent decades, moreover, the growing of avocados has brought this area increased prosperity (Damien de Surgy, Martínez, & Linck, 1988). The rancho in Guanajuato, in contrast, is over 13 kilometers from the nearest city, and there is infrequent (once a day) public transportation to and from it-without a car, it's a very long walk; moreover, this rancho has only benefited from electricity within the last decade and as of 1991 did not yet have running water. In contrast, the *rancho* in Michoacán has benefited from both of these services for sorne time. As a recent study of another *rancho* in "Jalmich" (the border area between the states of Jalisco and Michoacán) has shown (Barragán López, 1990), proximity to modern roads can make a significant difference in a Mexican rural community's social and economic life.

Even after a public school was established in the more isolated *rancho* during the 195Os, sorne of the children who were "of school age" had to work rather than attend school. The center family husband estimates that he went to school for a "maximum of about three months" at two different ages, first when he was 8 (for a month and a halO and sorne time later when he was put in third grade (for another month and a halO. He says the reason he could not go to school was that he had to work (his mother had died and his father worked for long periods in the United States):

> Es *que teníamos que trabajar. Mira, como no había la jefa, mi papá siempre estuvo acá en Estados Unidos. Entonces pues, teníamos que trabajar para comer. .. o sea que a los ocho años ya empieza uno a trabajar en México. Desgraciadamente allá, tienes ocho años, ya puedes caminar bien, tienes que ir a ver los animales. ..*
>
> It's that we had to work. Look, since our mom [the bossl was not around, my dad was always in the States. Well, we had to work to eat ... in other words, already at the age of eight one starts to work in Mexico.

Unfortunately, there, when you are eight and can walk well, you have to go look over the animals...

This description is strikingly similar to Spufford's (1981) discussion of literacy among working-class rural Englishmen in the 17th century; in both cases literacy, at least that learned through formal schooling, was inextricably linked to the economy, in that only children who could be spared from other labor were able to attend school. Like the 17th-century spiritual autobiographers whom Spufford studied, these men from the Guanajuato *rancho* learned to write and read outside of school. Someone else who had been schooled, usually a friend, taught them their "letters." As one man explained it:

Bueno. .. te voy a decir la pura verdad. Mira, no hay persona que se enseñe por su mismo a nada. Tiene que haber una base, tiene que haber un, ¿Cómo te dijera? Nosotros decimos un pie. O *sea, una base para empezar, porque, simplemente, para que tú te enseñes a algo, tienes que aprenderlo de otro.*

Well ... I'm going to tell you what it is really like. Look, there isn't a person who can teach himself anything on his own. There has to be a base. There has to be a, how can I tell you? We say there has to be a leg to stand on. In other words, a base for beginning, because, simply, for you to teach yourself something, you have to learn from someone else.

When this man was 9 or 10 years old a teacher began to give classes in his *rancho,* but he could not go to school for more than a few months because he had to work. According to him, those who did not go to school learned sorne of the letters from those who did go to school. Later, during his second few months at school, he learned more letters and how to put them together to form his name. After that, he built on what he had learned by reading and writing by himself ("in the street"), practicing with such things as empty cigarette boxes, which he used both for reading and for writing. Here is how he describes the way he leamed:

Por ejemplo, tú traes una cartilla de cigarros. ... Ves las letras y *dices, "pues, esta es esta,* y *esta," así, verdad,* y *las vas juntando, entonces ya después te vas empezando a practicar tú mismo,* y *hasta que llega el día que ya conociendo todas las letras, las puedes juntar. Entonces* yo *después empecé a escribir solo, a escribir. Y cuando les platicaba a mis amigos, "Mira, fíjate que ya sé escribir,* y *esto ya se escribe así de este modo, de este otro." Entonces seguí practicando* y *practicando. ..*

Algunos amigos allí ya mayores tenían revistas, cuentos, sí, revistas de historietas. Y me las prestaban. Entonces, como en esas revistas me gustaba leer, yo *creo fue la base de donde aprendí* yo *más también, porque ya cuando empiezas a leer una revista, cuando terminas una revista* y *la leés completa, ya allí ya vienen casi todas las palabras. Entonces se me fue mejor,* o *sea, sí fui*

> *mejorando la lectura mía. Para escribir pues, eso* sí *batallé más, pa' eso* sí *era, era más complicado. Pero, cajetilla de cigarros que me encontraba por alU tirada* y *toda la dejaba rallada.* Yo *trahía un lápiz* y *lo sacaba* y *me acordaba de lo que había leído en* la *revista.* Y *las ponía a veces que le sobraban letras, a veces le faltaban. Pero era parecido.*
>
> For example, you have a box of cigarettes.... You see the letters and you say, well, this one is this one, and this one, like that, right, and you put them together, then later you begin to practice it yourself, and the day comes when you know all the letters, you put them together. Then later 1 began to write by myself, to write. And when 1 was talking to my friends, "Look, 1 can write," and "This is written this way, or that way." And then 1 continued practicing and practicing...
>
> Some of my older friends there had magazines, stories, yes, comic book magazines, and they would lend them to me. And since 1 liked reading those magazines, 1 believe they were the basis of my learning more, because when you read a magazine and finish it, you have read almost aH the words. So, my reading skills improved. When it came to writing it was more difficult for me; it was more complicated. But, if 1 found a cigarette package thrown away, 1 would finish by leaving it all scribbled on. 1 had a pencil and 1 would take it out and 1 would remember what 1 had just read in the magazine. And 1 would write with excess letters or with missing letters. But it was more or less the same.

These accounts reveal much about literacy learning stripped of formal institutional structures: a "bare bones" approach taken by highly motivated men. One man's account, and that of his *compadre* included below, provide details underlying their own views of this learning process and of written language itself. In the discussion that follows I address three aspects of these accounts: first, what they disclose about the process by which these men describe learning to read and write; second, what they disclose about the social nature of such learning and, for *mexicanos* especially, the important role *confianza* (trust) plays in this process; and third, what they tell us about significant features of the setting that provides the "motivation" to learn to write and read.

The process of literacy learning. The man quoted aboye, like the spiritual autobiographers from 17th-century England (Spufford, 1981), describes his acquisition of literacy as first learning the letters of the alphabet, then learning to put them together. Both accounts refer to learning to read first, then learning to write, and they both refer to writing as being more difficult than reading. Another man from the Guanajuato *rancho,* however, describes his process as the reverse: He learned to write (so that he could write letters home from the United States) but claims he still reads "only a Httle," including part of the *anuncios* (announcements)

in church and a small part of the newspaper. He writes multipage letters about every two weeks, and he does so very laboriously, forming rather large letters. He does not read regularly in his daily life; he may, of course, read signs and other environmental print, but for him, apparently, this does not count as "reading." The following is how this man describes how he first leamed to write, then later to read a little:

> *Bueno,* yo *empecé a escribir cuando salía de mi tierra, cuando empezé a escribir para mi casa. Entonces había un señor que me decía, "mira así, así se hacen las letras," me las apuntaba. Entonces* yo *empecé a pensar* y *a hacerle la lucha a escribir* y yo *escribfa. Ya me empezaban a contestar* y yo *me sentfa contento porque,* sí *me daba gusto 10 que decía, ¿no? Ya, ya, ya la estoy, ya la estoy haciendo ...*
>
> *Yo me ponía a escribir para mi casa. .. me acuerdo que la primer' carta que mandé me dure como dos dias, bueno, después del trabajo Y entonces yo escribía mal hechito como podía,* y *me llegaba la carta pero no podía* yo *leerlas. Yo la daba a leer porque no podía. Hasta, después ya con el tiempo ya fui a, poco a poquito a poderlas ir leyendo.*
>
> Well, 1 began to write when 1 went out of my country, when 1 began to write home. There was a man who would tell me, "Look, this is how letters are made," and he would write them for me. So 1 began to think and try to write and 1 would write. Then they began to answer me, and 1 was happy because of what their letters said. {And 1 would thinkl now, yeah, now 1 am doing it. ..
>
> 1 would write to my house... 1 remember the first letter 1 sent took me two days to write, well, after work 1 would work on it... And so, 1 would write badly, any way 1 could, and then 1 would get a letter... but 1 could not read it. 1 gave it to someone to read because 1 couldn't. Not untillater, with time, little by Httle was 1 able to read them.

These differing accounts tell us that neither learning reading first nor writing first is more "natura!." Both, however, can be acquired without schooling as a spontaneous part of daily IHe, when people perceive a need for these skills. These accounts also reveal how literacy is perceived by those coming to it on their own. Both of these men, for example, recognize that writing, especially in English, is not an exact ref1ection of speech. In their own words:

> *El inglés que* yo *escribía. .. no era exactamente como lo escriben en la escuela,* o *ni muchos menos siendo que* yo *lo escribÚl a manera que se pronuncia;* o *sea más bien, lo escribía yo en español. Sería decirlo así, verdad,* yo *lo escribía en español. .. por ejemplo. .. me decian eso se llama* "coffee cup," *yo le ponía, verdad, como se pronuncia.*

The English that 1 wrote ... wasn't exactly the way they write it in school, much less so since 1 wrote it the way it was pronounced; in other words, 1 wrote it in Spanish, that's how 1 would describe it. 1 wrote it in Spanish ... for example ... they would say that is called "coffee cup," 1 would put it how it was pronounced.

Pero ya que yo *escriba,* yo *sé que no las voy a escribir como debe de ser. Ahora, puntos, acentos, ¿D6nde los lleva? Quién sabe, no tengo idea. .. a lo mejor pensándolo digo, "a caray, pos* sí, *a lo mejor lleva el acento aquí," pero eso de que punto, coma yeso, eso sí no sé nada. Nomas las letras.*

But once 1 begin writing, 1 know 1 am not going to write properly. Now, periods, accents, where do they go? Who knows, 1 have no idea ... maybe when thinking about it 1 say, "oh wow, yes, maybe the accent goes here," but about periods, commas and that, 1 know nothing. Only letters.

Porque los que aprendemos a leer y *a escribir acá lfrico, qué vamos a saber de ortografía, qué vamos a saber dónde va un acento, qué vamos a saber que dónde está un punto se tiene uno que detener cuando está leyendo, ¿qué sabe uno de eso? Uno le sigue derecho. ¿Sí* o *no?* Yo no *me fijo en eso, que, está un punto debe de haberse parado un ratito. No, pos yo ese punto ni lo ví. Estaba muy chiquito yo sigo para adelante. ¿Me entiendes?* Y *la gente que está educada, que ha tenido su escuela, pos oye, ve un punto y se para.* O *ve unas rayitas allí que les dicen signos. .. le dan su sonido a la lectura.* Yo *no, yo, parejo. Nada de bajadas y subidas, no, no, no, no, ¿qué es eso?*

Because those of us that learn how to read and write over here, lyrically, what are we going to know about spelling, how are we going to know where an accent goes, that when there is a period you pause when you are reading, what does one know about that? One goes on straight ahead. Yes or no? 1 pay no attention to that, and were one to tell me there is a period you should have paused a bit, well, 1 just did not see that periodo It was too small for me to see so 1 kept going. Do you understand me? And people who are educated, that have had schooling, well, they see a period and they pause. Or they see a bunch of small lines there, and they are signs for them to give a special sound to their reading. Not me, 1 am even. None of those ups and downs, no, no, no, no, what is that?

These men, then, know that the writing system that they have learned to use includes not only the letters of the Spanish alphabet, but also accent and punctuation marks. The letters alone, however, are basically sufficient for their purposes: writing for themselves (at work and elsewhere) and writing to family and friends in Mexico. They view the accent and punctuation marks as signposts for reading, and although one of the men says that he reads "evenly" (no "ups" and

"downs"), without heeding the accent and punctuation marks, he in fact reads aloud quite expressively and has done so in my presence.

One evening in his home, this man picked up sorne printed materials we had brought to them (a list of questions prepared by the Catholic Archdiocese to prepare people for the U.S. amnesty exam) and began reading it aloud, in English, as he walked around his living room. An acquaintance of his exclaimed in surprise, "What?! You can read?! But you always say you can't read in our class (at the local community organizationl!" Everyone laughed uproariously at his cleverness. This anecdote serves two purposes here: First, it proved that, in spite of his statement about reading less "expressively" than he would if he had learned how to use accents, periods, and commas, he in fact read quite accurately and appropriately. His comment may reflect a belief that, if one doesn't leam to read "officially" in school, what one does when decoding print isn't "really" reading. That is, true reading is sanctioned by school leaming. Second, this anecdote clearly indicates that what people say in one context (or in response to survey questionnaires or formal interviews conducted by strangers) is not necessarily what they do in other contexts. In this case, this man has literacy abilities quite beyond what would be predicted, especially based on his negligible experience with formal schooling, and he has literacy abilities that surpass even his own assessment of them. In a formal test of English literacy levels[7] this man achieved an extremely high score, the highest in his social network (Guerra, 1992).

Learning literacy *lírico,* then, is remarkably effective. A1though formal schooling is the route to literacy for many people, schooling is clearly not essential. These personal accounts of this process provide other counterintuitive findings as well. First, sorne people learn to read first, then write, whereas others reverse this order and learn to write first, then read. Second, the writing system, that is, the alphabet, is seen as a way to represent speech, primarily through the use of the letters, but additionally through the use of punctuation and accent marks. The latter are seen as learned primarily through schooling, whereas the letters themselves can be "picked up" lyrically.

To learn *lírico,* then, is to learn informally, without books, and purely with spoken language. Things learned *líricamente* ("lyrically")-traditionally the guitar or even, according to another network member, English-are "picked up" without formal instruction. Thus, one network member in Mexico said she was learning to play the guitar *lírico* with a group of people at the church there; although there was a "leader" in this "class" who was more experienced in playing the guitar,

7We thank Aline Grognet and the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington, DC for providing us with a pre-publication version of the English literacy materials prepared for use in amnesty classes.

learning proceeded informally, without explicit instruction or books-indeed without an actual "teacher." It is worth noting that a1though much of the practice in such "lyrical" learning goes on without a teacher, even when there is a teacher, the learning situation is informal, and in the case of the men who learned literacy *lírico,* something that happens between friends. The importance of this aspect of the process is discussed in the next section.

The social nature of literacy learning. 1 already have discussed how the men described here (like the 17th-eentury spiritual autobiographers) initially acquired sorne literacy from friends who had had sorne schooling while they themselves were working during childhood. Thus, minimal literacy skills had been acquired one on one from friends during childhood, along with much practice using any materials available, such as cigarette packaging and magazines. When these men began working in Chicago (at about age 17), they felt a renewed and increased desire for literacy skills in order to write letters to family and friends back home. Stressing its importance, one man refers to this as a "personal obligation" and says that many people have learned to write for this reason. Because of *compadrazgo,* it would be especially important for Mexicans to maintain close relationships with kin and compadres even while far away. Literacy is, of course, an available technology to serve this function, as is the more expensive telephone. Sorne of the families now regularly use the telephone to talk to relatives in Mexico; others, however, still rely on writing. Writing, however, is not only important in maintaining personal relationships, it also is acquired as a part of such relationships. These men describe themselves as fortunate in being able to learn writing from trusted friends.

> *Él era del estado de México siendo que yo lo conocí aquí en Chicago, y éramos muy amigos aquí en Chicago. Entonces, pues, muy sencillo. .. mucluls de las veces tú encuentras algún amigo que en verdad es amigo, ¿verdad? Y cuando eso sucede el amigo sí se preocupa por tí. Sin, pos yo digo sin ventajas,* o *son amigos, que decimos acá nosotros, un amigo derecho, que te estima. Entonces esa es una de las razones que yo creo que él me ayudó porque viéndolo por el otro lado, qué le podría importar yo a él. Te imaginas, no somos ni siquiera vecinos, ni parientes, ni mucho menos. Entonces este hombre, creo que hizo mucho, mucho por mí.*
>
> He was from the state of Mexico and 1 met him here in Chicago and we were very good friends here. So, it's very simple...sometimes you find a friend who is a true friend, right. And when that happens the friend really does worry about you. Without, well 1 think that they do so without taking advantage, or they are friends, as we say over here, a straight up friend, one who really cares about you. So that was one of the reasons that 1 believe he helped me, because seeing it from a

different perspective, why should 1 have mattered to him? Can you imagine, we are not even neighbors or relatives or even much less. So this man, 1 think he did a lot, a lot for me.

Another way in which learning literacy is revealed as an intensely social process is found in the leaming process itself. 80th men describe the emotional support of the friends who taught them to write and comment on the trust *(confianza)* that had to exist between them during this process. These friends were selfless and generous in their efiorts to teach literacy, but also they were very supportive. As one of the men explains it:

> *Bueno,* yo *ya sabía más* o *menos, pero* yo *creo que de allí para acá me empecé* yo *a, cómo te dijera, aprender más de lo que creí que podía aprender. Porque, en primer lugar, fíjate, que te voy a decir una cosa: cuando tú quieres aprender algo* y *hay alguien que te ayuda, te apoya sí* se *puede aprender. Pero* si *en cambio tú tienes un amigo que en vez de que te apoye se empiece a reir de tí, que "¡Ah, mira que eres un tarado, no* se *te pega nada!" en fin, te desanimas en completo.*
>
> Well, 1 already knew how to [read and write] somewhat, but 1 think that from there 1 began to, how would 1 say it, learn more than 1 thought 1 could learn. Because, in the fjrst place, listen, 1 am going to tell you something: when you want to learn something and you have someone to help you and really support your efforts, you can learn. But if you have a friend who instead of helping you laughs at you and says, "Oh, look you're so stupid, you can't grasp anything!" finally you become totally discouraged.

Thus, literacy is a social phenomenon in several aspects. First, it is a system, or tool, created by human beings and passed on from one human being to another. Often this is accomplished through formal schooling, but it is also achieved *lírico,* informally, as a natural part of (nonschool) life. Second, especially for those far from home, literacy is essential in maintaining human relationships, that is, for living up to one's personal obligations. Finally, supportive human relationships are crucial in the leaming process itself; a degree of trust and commitment provide the human base from which leaming and teaching are carried out. In the next section I discuss the setting that generates the motivation to pursue such leaming.

The setting o/ *literacy learning.* Szwed (1981) defines motivation as "the nexus at which reader, or writer, context, function and text join" (p. 15) and adds that reading and writing skills will vary according to differing degrees of motivation. Clearly, the men being discussed here were highly motivated to leam literacy skills. What was the basis of this motivation? Using Szwed's definition, we can trace several aspects of the setting toward the nexus that yields motivation. First, the readers

and writers in this case were men with virtually no formal schooling who were working in a foreign country without much competence (initially) in the dominant language and who had left an extended network of very close relatives and friends "back home."

In this context (Szwed's second aspect), these men felt, as one of them said, a "personal obligation" to maintain these social connections, hence they tumed to an available cultural tool or technology-literacy-for long-distance communication. The problem, then, was how to leam to use this technology, a problem that, as has been explained, was solved socially with help from others.

The third aspect which forms the nexus for motivation, according to Szwed, is function. Here the function of literacy was to communicate over a long distance with loved ones and to maintain or extend important human relationships. One man describes the context in which he felt motivated to leam and improve his literacy skills:

> *Entonces ya después me vine para acá le puse más interés a aprender. O sea yo creo que aprendf más bien aquf cuando uno está lejos de su tierra, las circunstancias lo obligan a uno a aprender porque, eh, te imaginas que yo me hubiera ocupado una persona que me hiciera una carta, por ejemplo a la novia, ¿verdad? Primero se da cuenta el que está haciendo la carta que yo... Pondrá lo que le dices o le pondrá de más. A lo mejor en vez de decir saludos le manda decir "óyeme vete para el catre," pero con más malas palabras. ¡Te imaginas! Entonces, yo creo que esa es una de las rawnes las que la mayorfa de nosotros nos hemos enseñado a leer y escribir.*
>
> So then afterwards when I carne over here... I became more interested in learning. In other words I think I learned better here... when one is away from his country, the circumstances require that one learn because, well, can you imagine, if I had hired someone to write a letter, for example to my girlfriend, well, the person writing the letter would know before I. .. Perhaps he will put what you say or perhaps he will add something. Maybe instead of saying hello he tells her to go to hell, only in worse language. Can you imagine! So I think that this is one of the reasons so many of us have taught ourselves to read and write.

What is important here is the combination of factors that yields motivation. Motivation may be something an individual feels, but it clearly is not a quality that a particular person either has or does not have across various settings. Instead, it emerges out of the setting, out of the mixture of participants (reader and or writer, teacher and leamer), function, and (potential or created) text. Therefore, these men were motivated to leam to write because of a combination of factors: first, those with whom they wanted to communicate were in another country; second, they feH a personal obligation to maintain these relationships and to maintain them *personally;* third, a cultural tool, writing, was

available for this purpose; and fourth, others were able and willing to share their knowledge of this cultural too!.

People, then, cannot be said to be either with or without the quality of motivation, except in specific settings, and whether or not they are motivated to learn or to use literacy depends on specific aSPeCts of those settings. 1 next describe how various members of this social network used literacy in their daily lives, across multiple settings.

LD'ERACY PRAcrICES IN PUBLIC ANO PRIVATE OOMAINS

The members of this social network are literate. Especially as a network, they deal more than adequately with the literacy demands in their lives, and various members use literacy to differing extents to achieve an assortment of personal goals. Although it is not often foregrounded as an end in itself, literacy is part of the texture of their daily lives. Literacy materials (e.g., hardback and paperback religious books, magazines, and books and pencils for the catechism c1ass held in one family's home) are stored out of sight until they are to be used. When occasions for literacy arise, materials are retrieved and used; also, knowledge of literacy is among the resources that are shared across members within the network. Those who are more knowledgeable about literacy, either in terms of reading and writing skills or background knowledge relevant to written texts (Le., either in terms of literacy skills or literate behaviors), are routinely called on by less knowledgeable individuals when the need arises. Por example, those who have more advanced levels of schooling are called on to read official letters (in English) received by those whose formal schooling is less extensive. Thus, literacy is among the network's pool of shared resources, as are other kinds of knowledge, inc1uding information about potential jobs, health care, automobile repair, and so forth. As Velez-Ibañez and Greenberg (1989) have shown, this kind of sharing of "funds of knowledge" is especially characteristic of Mexican-origin social networks.

In analyzing the literacy practices of these families, I chose to emphasize domains in which literacy is used, rather than the functions of each literacy activity, as have other researchers (Heath, 1983; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988). Many literacy activities serve multiple functions (for example, reading an official letter can serve both interactional and instrumental functions); moreover, domains allow a more social, rather than individual, perspective, inasmuch as they allow one to situate the literacy practice in the social relationships that exist within domains, as well as to situate the literacy practices more concretely within the larger view of daily life. I have adapted a framework of domains provided by

Goody (1986) that encompasses the four traditional "subsystems of society": religion, economy, politics (the state), and law. Goody provides an analysis and synthesis of the role of writing, historically and cross-culturally, within these four broad societal domains.

During the period in which I collected data for this analysis, adult family members were undergoing, with our assistance, the amnesty process established by the U.S. government with the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. As a result, the families' literacy practices within two domains, politics (the state) and the law, coalesced; hence, for the purposes of this analysis, I also coHapsed these two domains into one. In addition, I added two domains that involve the private realm of the families' lives (Goody's domains are aH within the public, societal realm): the family/home domain and the education domain. The former is entirely within the private realm, and the latter involves both the public and the prívate realms because formal schooling for either adults or children is "public," and informal educational processes (e.g., leaming literacy "lyrically" with a friend, or studying English or for the GED at home) are "prívate."

The following descriptions of literacy practices among these families are described within four of these five domains: religion, commerce, the state/law, and education. The fifth domain, that of family/home, has been treated in detail elsewhere (Farr, 1994).

The Rellglous Dornajo

Literacy practices are an integral part of the religious activities of these families, whether the activities take place within the church proper or within the homes of its members. Almost aH of this literacy, moreover, is in Spanish, and much of it involves the reading, and sometimes writing, of relatively long texts. One older female member of the network is particularly known for her religious faith (although a number of the other women frequently read religious materials as well), and this woman regularly loans books to others that are intended to promote values and understandings encouraged by the church. The Catholic church itself plays an extremely important role in the lives of family members, although it plays a more direct role in the lives of the women and children who participate in church services and other activities at least weekly (and, for sorne members of the network, almost daily). In addition to services on Sunday, sorne members attend a prayer meeting on Tuesday (and sorne other) nights, and each Saturday morning *doctrina* (catechism) classes are held for the children in various church members' homes. During the period of data coHection, the second-grade *doctrina* class was held in the center family's home, and it is this class that I attended regularly one autumn.

Many other religious activities cluster around holidays (e.g., Christmas), and special events are held in members' homes to celebrate the holidays. These phenomena are not only religious events, but literacy events as well, as they are occasions in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of the participants' interactions and their interpretive processes (Heath, 1982). For example, one post-Christmas occasion, *el levantamiento del niño jesús,* or "the putting away of the baby Jesus," is organized partially by a Novena booklet that is in Spanish and was printed in Mexico: *Novena para las Posadas.*

In what follows I describe in somewhat more detail the literacy practices in two religious literacy events-*doctrina* and the *levantamiento*-in order to illustrate the nature of these activities and how literacy is part of the texture of these events.

The *doctrina* class was held from 10:00 a.m. until about 11:30 a.m. on Saturday mornings in the living room of the center family. About 10 children participated, all of whom were in second grade, as was the youngest child of the center family. The furniture was arranged in a rectangle on one side of the living room so that the children sat on sofas and chairs along three sides of the rectangle and the teacher(s) sat or stood along the fourth side, against the wall. *Doctrina* books and pencils from the church were retrieved from the compartment within the coffee table for use during class. The book used, *Creciendo con Jesus (Growing with Jesus),* was a large paperback volume that was printed in both Spanish and English. Lessons each week were structured around the lessons in the book. Classes were very schoollike, with the female teachers (junior and senior high school students who volunteer to do this) clearly assuming authority over the children and the children matter-of-factly accepting this authority. The children were eager participants, frequently asking to read aloud from the book, and shyly but proudly showing their written work to the rest of the class when the teachers brought them up to the front of the class to do so.

Throughout the class, reading and writing occurred continuously, and oral discussion of the written texts (those in the book and those generated by the children) was interwoven with the literacy activities themselves. Discussion centered around interpretation of the written texts. Singing also was an important part of the class, and this usually occurred toward the end of class, in part to keep the increasingly restless children occupied until parents arrived to take them home. Prayers, of course, also were an important part of the class; sometimes they were read from the books, and sometimes they were recited without the books, as there was an emphasis on memorization of such texts to make them a part of oneself.

All language use by the teachers during *doctrina,* whether oral or

written, seemed to be geared toward teaching ethical values associated with Catholicism. For example, before Christmas, one *doctrina* class focused on "doing good" during Advent¡ the children were required as homework for the class to write two lists in an Advent Book *(Libro de Adviento),* which the teachers had made and passed out to each child. One list was for all the good deeds they intended to do during Advent, and the other list was for the good deeds they actually did. The message emphasized by the teachers in this lesson, and the next one in which these lists were reviewed and discussed, was that no one is perfect but everyone is forgivable: We aH try to do our best, but we aH make mistakes¡ God always forgives us when we are *realIy* sorry for what we did (and God will know whether or not we are really sorry in our hearts for our mistakes).

Doctrina class during Advent provides part of the structured celebration of Christmas, both at church and at home. A number of activities take place within homes during this season, including *posadas* (9-day celebrations in which people enact the holy family looking for an inn), the *acostamiento* (rocking and putting the infant Jesus to sleep), and the *levantamiento* (taking him up and putting him away for another year) ceremonies. At home, on Christmas eve, network members participate in a ceremony in which a doll representing the infant Jesus is put to sleep in a manger scene created on one side of the living room. About a month later, they enact the ceremony in which the infant Jesus is taken up from his crib in the manger and put away for another year. 1 describe here one particular *levantamiento* ceremony.

Immediately prior to the *levantamiento* ceremony in the center family's home, the mother retrieved from storage and passed out well-used xeroxed copies of a *Novena* booklet which she herself used during the ceremony. Songs Oyrics only) and prayers to be used during Christmas events, including this one, are printed in the booklet. As in the *doctrina* class, in this religious literacy event the activities were structured in part by print, which was used for praying and singing by the participants. Sorne prayers were read (recited from memory by sorne) together, and others were performed by the mother of the home. For sorne prayers, the mother "read" them verbatim (although it was not an unfamiliar text for her, thus the print seemed to serve to refresh her memory), for others she moved away from the printed text, expanding the prayer with her own formulaic additions. For the songs as well, all the participants clearly knew the parts and used the text to refresh their memories and to include less familiar verses. Other parts of this event, of course, were structured not by the printed booklet, but by custom. For example, at the end, everyone lined up to go up to the baby Jesus doll, which was held by an adult female whose birthday it was, kissed the

doll (which was carefully wiped with a cloth after each kiss), and received a little bag of candy, cookies, and peanuts.

In both of these descriptions of religious literacy events, the literacy practices were so integrated into the events as to be almost invisible. Yet, they were a very important part of the events. They were simply taken for granted as a natural part of the ceremony; no special attention was given them. The same can be said for other religious literacy practices, for example, the occasional reading of religious magazines *(El Centinela, Maryknoll* magazine) that I observed in the homes. This "invisibility," in fact, is descriptive of most of the literacy practices in these families, whether in the religious or other domains. Literacy in the religious domain, however, is unique in two ways: first, the print read or written is almost always in Spanish; and second, it involves the reading and writing of extended texts, for example, books, magazine articles, prayers, and songs. In the other domains either English predominates or both English and Spanish are used, and the written language often consists of short sentences, for example, those used on bureaucratic or commercial forms.

The Commerdal Domaln

In the commercial domain there are four primary areas in which family members use literacy: on the job (for sorne of them, not others), in entrepreneurial business activities (e.g., the selling of items from catalogues and the rental of apartments or rooms within family-owned property), while shopping, and when paying bills. Job literacy is usually in English; entrepreneurial activities utilize both Spanish and English (e.g., the Jafra cosmetics order form is in Spanish, but the bag for sold products is printed in English); shopping involves print in both languages; and bills are usually in English. Biliteracy, then, is generally the norm within the commercial domain.

Literacy demands on the job vary greatly among network members. One person struggles to write reports in English as part of a quality control process in the factory in which she works. A number of the women use no literacy at all as they debone chicken breasts in a poultry factory. Sorne of the men report working from "punch lists" on their jobs; these lists are given to them by supervisors and indicate what work needs to be done-in one case by a team of painters, and in another case by railroad construction workers. The men describe "decoding" the lists using literacy skills, knowledge of English, and on-the-job content knowledge. If they cannot decode the entire list, they ask co-workers for help. Another group of the women in the network work at a warehouse that ships out catalogue orders; they report having to read orders and write, with large markers, on the boxes in which they

gather the items that are ordered. In aH these cases only one person described the literacy demands at work as being difficult for her (the quality control report writer); aH the others seem to be managing weH, regardless of the level of schooling they achieved in Mexico, which varies from no schooling (or a few months), up to graduation from *secundaria.* Most of the older adult network members have fewer than six years of elementary schooling. Nevertheless, virtuaHy aH of them are coping quite weH with the literacy demands on their jobs, which, in sorne cases, are relatively minimal.

Many of the men and women maintain smaH businesses in addition to their jobs. The husband in the center family, for example, rents out apartrnents on the property that they bought; they live in the first floor apartment and rent out three small apartments in a separate building in the back of their property and two apartrnents on the second floor. They also provide living space (for renO to other members of the network who spend sorne time each year working in Chicago. Sorne people divide each year between Chicago (working for pay) and their village in Michoacán; others spend several years at a time working in Chicago. AH, however, return to Mexico whenever they are able to financially and can spare the time from their jobs. Sorne of the families, of course, live and work continuously in Chicago (and own property there), only visiting Mexico when they are able to take the time off from work. These families provide the base from which other kin and *compadres* can live and work when they come to Chicago. Maintaining records for such complicated arrangements requires sorne effort as well as both literacy and mathematics skills; the father in the center family is assisted in this by his eldest daughter, who attends a Chicago public high school.

Many of the women in the network maintain small businesses as authorized representatives of catalogue companies, for example, Tupperware, Stanley home products, and Jafra cosmetics. They sell items from these catalogues to other network members, friends at work, and other acquaintances. Their businesses entail recordkeeping, filling out orders, and exchanging monies as payment for items. Thus, both literacy and mathematics skills are required to maintain these businesses. One woman (the most active in such businesses), when asked whether she used a calculator to do the math, replied that she did not, because, although she had a calculator, one of her daughters always had it when she needed it, leaving her no option but to do the math by hand.

Shopping is another area in the commercial domain in which literacy practices occur. Before going out to shop, network members sometimes read advertising circulars which have been delivered to the house and/or ads in various newspapers (the *Sun Times* which is in English and *La Raza* or other local newspapers which are in Spanish). In

stores they read labels, sometimes thoroughly, as happened one time in an herbal shop where we had stopped to buy tea for health purposes (e.g., to ealm nerves, to al leviate eonstipation).

Final ly, literacy praetiees in the eommercial domain inc1ude the paying of bills. Sorne bills arrive in the man; others, sueh as those from a hospital, are given upon discharge. In the latter case, more than the bill was given upon diseharge; papers that indieated what the patient should or should not do for several weeks, as well as the treatment (inc1uding drugs and injeetions) the patient reeeived while in the hospital, were also given to the patient. Literaey, as wel1 as mathematieal skills, are needed for dealing with al1 sueh papers.

To eonc1ude, network members quite adequately respond to the demands for literacy in the eommercial domain, whether this involves their jobs, their own entrepreneurial aetivities, shopping, or bill paying. In spite of the faet that most members have rather limited sehooling (in U.S. terms), they are quite funetionally literate in the eommercial domain of their own lives.

The Sfafe/Law Domaln

Two primary state institutions have eonsistently made literaey demands, primarily in English, in the lives of these Mexican immigrants: the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and the Internal Revenue Serviee (IRS). The reeent U.S. government's amnesty poliey for undocumented workers provided a proeess by which network members without "green eards" eould obtain legal status within the United States. Having worked in the United States for up to 17 years, virtual1y al1 sueh members had the required written evidenee to prove they were eligible for amnesty. Beeause this poliey took effeet near the beginning of our researeh, we offered to assist members in the amnesty proeess in exehange for their eooperation in our researeh. Specifical1y, we provided a weekly c1ass in the eenter famny's home; this c1ass, led by Juan Guerra and taught as wel1 by Lucía Elías-Olivares and myself, eovered the U.S. civic eontent material to be tested by the INS. We used a list of 100 civic eontent questions developed by Catholie Charities in Chicago (e.g., What do the stars on the U.S. flag mean? Who was the first president of the United States? Who are the senators of your state?) to eover the civic eontent material, and Juan Guerra developed a practice dialogue of an interview in English that was intended to approximate the ultimate INS interview of applieants in order to help network members prepare for the interview.[8]

8We used the materials developed by the Center for Applied Linguistics (see footnote 6) to determine levels of literacy skills.

Prior to the beginning of our in-home class, network members had been attending English classes at a nearby local community organization, and they had planned to attend amnesty classes there as well. Evidence of 40 hours of work in such classes was sufficient to obtain an INS interview and, it was hoped, legal status. Many family members chose to study in our classes, however, and take the optional written exam (passing it was considered equivalent to the 40-hour certificate) prior to the final interview. AH network members who participated in our class passed both the written exam and the interview, thereby attaining legal status.

Occasionally, during the course of the amnesty process, various network members would receive correspondence from the INS regarding their own or a family member's status in the process. This correspondence, like other similar correspondence, often was deciphered fairly well by the recipient, even though most recipients had a limited knowledge of English and only basic literacy skills. Frequently, sometimes to decipher the message, but more often to check on their own understanding of the correspondence, recipients would ask other members of the network with more advanced knowledge of English and literacy to read and interpret the correspondence for them. Usually this meant a teenage member of the network who was attending high school in Chicago (or, in one family, a daughter who was attending college). After our research team became a part of the network (classes rather quickly became social as well as educational events and led to friendship), members asked us to assist in difficult literacy tasks. For example, the print on the INS forms which amnesty applicants had to fill out was extremely tiny and unclear, and even we, supposed experts in literacy, found it difficult to read and respond to the questions.

On other occasions, various network members would receive correspondence from the IRS. In one case in which I was asked to assist, this involved the questioning of a past claim by one of the network members. Again, even a college professor of English found the message confusing, and complying with the demands in the letter necessitated several telephone caHs on my part to the agency in question. Thus, both orallanguage, in English, and literacy, also in English, were required to respond adequately to the demands of this bureaucracy.

To conclude, in this domain as in the commercial domain, network members coped quite well with literacy demands. It could be argued, of course, that they did so with the assistance of university researchers. Yet, there is no doubt that had we not been part of their lives, these families would have coped anyway, using the considerable literacy and English-speaking resources of their social network. The children of the adults who had migrated from Mexico up to 20 years

previously were both bilingual and more literate (more schooled) than their parents and quite capable of handling most institutional literacy demands from the state. If demands arose that they were unable to handle, the social practices of this group would have led members to ask other acquaintances (e.g., at the community organization, or at work) for explanation and assistance. The overall picture, then, is of a social network of families exchanging resources with one another, as well as with others outside the group, in order to survive. And because of this active resourcefulness, they not only survive, but assert control over their own lives.

The Educational Domaln

I include in the educational domain all education-related literacy activities, both those that are part of public institutions, for example, the school and the library, and those that are more personal and informal and that take place in the home. For the most part, these activities utilize English print, although on occasion (e.g., homework for bilingual education in grades K-3) they utilize Spanish print. First, the formal, public aspects of education are described and then the informal practices of various individuals.

Perceptions of education as a public institution have both ideal and real dimensions. The ideal of education is highly valued by these families; this is evident in their respect for educated individuals, their insistence that their children leam, and their seriousness about their own opportunities for leaming. Their real experiences with formal education, in contrast, often are disappointing. For example, one summer a fifth grader in one family began summer school; her teacher had recommended her for a program that would strengthen her English and other skills. The expected teacher for the program, however, whom the child liked very much, decided to go to Mexico for the summer. The replacement summer school teacher, in the child's words, "yelled at them, told them they were already in fifth grade and didn't know how to act, and told them they were dumb." Her mother's comment was, "what's the use of going to school if it makes you so nervous you can't do anything?" She withdrew her daughter from the summer school program and enrolled her, along with four cousins and a younger brother, in the nearby public library summer program, where, the daughter told me, "you read books and then they ask you about them." Unfortunately, she was not very interested in these books, which she said were at the "sixth-grade level" and beyond her understanding.

In spite of such disappointing experiences with formal educational institutions (not aH of their experiences are so negative), the ideal of advancing in formal education remains important. A

particularIy explicit example of this high regard for formal education occurred during dinner in one family's home; one of the mother's six daughters (the third born) was attending college out of town and majoring in psychology. The mother was explaining with manifest approval and admiration how her daughter had, as part of her coursework, counseled a potential suicide victim. 5he had, in fact, talked a woman out of committing suicide. Sorne time later, the police caUed the daughter and asked her to speak again to the woman, who once more was on the verge of committing suicide and who had asked for the daughter. Once again she soothed the suicidal woman with her words and calmed her down. Her mother and a friend who lives with the family were both extremely impressed with and proud about this evento The friend went on to remark how people with education (those who *estudian mucho* or "study a lot") have more ways of treating other people than those, like himself, who are not so educated. "We," he said, "tend simply to dismiss other people sometimes," and he used a gesture indicating such dismissal-an "eh!" and a turned head with a backward wave made with the back of the hand, as if to brush someone away. The mother then added that another of her daughters was also like that; the other daughter she mentioned was, at that time, the only other one with plans for postsecondary education. Thus, formal education is clearIy seen as leading to enhanced abilities and not just academic ones. It is seen as enhancing one's abilities to deal more effectively with people and to handle life's problems.

Another indication of the approbation of formal education is seen in activities focusing on children's homework. Children are regularIy and authoritatively directed to do their homework, and they do so even in the midst of parties (e.g., baby showers with dozens of relatives and friends in the home). At times I have assisted with this homework, often because the children have had difficulty with it and the parents have perceived my visit as an educational opportunity not to be missed. Frequently the problem has been that the child in question did not understand the tasks at hand. Once this involved a worksheet that required her (a) to add suffixes to words to change their part of speech, and (b) to read and comprehend relations of cause and effect. My assistance involved figuring out what was required and explaining and demonstrating the tasks. Once the child (then in fourth grade) understood the tasks, she quickly and readily accomplished them. Had she not completed these tasks, of course, her teacher might have concluded either that she was irresponsible or lazy, or that she was not intelligent enough to do so. In fact, however, the problem was that she did not understand what she was supposed to do. It is possible that the teacher simply passed out the worksheets without explaining how to

complete them¡ it is also possible that she provided an explanation that the child (and probably other children as well) did not understand.

A similar problem occurred sorne months later in another family's home. This time the homework in question was math. It became clear to me while helping two children (one in third and one in fifth grade at the time) that their problems stemmed from not understanding the underlying concepts involved. One of the girls, the fifth grader, evidently had been learning multiplication tables by memorizing columns of figures¡ she had not understood that by adding the number in question to each answer one could anticipate the next answer. For example, 8 x 5 = 40, and 8 x 6 = 48. Adding another 8 to the 40 would result in 48, the same answer as 8 x 6. ConceptuaUy, multiplication tables "work" by adding the number in question to each answer progressively. Again, once I explained this, she caught on quickly. And again, I wondered whether her teacher had explained it this way, or simply had told them to memorize the tables. It is, of course, possible that the teacher did explain it conceptually, but in language (whether 5panish or English) that the child did not understand. In this example, as in the previous one, the children had difficulty doing their homework because they did not understand until the conceptual basis for the work was explained to them at home. Parents, of course, expect such conceptual bases to be provided by teachers at school¡ to the extent that these cases represent a more regularly occurring phenomenon, there is a serious gap between parental expectations and the realities of school. This point is taken up more directly in the conclusion of this chapter.

So far I have described the formal, public aspects of literacy practices within the educational domain. Now I tum to more personal, informal practices which various adult members carry on in their homes. These practices fall into two primary categories: those activities in which adults involve children directIy and those activities which adults carry on themselves, that, it could be argued, impart implicit messages to children about the importance of literacy and leaming.

Two scenes in particular illustrate adult-child literacy activities¡ in both cases, children were practicing writing. In the first case, a 4-year-old boy was sitting on his mother's lap learning to write the letters of the alphabet. His hand held the pencil with which he was writing, and his mother's hand held his hand, guiding it in making the letters. Une by line (on white, lined paper) they wrote each letter of the alphabet many times. In the second scene, a father was supervising two young boys (then in kindergarten) who sat on the floor at his feet, using the coffee table to practice writing their names. These two boys are cousins and share the same first names¡ the father joked to me that they were practicing each other's name. This father, interestingly, learned writing

lfrico, outside of school; his achievement in this regard is described earlier in this chapter. What is striking to me in both of these scenes is the importance attached to writing, such that it requires parental action and direction outside of the children's formal schooling.

Another scene underscores the importance with which writing is regarded. Early in my fieldwork, I asked, during a living room conversation with the father in the example aboye, whether he ever used writing or reading at work. He responded enthusiastically and at length, vehemently explaining that, yes, he did indeed. He summoned his eldest daughter to retrieve sorne papers from a bedroom and displayed them to me. They appeared to be directions for tasks at the railroad construction company where he works. Sorne of the papers were incomprehensible to me, as I did not recognize many of the listed items, although they were written by his boss in English. Each item was simply a few words; none were a complete sentence (nor did they need to be). He interpreted them, however, with on-the-job knowledge; he understood that the listing of a certain item (e.g., a railroad tie in a particular place--so many feet north of a certain location) meant it needed to be repaired or replaced. The father illustrated how he "decoded" the writing on the list (he sounded out a word letter by letter) to understand the referent, then added his on-the-job knowledge to carry out the work. He pointed out that I did not understand the writing on the papers because I did not work there. When we had finished looking over the papers, the father rather ceremoniously returned them to his daughter with instructions to store them again. This way of treating pieces of writing, although not involving parents and children together directIy with print, nonetheless sends yet another implicit message to children about the high regard for writing held by their parents.

In addition to the informal literacy activities which children observe (and implicitIy learn from), a number of the adults in these families from time to time pursue personal literacy activities which advance their own learning. On various occasions I have been shown books that individuals study on their own for a variety of purposes: to learn English, to pass the CEO (high school equivalency) exam, or to pass the citizenship test. These books are primarily in English and are of a variety of types: one household of adult men (whose wives, mothers, and children remained in their village in Mexico, while they worked in Chicago and sent money home) used a rather old U.S. science textbook (entirely in English) for learning English; a *compadre* of the center family who lives in Waukegan, IL (about 1 hour north of Chicago) is admired by many in the network for having taught himself English with an English textbook after he migrated to the United States; a single young woman of 24 uses an excellent, recent edition textbook for Spanish speakers learning English; and a young

married woman who attended sorne elementary school in Chicago (although she finished her schooling at the *secundaría* level in Mexico) has used two books for personal study, one (in Spanish and English) for the U.S. citizenship test (so that her Mexican husband could become a documented resident), and another (in English) for the GED exam.

Thus, in formal and informal ways, both the adults and the children in these families participate in literacy activities that further their educations. The children pursue these activities on a daily basis during the school year and usually in the summer as well, as part of summer school or other institutional programs. The adults direct the children in homework and other literacy practice, and they pursue their own leaming as time permits, either after work or during periods when they are not working (e.g., one young mother studied a citizenship book when she was home from work for a few months following the birth of her daughter). As in the other domains, literacy activities in the educational domain are interwoven throughout their daily lives.

CONCLUSION

The primary goal of this chapter has been to provide a description of literacy within one social network of Mexican immigrant families in Chicago. This description focused, first, on how literacy was leamed by network members, either through formal schooling or "lyrically" outside of school. To leam literacy or other skills *lírico* is to learn informally, without books, that is, purely with spoken language. This process is at heart a social one because the skill that is taught and learned is passed on from one person to another. The fact that these men learned literacy primarily after migrating to Chicago because of "personal obligations" to write to their families and friends back in Mexico indicates that the motivation to learn is a product of contextual factors, not an intrinsic quality which an individual either does or does not possess.

The second aspect of the literacy description provided in this chapter involves the actualliteracy practices of network members within four broad domains. Domains treated in this chapter include those of religion, commerce, the state/law, and education. The first three domains are entirely public; the last domain has both public and private aspects. A fifth domain, that of the family/home which is entirely private, is described elsewhere (Farr, 1994). A primary finding from this description is that literacy practices are abundantly part of the stream of daily life within these families. This literacy is "functional" in the sense that with it, network members cope quite adequately with a variety of institutional demands and pursue personal, economic, and social goals to meet their own needs. Whereas sorne of these individuals do not regularly spend

extensive amounts of time reading or writing entire "extended" texts such as novels or other books, as has been described for sorne mainstream (Heath, 1983; Taylor, 1983) as well as nonmainstream <Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988) groups, many of the women in the oldest generation (between 35 and 55 years old) regularly read religious materials, including magazines, books, and the Bible. AH network members are, however, literate, in that reading and writing, in both Spanish and English, are a regular part of their daily lives. As a network especially, these families are literate; that is, literacy, like other kinds of knowledge, is shared as a resource among the members of the network.

This description is a synchronic one: It focuses on the current lives and the current literacy skills/behaviors of a particular group of people. Such descriptions are important as they provide fuller understandings of what literacy "is" in modern societies and especially because they contribute the perspectives of nonmainstream groups to a broader definition of literacy, as caBed for by Heath (1982).

What implications do these findings have for educational policy? Implications can be discussed for two kinds of educational institutions-those for children (from elementary to high schooD and those for adults. The two examples provided in this chapter of children having difficulty with homework raise sorne serious questions. The children in these families are normal and weH socialized, with an eagerness to learn. Their parents are strictly supportive of formal education and very much "on-the-job" as nurturing, supervising parents. Yet, the children are not learning at their full capacities. It is clear (Goodlad, 1984) that much current instruction, especiaBy in inner-city schools, focuses on rote learning rather than on "higher level" thinking processes. Was the problem demonstrated in these examples caused by higher level thinking not being taught? Both the worksheets and the multiplication assignment required conceptual thinking for completion, but neither of the children understood how to proceed. One explanation is that their teachers did not teach them the underlying concepts they needed to learn in these cases. Another explanation is that the teachers did so, but the communication was not successful, (e.g., these children were able to speak English, but they acquired most of their command of English during the late elementary school years, and fourth grade in particular is difficult because it is the transitíon year from bilingual education, which extends in this case from kindergarten through third grade, to English-only instruction).

Although 1 did not observe the two classrooms in question and so cannot judge their "quality" or effectiveness, sorne tentative conclusions nevertheless can be drawn from these examples. First, when children are being taught "basic skills" such as language structure (the

suffix example), reading (the cause and effect example), and mathematics (the multiplication tables example), they should be taught the relevant underlying concepts, both to learn the current material and to progress to more difficult material. ConsequentIy, more instruction, in the language children know best, should focus on concepts, not just on memorization and rote learning. Goldenberg's (1991) appeal to utilize insights from two oppositional traditions of educational research-skills-based and holistie-might be fruitfully applied here.

Second, facilitating the learning of children such as these warrants improvement *within schools* rather than within homes. Recent calls for "parent involvement" often appear to be attempts to lacate the source of learning problems within families rather than within classrooms and schools. No doubt there are sorne instances in which such an assumption may be accurate, in both inner-city and middle-elass neighborhoods. Too often, however, all inner-city families are presumed to be dysfunctional, or to operate with deficits of sorne sort, and parents increasingly are expected to "become involved," that is, to institute literacy practices in their homes that resemble those of the school (and those of white middle-elass families). For the children whose families 1 have come to know, this is an unfair burden. If the schools were able to achieve at the level of these parents' expectations and trust in formal education, many frequently cited problems in the education of inner-city populations would be well on their way to solution.

The findings reported here have implications for educational institutions serving adults as well. Many of the adults in this social network, especially the younger adults (those in their 20s) have indicated an interest in continuing their educations. They are constrained in doing so by the demands of blue collar work and of their extended households. Such realities often make it difficult for them to attend classes at night on a regular basis; the women, moreover, are reluctant to venture too far from their homes because of dangerous neighborhoods, especially after dark. Nevertheless, many would like to be able to obtain high school equivalency degrees, primarily in the hope that they could then obtain better paying and less physically tiring employment.

Programs that could serve such a population would have several important features, among them an emphasis on (a) developing Spanish-English bilingualism, and (b) practice in reading and writing texts that are relevant to their lives (Farr, 1994; Moll & Diaz, 1987). It is important to note that developing fluency in English would best not be carried out at the expense of Spanish. The bilingual individuals in this network have been able to take advantage of more opportunities than those monolingual in Spanish, and it is their bilingualism, not just their knowledge of English, that has been important in these opportunities.

This finding is corroborated by other research on Mexican-origin populations (Macias, 1985) which indicates that bilingualism has a more positive effect on income than does either Spanish or English monolingualism. Yet other research (discussed in Duran, 1987) clearly suggests, depending on age and other factors, the pedagogical value of beginning literacy practice in the native language of the leamer and later moving to literacy in the second language.

Finally, programs that could be truly useful to populations such as the families discussed in this chapter would seriously take into account their culturally defined attitudes and perceptions, as well as the everyday realities of their Uves. That is, programs should be both culturally and socially sensitive. For example, these adults would not respond positively to a program that placed a high value on promoting individuals at the expense of relationships within the family and the social network. One man described in this chapter refused to read aloud in class at a local community organization. He claimed he could not read, although I observed him reading both silently and aloud later in his home. Also, when publicly asked in the class what he did for a living, he represented himself as a dishwasher when in fact he was the foreman of a railroad construction crew.

A socially sensitive program would take into account the difficulties adults such as those discussed here would have in attending classes at night, particularly if they are located far from home. Whereas sorne men are reluctant to attend classes in public schools because they view them as being for children, sorne women are reluctant to attend classes in community organizations, especially if they are not accompanied by husbands or other family members. Many of these women, however, do go on a regular basis to the local Catholic church at night during the week. A literacy program located within the church, especially if it provided not only instruction for adults, but also assistance for children doing their homework, would appeal greatly to the adults in these families.

In sum, then, the findings from this research can be used to develop or improve literacy programs for similar populations. These programs should be (a) aware of and respectful toward the literacy skills and literate behaviors already used by such adults in the various domains of their lives, (b) supportive of Spanish-English bilingualism and biliteracy, (c) sensitive to the cultural values characteristic of Mexican immigrant populations, (d) sensitive to the social realities of working class jobs and specific neighborhoods, and (e) based on the reading and writing of texts that appeal to learners and are directly relevant to their lives.

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