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Negotiating an Identity to Achieve in English:  
Investigating the Linguistic Identities of Young Language Learners

by

Jennifer Marie Collett

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of

the requirements for the degree of

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in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

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Spring 2014

Negotiating an Identity to Achieve in English:  
Investigating the Linguistic Identities of Young Language Learners

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by Jennifer Marie Collett

## Abstract

### Negotiating an Identity to Achieve in English: Investigation the Linguistic Identities of Young Language Learners

by

Jennifer Marie Collett

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Patricia Baquedano-López, Chair

Qualitative research methods guide the data collection and analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Dyson & Genishi, 2005; Heath & Street, 2008; Schram 2006) of this 18 month study researching the academic lives of 21 Spanish-English language learners classified as *limited English proficient* (LEP) in two urban, elementary school communities. In this dissertation, I argue that language learners in elementary school begin to construct identities with language through the school community resources they are able to access as they participate in school-based activities. These language identities are related to students' engagement and motivation to participate in school, and also hold a relationship with students' language classification status. By triangulating the data of 21 focal students to include: 1) student interviews, 2) observations of students in academic and non-academic school activities, and 3) students' performance on academic tests, findings reveal how all language learners construct one of three language-learning identities – *dual*, *separation*, or *distant* – where a distant identity is associated with students who remain classified LEP or are reclassified as a *long-term English language learner* upon exiting elementary school.

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This study is dedicated to those children who shared their experiences navigating their bilingual worlds ... and to my mom who shared her stories navigating a bilingual world that were a source of inspiration for this study and my career in education.

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## Chapter 1: Negotiating an identity to achieve in English - Investigating the academic lives of young language learners

### Introduction

Learning English as a second language is a complex, academic journey that involves developing an identity to accommodate this new language and culture (Gee, 2001; Ibrahim, 1999; Talmy, 2008; Valdés, 2001). Approximately one million<sup>1</sup> students in California public schools, who are often referred to as English language learners, are going through this journey. English language learners enter the school system speaking a language other than English in the home and are labeled as *limited English proficient* (LEP)<sup>2</sup>. Students who successfully attain a level of academic English proficiency are reclassified as *fluent English proficient* (FEP)<sup>3</sup>, meaning they are fully mainstreamed into academic classes. However, students who are unable to lose these labels before exiting elementary school are reclassified as *long-term English language learners*<sup>4</sup> and tracked in sheltered English classrooms as they move through middle and high school facing increased academic failure and achievement gaps with their more English proficient peers (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Olsen, 1997, 2010; Reardon & Galindo, 2009; Valenzuela, 2001). In this study, I argue that Spanish-English language learners in elementary school begin to construct identities with language through the school community resources they are able to access as they participate in school-based activities. These language identities are related to students' engagement and motivation to participate in school, and also hold a relationship with students' language classification status. By triangulating the data of 21 focal students to include: 1) student interviews, 2) observations of students in academic and non-academic school activities, and 3) students' performance on academic tests, findings reveal how all language learners construct one of three language-learning identities – *dual*, *separation*, and *distant* – where a distant identity is associated with students who remain classified LEP or are reclassified as a *long-term English language learner*.

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<sup>1</sup> In the 2012-2013 school year, nearly 1.3 million students (kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade), or 21.6% of the students enrolled in the California public schools were identified as speaking a language other than English at home (California Department of Education, 2013). Over the past 15 years these statistics have been consistent making California one of the top 5 states with the highest proportion of English language learners. In California the largest percentage of language learners enrolled in public schools have a home language of Spanish, where 84.6% are from Spanish speaking homes (California Department of Education, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> In this dissertation I use the term *language learner* to refer to those students classified as LEP.

<sup>3</sup> Students classified LEP receive an overall score of *Beginning*, *Early Intermediate*, or *Intermediate* on the California English Language Development Test (CELDT). In order to be reclassified to *fluent English proficient* (FEP), students must meet three criteria: (1) Students must receive an overall score of *Early-advanced* or *Advanced* on the CELDT, as well as scoring *Intermediate* on each of the four areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, (2) Student must score *Basic* or above on standardized tests, (3) Students must have teachers' signed consent that the student is performing on grade level.

<sup>4</sup> Students are reclassified as a *long-term English language learner* if they are enrolled in the district for more than five years labeled as *limited English proficient* (LEP).

Two northern California, urban elementary schools located in the same school district were selected as the research sites. Specific protocol was used to select the two schools, Altamont and Lincoln<sup>5</sup>. Both schools have a Spanish Immersion Dual Language Program, which are programs where both English and Spanish are instructional languages<sup>6</sup> (Baker, 2006; Lindholm-Leary, 2001). Dual language programs were selected for two reasons. First, in these programs students are taught in two languages because the students' home language is recognized to be an asset to support learning and literacy development. In addition, students in dual language programs are not isolated from their English dominant peers, but rather placed in classrooms with students who are from Spanish-speaking, English-speaking, or bilingual homes. I thought these two variables in terms of instructional language and differences in students' home language backgrounds would support language learners in constructing a greater range in language identities. Despite the fact that these programs recognize a students' home language to be an asset in learning, some students create a social distance with language learning, become disengaged with school, and are ultimately challenged to lose the linguistic labels first placed on them when they entered the school system. For these students, the ways they are positioned in school to take up an English identity erodes the linguistic resources they initially brought with them into school. In highlighting the case studies of 8 focal students, this dissertation examines the processes of socialization that position students to take up one of three language identities, and the implications these identities have for academic engagement and language development. All focal students are cases of how learning and language identities are informed by each other, meaning that students' learning in school informs their language identity and these identities in turn inform their learning experiences. Findings indicate that schools must be more explicit in supporting and validating a students' language and ethnic identity. While instructional language might be one way to validate a students' linguistic and cultural background, it cannot be reserved as the only means to do so.

Across the two schools, 21 students were selected as focal students. All students entered the public school system and labeled *LEP*, enrolled in a dual language program, and exited their respective schools in May 2013. In triangulating the data collected on the 21 focal students, the study answers the following research questions:

1. What is the range of identities language learners are able to take up while learning two languages in a dual language program in elementary school?
2. In what way are these identities related to important outcomes including:  
a) reclassification, b) academic achievement, and c) social relationships?
3. How do the programs and local school context support the ways in which students are constructing identities?

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<sup>5</sup> School names are pseudonyms.

<sup>6</sup> Spanish Immersion Dual language programs are programs where ideally 1/3 of the students are from Spanish speaking homes, 1/3 of the students are from English speaking homes, and 1/3 of the students are from bilingual Spanish-English speaking homes. Both school sites, Lincoln and Altamont, follow a 90/10, whereas in kindergarten 90% of instruction is in Spanish and 10% is in English. Through the years the percentage of Spanish instruction decreases while English instruction increases until the fourth grade where 50% of instruction is in Spanish and 50% of instruction is in English.

The chapters of the dissertation are outlined below.

- **Chapter 2: Language and identity: A theoretical and empirical literature review**

Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical frameworks and empirical research used to frame this study. The chapter reviews three areas of research including: 1) theoretical and empirical work investigating the relationship between language and identity, 2) sociocultural theories of learning at the intersection of race, ethnicity, and language, 3) bilingual educational policy in the U.S. school system.

- **Chapter 3: Altamont and Lincoln: Investigating language identity in school**

Chapter 3 describes the criteria used to select the two research sites, Altamont and Lincoln elementary school. Each school has an established dual language program to create classrooms of students from different language and ethnic backgrounds. While both school communities are comprised of multi-lingual and multi-ethnic families, they serve as comparative research sites because each school has a unique range of students from varied socioeconomic, linguistic, ethnic, and racial backgrounds. Initially, these research sites were selected because it was believed they would yield a different range of language-learning identities. The chapter moves to describe the criteria used to select the 21 focal students across the two sites. Of greatest importance in the selection criteria was that all students were labeled *LEP* at the beginning of the study. In selecting these focal students, I was able to examine how students are successful or challenged to shed linguistic labels before exiting elementary school. The chapter ends by outlining the qualitative methods used to collect and analyze data, which led to the findings discussed in the analytical chapters that follow.

- **Chapter 4: Language and identity: The role and function of language for language learners**

Chapter 4 outlines the theoretical framework of language-learning identities<sup>7</sup>. The theory of *practice-linked identities* (Nasir & Cooks, 2009) is used to understand how language-learning identities are constructed through the types of community resources students are provided access to in their learning. Language identities are determined by *language function* and *language use*. The function of language is defined by how language structures students' academic experiences, while language use is defined by students' actual use of language. In this chapter, I argue that students construct one of three types of language-learning identities - dual, separation, distant - which shift over time and are related to students' language classification as *limited English proficient* (LEP), *fluent English proficient* (FEP), or *long-term English language learner*. The chapter outlines the

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<sup>7</sup> Language-learning identities and language identities are used throughout the dissertation to refer to students' identities under investigation.

characteristics of the three types of language identities and compares the nuance differences in how these identities function at Lincoln as opposed to Altamont. The chapter begins by examining the community resources, referred to as ideational and relational resources (Nasir & Cooks, 2009), which shape a dual and separation language identity. The chapter concludes by describing how the ideational and relational resources become limitations (Nasir, 2012) in distant language identities, and the relationship these identities hold with students who are challenged to lose the *LEP* classification before exiting elementary school.

- **Chapter 5: Shifts over time: How language identities functioned at Altamont Elementary School**

Chapter 5 argues that Altamont students' participation in school-based activities shapes the types of ideational and relational resources students are able, or not able to access to shape students' language identity. Case studies of 4 of the 15 Altamont focal students are examined to illustrate the characteristics of the three types of language identities – a dual, separation, and distant. In using the experiences of two of these four focal students, the chapter discusses how language identities change over time. Over time, as these students are provided access to different types of ideational and relational resources, they are able to shift between a dual and a separation language identity. As these students are socialized into school the linguistic resources they initially brought with them are not validated or supported, causing students to construct an identity where they are not able to fully acknowledge and use these resources in school. The chapter concludes by highlighting the experiences of two additional focal students to provide evidence in how ideational and relational resources become limitations for students with a distant identity. These limitations impact students' participation and disengagement with learning, and also challenge them to lose the linguistic labels placed upon them when they entered the school district. Students with a distant identity exit elementary school maintaining the label *LEP* or reclassified as a *long-term English language learner*. In highlighting these two students' school experiences, the chapter identifies the processes of socialization that position students with a distant identity to take up an English-only identity, and in doing so force them to create distance with the Spanish identity they initially brought with them into school.

- **Chapter 6: The secret linguistic garden: How social networks at Lincoln supported students' language identities**

Due to demographic and structural differences at Lincoln, six focal students participated in the study. Chapter 6 argues how the social context of Lincoln structures a unique set of school-based activities for students and impacts the types of ideational and relational resources they are able to access, which creates nuanced differences in how separation and distant identities function at Lincoln. Lincoln was selected as a comparative research site because the school is recognized as having one of the highest reclassification rates in the district, but

also has a significant achievement gap between their Latino, language learners and their White, English-dominant peers. In the grade of the focal students there are fewer students who claim to speak Spanish in the home. 27% of Lincoln students identify Spanish to be a language spoken in the home, as oppose to the 87% at Altamont. Due to these variables, six focal students participated in the study because they were the only students classified *LEP*. A fewer percentage of language learners also creates a distinct set of social networks students are able to access impacting how relational and ideational resources function. In this chapter I argue and illustrate through the experiences of four focal students how differences in Lincoln's learning community impacts students' language identities. Findings in Chapter 6 are similar to Chapter 5 in that identities shift over time, and while there is only one student, Roselyn, who exits elementary school reclassified as a *long-term English language learner*, the chapter argues how the social context of Lincoln positions her to take up an identity that distances her from English.

- **Chapter 7: 'I was born here, but I'm Latina not American'– Language learning, ethnicity, and race**

Chapter 7 argues that students' language identities are also connected to issues of ethnicity and race. By presenting data across both schools, the chapter examines how young language learners in elementary schools are beginning to think about who they are ethnically, and how their ethnic identity is related to language use and the function language serves in their learning environments. The chapter argues that early into students' academic career schools become spaces where students learn how to use language, and where students work through who they are ethnically and racially in relation to this language use. Chapter 7 identifies how language learning is a process where all students construct ideas of what it means to be a *Latino/a* and an *American*, and how students position themselves in relation to their English-dominant peers to develop these ideas.

- **Chapter 8: Discussion & Implications**

Chapter 8 discusses the implications this study has on future research and educational policy initiatives that impact young language learners. The chapter argues how schools must be more explicit in supporting and validating a student's linguistic and ethnic identity, and must reevaluate the measures used to support language learners.

## Chapter 2: Language and identity: A theoretical and empirical literature review

### Introduction

English language learners in U.S. public elementary schools are presented with multiple challenges at an early age in their academic careers. These young students must learn a new language of English, and become literate in this new language in order to achieve alongside English dominant peers. This task is not only a linguistic challenge, but also a cultural and social feat as students assimilate into the institution of schooling, which comes with it understanding and mastering a distinct set of cultural norms. For many students, the challenges become too difficult and the labels indicating English proficiency that were first placed on them when they entered the school district follow them to middle and high school. Labels indicating students' English proficiency – *English language learner*, *limited English proficient*, or *long-term English language learner* – create further obstacles for students in high school. National and state reports have identified the ways in which secondary schools face numerous challenges to academically and emotionally support language learners (California Department of Education, 2013; National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). These challenges include a scarcity of qualified teachers, structures of accountability to monitor students' linguistic and academic development, as well as systems of tracking that isolate these students from rigorous academic environments with English dominant peers (Olsen, 2010; The Urban Institute, 2000) and create structures that marginalize these children as they learn in school.

For these reasons, it is important to research the experiences of language learners in elementary school to understand their academic, linguistic and socio-emotional needs so they can successfully shed linguistic labels to be able to fully assimilate into secondary school. Linguistic labels are placed on language learners when they enroll in the school district. Students who enter the California public schools speaking a home language of something other than English are given a test, the *California English Language Development Test* (CELDT) to determine their English proficiency. Students are labeled as *limited English proficient* (LEP), if they receive a certain score on the CELDT. With each year, students are administered the CELDT and those who successfully attain a level of academic English proficiency and receive a certain score on the CELDT are reclassified to *fluent English proficient* (FEP) and mainstreamed into academic classes. However, students who are unable to lose these labels before exiting elementary school are often isolated in sheltered English classrooms as they move through middle and high school, and face increased academic failure and educational gaps with their more English proficient peers as they are reclassified as *long-term English language learners*, carrying now a label to indicate their linguistic history (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Olsen, 1997, 2010; Reardon & Galindo, 2009; Valenzuela, 2001). This study investigates the academic lives of language learners in two urban elementary schools who are on the cusp of reclassification before exiting elementary school and looks at how students construct identity through language and the relationship this identity has on their language classification status.

While there are few studies investigating how classroom practices mediate identity development vis-à-vis language learning for language learners in elementary school,



conclusions from these studies indicate how young learners construct identities that can, but may not always align to their linguistic capabilities, contributing to academic disengagement (Rymes & Pash, 2001; Willet 1995), minimal peer collaboration (Volk & Angelova, 2007) and academic failure (Schaffer & Skinner, 2009). Volk & Angelova's (2007) study of first graders in a Spanish-English dual language program identifies how language mediates peer interactions where the Spanish-dominant students accommodate for the English-dominant students in classroom-based activities. The authors argue that this linguistic accommodation is controlled by the larger language ideologies (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994) of the school and society. These results warrant further research as to how language learners' academic experiences are mediated by larger school structures and ideologies, as well as local interactions with peers and teachers. Research questions guiding this study sought to understand how students construct identities vis-à-vis learning English as a second language in school, and the ways in which these experiences impact academic success. Results indicate that students take up one of three language identities – *dual*, *separation*, or *distant* - as they participate in school-based activities, supporting both academic engagement and disengagement.

The goal of this chapter is to outline the theoretical frameworks guiding this study, and the empirical work this study builds upon. First, I discuss the theories framing this study. These frameworks present definitions and understandings around learning, as well as on the relationship between language and identity. Next, I discuss the empirical work on identity and learning for language learners in U.S. public schools. In order to understand the analytical chapters that follow, the chapter ends by outlining the framework of practice-linked identities (Nasir & Cooks, 2009) guiding data analysis.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Language learning in a social context**

A sociocultural theory of learning is the first theoretical framework guiding this study. From a sociocultural perspective, learning occurs through participation in social activities (Cole, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978), which are part of larger cultural communities (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003; Rogoff, 2003), where changes in participation in these communities support development (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 2003). I use this theoretical perspective to highlight the ways that language learning is connected to the social context.

Vygotsky (1978, 1986) provides important foundational ideas to sociocultural theories of learning. His emphasis on the social construction of learning brought to light the important idea that human interaction supports children's development. Through this theoretical lens, participation with others becomes critical to understand and examine when researching learning. Vygotsky theorized that children's engagement in problem-solving activities with more skilled others supports development and growth. Children's *zones of proximal development* define the developmental space of the problems students can solve independently to those problems that can be solved with more competent others. Rogoff (2003) extends this idea, proposing the need to situate these interactions in the larger social world, which involves the values and goals the institutional structure places on these interactions. Research examining classroom learning must identify these

larger cultural and societal structures guiding students' experience (Moll, 1992). In this study, the sociocultural aspects of student learning that occurs between peer interactions in academic and non-academic activities is documented and analyzed to understand how this guides students' language learning, and how students make sense of themselves as language learners.

Vygotsky (1986) extends his theoretical ideas of how learning is structured through participation in activity by identifying the cultural and social artifacts mediating this process. For him, language is an important artifact mediating participation and human interaction. Vygotsky contends that our minds develop through the ways in which we engage in linguistic interactions. He acknowledges that these linguistic interactions include both those interactions that support the development of the first language, as well as those interactions that develop academic discourses and additional languages thereafter. Theories of language socialization, the second theoretical framework guiding this study, are grounded in how Vygotsky identifies the role language plays in development (Garrett & Baquedano-López, 2002; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). Language socialization scholars recognize language to be a fundamental tool mediating learning. From this perspective, in order to study language learning, the process must be situated in an understanding of the local language practices and how individuals are able to engage in these practices (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986), as well as the nature of the larger institutional discourses structuring these local practices (Garrett & Baquedano-López, 2002). Through this analytical lens, language learning in schools is a dynamic process where students learn how to use language, and where language learning structures how students learn (Baquedano-López & Kattan, 2008; Baquedano-López & Hernandez, 2011; Duff, 2007; Heath, 1983; Phillips, 1983). I use theories of language socialization to structure the classroom observations of the focal students' interactions with others in school-based activities to understand how these local language practices are informing students' language identities and how these identities are in turn informing the local practices.

Theories of language socialization are also influenced by the ideas and theories from Bahktin's (1981) work on speech acts. Drawing from a sociocultural lens, Bahktin believed language, but more specifically discourse, plays a critical role in human interaction, where discourse needs to be examined in the social and historical contexts in which it is used. His work identifies the role that language plays during interaction in that all utterances are *dialogically* linked through past, present and future interactions. He put forth the idea that what one thinks or says is composed of language that has been expressed in past utterances whether those utterances occurred through texts, social groups, or institutions. Speech acts involve and are determined by these multiple utterances, but are also influenced by the social positioning of the interlocutors. In situating the role of context and speech acts and illustrating how utterances are *dialogically* linked, Bahktin identifies the struggle speakers face in finding the appropriate language so that the language, or more specifically the words becomes "one's own" (Bahktin, 1981, p. 293). As I will illustrate in the analytical chapters that follow, many of the focal students in this study struggle to make English their 'own'. It is therefore through this linguistic struggle, which is actualized in the way students are able

to participate in activities (Vygotsky, 1978) within learning communities (Lave & Wenger, 1991), that students are able to construct their language identities. In this dissertation, sociocultural theories of learning and processes of language socialization influenced the research design to collect and analyze data. Data collection was directed at how students use language to engage in activities with peers in their classrooms and non-academic spaces. Participation with peers from varied linguistic, ethnic, and racial backgrounds structures students' experiences, and in turn determines the types of resources (Nasir & Cooks, 2009) students are able to access to construct their language identities. The final theoretical frame used to structure this study was the work on identity processes and its connection to language.

### **Language and identity**

Theory of social identity (Hall, 1990), and more specifically the relationship between language and identity is the third framework guiding this study. Over the past four decades, scholars in second language research, which is often referred to as Second Language Acquisition (SLA)<sup>8</sup> (Kramsch, 2000, 2003; Lemke, 2003; Norton-Pierce, 1995; Norton, 2000; Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000), sociolinguistics (Labov, 1972; Eckert, 2000), linguistics (Bernstein, 1973; Fishman, 1989), and linguistic anthropology (Ochs, 1993) identified how language is a key mediator in the construction of a cultural and social identity.

I want to begin by discussing Norton Pierce's (1995) theory of social identity from SLA research because she identifies the critical role that power plays in the relationship between language and identity by positioning identity in the social context. Through establishing a relationship between social context, resources and investment, Norton Pierce discusses how the social context makes available certain resources to the learner, this in turn determines the learner's investment to learn and use the language. Her framework proposes that an individual's linguistic investment in learning a second language impacts the types of linguistic resources that are presented to the individual, which in turn informs the individual's ability to use and learn the language. In her theory of language learning and identity, she differentiates between a learner's motivation and investment:

[I]nstrumental motivation generally presupposes a unitary, fixed and ahistorical language learner who desires access to the material resources that are privilege of target language speakers. In this view, motivation is a property of the language learner – a fixed personality trait. The notion of investment, on the other hand, attempts to capture the relationship of the language learner to the changing social world. It conceives of the language learner as having a complex social identity and multiple desires. The

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<sup>8</sup> Research in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is separated from research on English language learners. SLA studies the process of learning a second language for primarily adults learning English as a second language, or adults learning a second language where that second language is not the dominant language of the society in which they live. Research on English language learners study children learning English as a second language in U.S. public schools. While the two bodies of research are separated, many of the larger theories of language and identity in SLA research influence my working definitions of identity in the context of language learning.

notion presupposes that when language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with target language speakers but they are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. Thus an investment in the target language is also an investment in a learner's own social identity, an identity which is constantly changing across time and space. (Norton Pierce, 1995, p. 18)

Through her work, Norton Pierce (1995) and Norton (2001) illustrate the role that positioning plays as it applies to language learning in a distinct social context. This positioning recognizes how learners develop language in a political and social world where power dynamics, and the positioning that occurs through these dynamics, influence the learners' experiences and opportunity to use the language, as well as the learner's investment to develop the language.

Norton's (2001) theory of language and identity attends to a larger societal level by identifying how the institutions within society, and more specifically an individuals' position in these institutions determine the types of resources learners have access to and the ways in which this access impacts identity. Hall's (1990) theories of identity also identify the role of positioning, and while his theories are not connected to language per se many of the ideas that he introduces in his work are used to analyze the data in this dissertation. Hall (1990) argues that we need to think of "identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (Hall, 1990, p. 222). Furthermore, identities are dynamic – in that they are 'never complete' - and formed within representation. Identity is produced through representation and involves not only how we represent our cultural selves, but also how others represent these selves through *positioning*. He argues for an understanding of cultural identity to be situated in time and history, to be understood as dynamic and fluid, and to be defined as "not an essence, but a *positioning*" (Hall, 1990, p. 226). In understanding identity as *not an essence*, but rather a *positioning* and a *representation* calls us to question the social and political structures that support this positioning. In later work, Hall (1991) further complicates these ideas by theorizing how identity is constructed through *positioning* and *representation*, but is also established across difference and must be understood as a process that is told from the position of the *Other*. Furthermore, the ways in which we construct understandings of ourselves as individuals is by identifying what we are not. When these ideas are mapped onto learning that happens in school, in order to research students' language identities in school, we must understand students' experiences and the ways students are positioned through learning. In the context of this study, in order to understand the process of identity construction for students learning two languages in elementary school, we must understand the political nature of students' school experiences and the ways they are positioned, and at times marginalized through language.

Gee (2001) defines identity as "being recognized as a certain 'kind of person' in a given context" (Gee, 2001, p. 99). While he does not dispute that each individual has a "core identity" that does not shift across time and place, in his theory he identifies the ways in which elements of one's identity are dependent on sociocultural, historical, and political

factors. Four different ways to view identity are introduced in his theory. Of greatest significance to my work are two of these ways, what he calls an *institution identity* and a *discourse identity*. An *institution identity* is constructed through the position one might hold or one might be assigned, and is created through the authority of the institution. For example, the institution of school has affixed all focal students in this study with the identity as an *English language learner*, or *limited English proficient*, despite the fact that many of them, as well as many members of their community, might disagree with this identity. Findings from this study highlight that in schools the ways in which students engage with learning as they are positioned through language, and how students interact with peers causes students to underwrite this identity of a *limited English proficient* student that the institution of school has placed upon them.

I want to end this section discussing aspects to Ochs's (1993) and Gee's (2001) theories of identity and language learning because their work identifies how local, micro-linguistic interactions shape identity. For Gee, an individual constructs an identity through discourse, or dialogue, and it is through this linguistic interaction where a characteristic, or trait, of an individual is constructed and re-constructed. He refers to this type of identity as a *discourse identity*. Ochs (1993) also situates her theory in the micro-linguistic interactions between individuals, but identifies the need to recognize how these interactions are not only constructed through discourse, but mediated through social acts and social stances. Social acts are linguistic behaviors. Social stances are attitudes or points of view that involve both knowledge and emotion. Social acts and stances are interdependent, meaning they cannot exist in isolation, so that social identities exist at the intersection of social acts and stances. Theories introduced by these two scholars (Gee, 2001; Ochs, 1993) identify the local, discursive processes that mediate the relationship between language and identity and are also the local, discursive processes that are under investigation for this study.

While many scholars made important theoretical contributions to the discussion on language identity, I highlight the ideas of a few key scholars to frame this study. These scholars establish the need to think about identity as a dynamic process that is constructed through representation and investment in larger institutional structures, and mediated by the local, discursive interactions between those individuals positioned in these institutions. Ochs (1993) positions social identities in micro-linguistic interactions in a more localized context, while Norton Pierce (2001) is analyzing the construction of identity through a broader more institutional lens, and Hall (1990) and Gee (2001) draw from both of these ends by establishing a relationship for the local and global in their theories. Theories of identity and language offered by these scholars have important implications for this study investigating the relationship between language and identity for language learners in U.S. public schools. Since the education of language learners is one that is deeply rooted in politics, policy, and power, theories of identity and language from an institutional perspective is necessary to understand the larger political structures influencing students' daily academic experiences. For this study, students' language identities are shaped through their experiences with language that are bounded by multiple spaces in diverse social contexts. At the local level, the home, classroom, and school influence students' academic experiences, and at a more global level the historical

politics of learning English as a second language in the United States (Valdés, 1997) also structures students' learning and process of identity construction. In the following sections, I review empirical studies motivating this current study; this work is focused on investigations of identity and learning, as well as the experiences of language learners in U.S. schools.

## **Research at the intersection of learning, identity, and language**

### **Language learning and language policy**

The education of English language learners in the U.S. is a highly politicized debate, resulting in multiple policy shifts at both federal and state levels over the past four decades, and impacting the programmatic structures of schools (Gutiérrez et al., 2002). For this reason, it is important to situate this study in the larger political context of these policy shifts around learning language in U.S. public schools.

Scholars have argued how larger political movements of colonization and immigration have caused changes in the language orientations and language ideologies of a society (McCarty, 2004; Pennycook, 1998; Phillipson, 1992; Skutnabb-Kangass, 1988; Tsui & Tollefson, 2004; Wiley and Lukes, 1996). Ruiz (1984) defined orientations as “dispositions toward language and its role, and toward languages and their role in society” (p. 16). Much of this work looks at societal dispositions towards language, which can embody orientations that embrace elements of multilingualism to those that are defined by *linguicism*, which is overt discrimination towards non-dominant languages (Phillipson, 1988). In other words, these scholars assert that when we analyze policy and political movements impacting the educational experiences of language learners in U.S. public schools, we must take into account the larger, dominant, societal beliefs around the role that the native language plays for students learning a second language of English in school. The work around orientations and ideologies bring to light the importance and analytical need to position policy shifts in relation to national or community group discourses and belief structures, and to understand the implications this dynamic has on local interactions (Fader, 2001; Field, 2001).

Focusing specifically on language learners in the U.S., scholars argue that the standardization process of testing creates a structure that discriminates against students who lacked proficiency in the standard dialect, specifically racial and linguistic minority groups who speak other legitimate varieties of English (Lippi-Green, 1997; Perry & Delpit, 1998). Scholars analyzing language policy after the Bilingual Education Act<sup>9</sup> analyze how shifts in language policy have taken up multiple orientations, often viewing the student's native language as a deficit or problem. These policy and political movements create the educational programs structuring the experiences of those students learning English as a second language in school (Crawford, 1992a, 1992b, 1995; Gándara & Contreras, 2009). While research has revealed that programs that develop literacy skills in the native language then transferring these skills to the second language are more

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<sup>9</sup> The 1968 Bilingual Education Act was the first piece of federal policy to focus on the learning environments for language minority students, which was the term used to refer to those students who entered the school system speaking a language of something other than English.

effective than traditional bilingual programs,<sup>10</sup> (Lindholm-Leary 2001; Ramírez, Yuen, & Ramey, 1991; Thomas & Collier, 1997), many states have continued to use transitional bilingual programs or English-only programs. In California where this study took place, bilingual education was officially outlawed in 1998 with Proposition 227 impacting both the types of classroom instruction and programmatic structures in the schools (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, & Asato, 2000). Despite this California legislation that placed restrictions on how language can be used in classroom instruction, with parent waivers students can be enrolled in one of several language programs<sup>11</sup> (Baker, 2006), creating multi-linguistic, multi-ethnic, and multi-racial school communities. Due to the linguistic labels placed upon language learners because of language policy, it is important to situate this study in these larger political and policy conversations. As findings from this study illustrate these labels track, isolate, and marginalize the focal students under investigation.

### **Identity and learning**

Before I discuss the literature on identity and learning, I want to briefly review the literature on race and education that support and motivate this study's research methods and questions. Two comprehensive papers review and analyze the general themes and frameworks scholars have used to research and discuss the relationship between race and education (Bartlett, McKinley & Brayboy, 2005; Nasir & Hand, 2006). Several theoretical frameworks have been used to study the role of race in learning, and how race is used to structure the larger institution of school. Both reviews (Bartlett, McKinley & Brayboy, 2005; Nasir & Hand, 2006) cite theories of cultural and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1991), cultural opposition theory, also referred to as "acting white", (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986), and critical race theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) as ways to frame studies and develop understandings on how differences in racial achievement are connected through peer groups (Ferguson, 2000; Horvat & Lewis, 2003), gender (Carter 2005), and social class (Hochschild, 1995).

Research has revealed how school structure and peer culture (Lewis, 2003; Oakes, 2005; Tyson, 2003), teacher beliefs (Sleeter, 1993) and pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1997) contribute to the ways students of various racial, ethnic or cultural backgrounds excel or are marginalized in school. Central in these studies are the ways that African American and Latino students' academic and social identities are defined and constructed through relationships with peers and teachers in the school community (Carter 2005; Davidson, 1996; Ferguson 2000; Horvat & O'Connor, 2006, Nasir, 2012). Students' identities are

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<sup>10</sup> Traditional bilingual programs are also referred to as transitional bilingual models. Transitional bilingual models consist of only students classified as *limited English proficient* who receive instruction in their native language for a designated period of time, typically lasting one to five years, in order to develop the needed literacy and cognitive skills to learn the second language of English (Baker, 2006).

<sup>11</sup> There are multiple types of bilingual programs: 1) Transitional bilingual program (see footnote 4), 2) Maintenance bilingual programs 3) Dual language programs (Two-way immersion programs), 4) English as a second language (ESL) programs, 5) Sheltered English programs. Maintenance bilingual programs and dual language programs use both languages (Spanish and English, in this case) during instruction and the goal is to support students to develop bi-literacy and bilingualism. English as a second language (ESL) and sheltered English programs use English as the only language of instruction, but use specific instructional strategies to support students' English development.

constructed through learning and play a role in their engagement, motivation, and achievement in school. School communities that support academic achievement value students' cultural resources and are places where students can construct diverse identities to support achievement (Carter, 2005; Davidson, 1996; Nasir, McLaughlin, & Jones, 2009). Studies of African American (Carter, 2005; Nasir et al., 2009), and Latino youth (Carter, 2005; Davidson, 1996) examine how the local school can support the relationship between identity and academic achievement by documenting how students negotiate their ethnic and racial identities through daily academic and social interactions. These studies identify the multiple and changing racial and ethnic identities students take up from their learning environment and how this process either supports or restricts academic achievement (Carter, 2005; Davidson, 1996; Nasir & Cooks, 2009; Nasir, Snyder, Shah, & Ross, 2012). This study investigates whether similar processes occur among young Latino youth who are learning how to navigate the cultural and social aspects to school, as well as a new language of English.

### **Language learning in the social context of school**

Ethnographic studies drawing from theories of language socialization (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986)<sup>12</sup> illustrate how language learning is a process where students learn to use language and learn through language. These studies reveal how linguistic variation and linguistic dialects affect language learners' social acceptance in schools, as well as their linguistic development and academic achievement (Heath, 1983; Phillips, 1983; Valenzuela, 1999; Zentella, 1997). For these students, their home language and how they use this home language and English has a relationship with teachers' perceptions of these students as learners, as well as the students' academic experiences and confidence to succeed with an English curriculum (Olsen, 1997; Ryan, 1999). While the majority of these studies reveal how the social context of school can disempower language learners, research has identified how schools can become spaces to support language learners to linguistically and academically succeed (Bartlett & Garcia, 2011). Two schools were selected as research sites for this study because it was believed these schools would support unique academic and linguistic experiences for students, socializing them in spaces where they would be able to take up a range of language identities.

Research documenting the relationship between language and identity development during middle and high school reveals how learning a second language of English is a process whereby students develop transnational identities, linguistic repertoires, and shifting perceptions of what it means to be American (Ibrahim, 1999; Olsen 2001; Talmy, 2008). Studies investigating students learning English as a second language in elementary school reveal how peer interactions determine students' language choices (Tarone & Swain, 1995), and these language choices impact not only students' language use, but also their investment to learn the language (Potowski, 2007). Instruction often impacts students' language use and research has indicated that children in dual language classrooms use considerable amounts of the target language until around fourth and fifth

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<sup>12</sup> For a complete conceptual review of language socialization research in the schools see Baquedano-López, P. & Kattan, S. (2008). Language Socialization in Schools. In P.A. Duff and N.H. Hornberger (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Language and Education* (pp. 161-173).



grades, when they then begin to shift to English (Blanco-Iglesias, Broner, & Tarone, 1995; Met & Lorenz, 1997; Tarone & Swain, 1995). While there are few studies investigating how classroom practices mediate identity development vis-à-vis language learning for bilingual elementary students, conclusions do indicate these young learners construct identities through peer interactions (Volk & Angelova, 2007) that are often divided by gender (MacRuaire, 2011) and do not always align to their linguistic capabilities, contributing to academic disengagement and failure (Rymes & Pash, 2001; Schaffer & Skinner, 2009, Willet 1995). These results warrant further research as to how language learners begin to construct identities vis-à-vis learning English as a second language, and the ways language practices impact students' engagement in school, language development, academic success or academic marginalization, and their ability to lose linguistic labels impeding their academic and linguistic assimilation into school.

By documenting the experiences of 21 students classified LEP, the study investigates how two different elementary schools in the same northern California district structure unique experiences for students to construct language identities. Each school's population includes students from varied language, ethnic, and racial backgrounds, which appeared at first to create structures of diversity in the school community. I use the term *appear* because further analysis reveals that while the schools enroll students from multiple language, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds, students organize themselves along linguistic, racial, ethnic, and economic lines impacting not only their academic experiences, but the language identities students are able to construct through this learning. This theme will be discussed throughout all remaining chapters.

The final section in this chapter will set the stage for the chapters that follow by providing a brief overview of dual language programs in the U.S., the reason why all 21 focal students across the two research sites are enrolled in this program, concluding with the analytical framework on learning and identities that guides the results reported in the four analytical chapters.

### **Analytical framework guiding data collection**

Data collection occurred at two school sites, Lincoln and Altamont elementary school, because of their dual language programs. Dual language programs have been applauded in the literature as the most supportive and productive program for language learners because students' home language of Spanish is understood to be a resource (Ruiz, 1983). The orientation that language is a resource in learning is intended to empower language learners because as Hakuta (1986) writes, "speakers of immigrant languages would be seen as holders of a valuable natural resource to be developed, and they in turn would help in the efforts of monolingual English-speakers to learn their language. At the same time, the English-speakers would be seen as resources for the non-English speakers" (Hakuta, 1986, p. 229). Dual language programs were selected because it was believed the programs would offer a range of students' language identities from identities that supported levels of engagement to disengagement with school.

In dual language programs Spanish and English are used in instruction and students in these classrooms are from linguistically diverse homes that use Spanish and/or English.<sup>13</sup> This composition of linguistic variation also brings with it a level of variation in terms of race, ethnicity, and culture. A central tenet of dual language programs is that language learning is taught through the content areas where both languages play important roles in classroom instruction (Christian, Howard, & Loeb, 2000; Freeman, Freeman & Mercuri, 2005; Genesee, 1987), and the goal is to promote biliteracy, bilingualism, enhance achievement, and foster cross-cultural understanding (Cloud, Genesee, & Hamayan, 2000; Howard, Christian, & Genesee, 2003). For these reasons, dual language programs were selected because it was believed these programs would create an environment for multiple language experiences, affording students to take up a range of language identities that would empower rather than marginalize students.

I want to conclude this chapter describing the analytical framework of *practice-linked identities* (Nasir & Cooks, 2009) guiding data analysis. Building upon Wenger's (1998) framework that learning and identity is situated in specific communities of practice, Nasir and Cooks (2009) identify a relationship between identity and school-based practices. In studying 30 African American high school students' participation in track and field – the practice under investigation – the authors illustrate how students' participation in track and field make available certain resources that students take up to construct their identity. The authors refer to these identities as *practice-linked identities* due to the fact that students construct their identities from the resources they gain access to through participation in the practice of track and field. There are three types of resources supporting these identities: *material*, *relational*, and *ideational* resources. Material resources are the actual material artifacts as well as physical space used to engage in the practice. Relational resources are the relationships that support engagement in the practice. These relationships play a critical role because “as individuals connected to others in the practice, it strengthened their sense of connection to the practice itself, because they come to define themselves as a member of the community” (Nasir & Cooks, 2009, p. 48). Finally, ideational resources are the ideas that participants construct of themselves in the practice, or the ideas that participants construct of the practice itself. The authors clarify how certain events or activities can also be thought of as ideational resources especially when students begin to connect more closely to a particular event. An important contribution from this work is the idea that as students engage in different activities, or practices, they are exposed to specific resources that grow from the activity, and inform not only the role students play in the activity, but also the identity they are able to take up through this role. In later writings, Nasir (2012) brings these ideas of identity and learning to the classroom by illustrating the ways in which resources can become limitations. In doing so she further complicates her theory of *practice-linked identities* by showing how restrictions are placed on students' experiences in school impacting the types of resources they can and cannot access, the identity they are able to take up, which ultimately impacts students' academic engagement.

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<sup>13</sup> Spanish Immersion Dual language programs are programs where ideally 1/3 of the students are from Spanish speaking homes, 1/3 of the students are from English speaking homes, and 1/3 of the students are from bilingual Spanish-English speaking homes.

Using the theory of *practice-linked identities* (Nasir & Cooks, 2009) to frame data analysis, findings illustrate the complex and varied language-learning identities students are able to construct through their learning in dual language programs. The chapters that follow describe in further detail the research methods, how the framework of *practice-linked identities* supports the analysis of collected data, and the findings generated through this analysis.

## **Chapter 3: Altamont and Lincoln: Investigating language identity in school**

### **Introduction**

Findings from this study reveal students' language identities are shaped by their participation in school-based activities. These identities change over time and are dependent on the types of resources students are able to access as they engage in academic and non-academic activities in their school community. Chapter 2 synthesizes the theoretical and empirical work guiding the research design, and this chapter outlines the methods used to collect data on the 21 focal students from the two research sites, Lincoln and Altamont elementary school.

With qualitative research grounded in a sociocultural framework, learning is defined as an activity that is mediated by cultural tools and artifacts and occurs within communities of participants. For the purposes of this study, the cultural tool under investigation is language, and the activities under observation are the academic and non-academic school-based activities structuring students' language use. Documenting and analyzing the interactions of the 21 focal students with peers, friends, and teachers, as well as student interviews where they reflect on these interactions provides data to understand students' language identities. Findings illustrate how these identities change across time and impact students' engagement and participation in school, as well as their language reclassification status. Student interactions are focused on both the academic and non-academic experiences that occur before, during, and after school to capture how participation across multiple social contexts in school informs students' identities. To understand how the larger school functions to structure students' experiences, observations of community meetings, concerts, shows, and festivals also occurred. In order to investigate how the 21 focal students construct an identity with language in school, the study is guided by three main research questions:

1. What is the range of identities language learners are able to take up while learning two languages in a dual language program in elementary school?
2. In what way are these identities related to important outcomes including:  
a) reclassification, b) academic achievement, and c) social relationships?
3. How do the programs and local school context support the ways in which students are constructing identities?

This chapter begins by providing a short description of dual language programs and describes the two research sites, Altamont and Lincoln elementary school. Each school is located in the same northern California, urban school district, but situated in different socioeconomic and ethnic neighborhoods. Since I am working from a sociocultural framework of learning, it is important to begin this chapter by providing a description of each school community and neighborhood. I selected Lincoln and Altamont as the research sites because both schools have an established Spanish dual language program, but there are important differences in regards to each school's demographic and

achievement data. Lincoln has the highest reclassification rate<sup>14</sup> for language learners in the district, and one of the highest academic achievement rates for their Latino youth, but one of the widest achievement gaps between their Anglo and Latino students. Altamont has a large community of language learners across the school, but especially in the grade of the focal students. During the 2007-2008 academic year a large percentage of English-dominant students were enrolled in Lincoln decreasing the enrollment of Spanish-dominant students. As a result, during the academic year focal student were selected, 25% of Lincoln students in the grade under investigation were classified LEP, as opposed to the 55% classified LEP at Altamont. An increase in the percentage of language learners at Altamont also yields ethnic differences among the students. At Lincoln, the families of all 6 focal students are from Mexico, while at Altamont the 15 focal students' families are from multiple countries in Central America, as well as Mexico. Initially, I thought these linguistic and ethnic differences across the school sites would impact the types of relational and ideational resources students would be able to access, which would in turn produce a different range of language identities across the two school communities.

### **Research Site Selection**

The two schools, Lincoln and Altamont were selected as research sites for several reasons. First, the study documents the ways in which language learners construct their linguistic identities in multi-lingual and multi-ethnic academic settings. At both Lincoln and Altamont there are distinct differences across students' ethnic, racial and linguistic backgrounds. These differences are achieved partly through the schools' language programs and the types of students these programs serve. Altamont has three language programs: a Chinese bilingual, a Spanish dual language, and an English-only program. Lincoln has a Spanish dual language and English-only program. A Chinese bilingual program serves students with a home, or a primary, language of Chinese. Classroom instruction occurs in Chinese and English. English-only programs serve students from multiple language backgrounds and instruction occurs in English. Of greatest importance is that each site has an established Spanish dual language program. Spanish dual language programs are referred to as two-way immersion, dual immersion, and two-way bilingual programs (Freeman, Freeman & Mercuri, 2005), but for the purposes of this dissertation and for the sake of simplicity they are referred to as dual language programs.

Initially, I believed differences in students' ethnic, racial, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds in dual language programs would yield a different set of language identities at each school site. In the analytical chapters that follow, I describe how language and ethnicity become the important variables structuring students' relationships with peers, and subsequently their language identities. While there are distinct differences in family's socioeconomic levels across the two school sites, where Lincoln has a greater percentage of White, middle to upper class families, this proves to be less prominent in how students associate with others, and in turn the identities they take up. Due to the fact that students' academic experiences are structured around language, it is not surprising that language and ethnicity become more distinct markers in how students construct their identities.

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<sup>14</sup> A reclassification rate is the percentage of students that were once labeled *limited English proficient* but are no longer affixed with such labels.

Both Altamont and Lincoln have an established dual language program, which was an important variable in site selection. Research identifies how these programs best support English language learners' needs by placing students in linguistically diverse classrooms where students speak a home language of Spanish and/or English (Baker, 2006; Lindholm-Leary, 2001). Dual language programs are composed of students from Spanish speaking, English speaking, and bilingual Spanish-English homes<sup>15</sup>, and instruction in these programs occurs in Spanish and English<sup>16</sup>. As described more thoroughly in the literature review, the structure of dual language programs support a level of linguistic balance among the students in the classroom by integrating students from Spanish, English, and bilingual Spanish-English speaking homes. In addition, instruction occurs in both languages to create an instructional space where neither language dominates instruction. In terms of academic goals, dual language programs seek to create a child who is a balanced bilingual developing full academic proficiency in the two instructional languages of Spanish and English to support bilingualism, biliteracy, and biculturalism (Baker, 2006). Initially, I selected students in dual language programs because I thought the characteristics of these programs would yield a greater range in students' language identities and create structures to prevent students from being marginalized through language. In the end, while both schools adhere to the structures of dual language programs, the schools do not always meet the goal of supporting students to gain academic bilingual proficiency, and students are also marginalized in specific ways through language. Several of the 21 focal students transition to middle school without gaining access to academic proficiency in both languages. As discussed in Chapters 4 - 6, the struggles students face to gain academic proficiency force them to position Spanish and English, and be positioned through these languages in distinct ways, impacting their language identities. The following section provides a description of the neighboring community of each school and then describes the immediate school community and the focal students.

### **The School Neighborhoods: Bay Heights and Valley Stream**

In this section, I provide a short description of the two school neighborhoods, Bay Heights and Valley Stream, in order to situate the schools in their larger social and cultural communities. While many of the Altamont focal students live in the school neighborhood of Valley Stream, all Lincoln focal students commute to its surrounding community of Bay Heights.

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<sup>15</sup> Spanish Immersion Dual language programs are programs where ideally 1/3 of the students are from Spanish speaking homes, 1/3 of the students are from English speaking homes, and 1/3 of the students are from bilingual Spanish-English speaking homes. It is difficult to create this linguistic balance. For example, at Lincoln a greater percentage of students are from English speaking homes, while a greater percentage of students are from Spanish speaking homes at Altamont.

<sup>16</sup> Both Lincoln and Altamont follow a 90/10 model. In kindergarten 90% of instruction is in Spanish and 10% is in English. Through the years, the percentage of Spanish instruction decreases while English instruction increases until the fourth grade where 50% of instruction is in Spanish and 50% of instruction is in English.

### **Lincoln: Bay Heights**

Located less than three miles apart from each other, Lincoln and Altamont are located in strikingly different neighborhoods. Bay Heights is one of the wealthiest neighborhoods in the city. Homes with 3 to 4 bedrooms sell on average for 1.3 – 3.0 million dollars (Zillow.com). In the field note below, I describe the local merchants I observe during a walk down Broadway St., three blocks from Lincoln.

In my walk down Broadway, the main street in Bay Heights, every marquee that I read is in English. I pass a ceramics studio, a bakery, coffee shops that are populated with individuals seated before their laptops with headphones in their ears. I stumble upon a ‘tea room’ where one can customize a pot of tea, a store specializing in chocolate covered deserts, several clothing ‘boutiques’, and high-end restaurants, describing themselves as either *Trattorias* or specializing in ‘Asian Fusion’ cuisine. (Field Note, 2/13/12)

Bay Heights circulates a community newsletter once every two months. In the July-August 2001 publication, Anders (2001) writes one of the feature articles entitled, *Census shows Bay Heights still white as snow*, to report the demographic shifts in the neighborhood by comparing U.S. Census Bureau data from 1990 to 2000. By highlighting how the largest population of residents in the neighborhood identifies as White, Anders (2001) writes, “The neighborhood's overwhelmingly white population was in stark contrast to [the city] as a whole, which became much more ethnically diverse during the '90s” (Anders).<sup>17</sup> These statistics seem to be consistent with a more recent survey conducted by the San Francisco Planning Department (2011) that identifies the two largest ethnic groups of Bay Heights are White, at 77%, and Asian, at 12%. This same survey also indicates English is the language most commonly spoken in the home, where 79% of the Bay Heights residents report living in English-only homes.

### **Altamont: Valley Stream**

Altamont is located in the neighborhood of Valley Stream, which is approximately 3 miles away from Bay Heights. Despite this close proximity the neighborhoods are quite distinct. Some of the differences between the two neighborhoods can be heard on a walk down Washington Drive, which cuts across Valley Stream and is one of the longest streets in the city. Unlike Bay Heights where English is the language dominating communication among those on the streets, English, as well as Spanish and multiple dialects of languages that I cannot identify, can be heard on any one corner in Valley Stream. The field note below from April 12, 2012, captures my observations on a walk down Washington Drive.

The busiest street in Valley Stream, Washington Drive, is approximately 4 blocks from Altamont. This street is one of the longest streets cutting across the entire city. Today, in particular, I paid careful attention during my 10-block walk from the bus stop to the school. Signs or store marquees represent the diversity of languages that can be heard from any street

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<sup>17</sup> (<http://www.noevalleyvoice.com/2001/July-August/Cens.html>)

corner. Within two blocks I pass a large market, 'Loma Produce'. In front of the store there are bins filled with avocados, oranges, Jicama, Yucca, bananas. Pupuseria, Taquería, cafés, Laundromats, bodegas, hair salons with pictures of styles for both men and women, dress stores advertising sales for communions, confirmations, and quinceañeras. Some buildings are vacant and left unmarked, or I suppose marked by the remains of the store that once stood. (Field Note, 4/12/12)

Data from surveys conducted by the San Francisco Planning Department (2011) reveals the three largest ethnic groups in Valley Stream to be Asian (49%), Latino (30%), and White (26%). Residents' home languages mirror these statistics where 39% of the homes speak an Asian or Pacific Islander language, 29% of the residents are English speaking homes, and 26% of the homes are reported to be Spanish speaking.

This section provides a short description of the larger school communities of Bay Heights and Valley Stream in order to highlight the ethnic, racial and linguistic differences across the two neighborhoods. In many ways, these neighborhoods represent the same differences that exist across the two school sites.

### **Research Sites: Lincoln and Altamont Elementary School**

Ethnographic and qualitative research methods guide data collection and analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Dyson & Genishi, 2005; Heath & Street, 2008; Schram 2006). The primary research lens is focused on the focal students, but the two schools, Lincoln and Altamont, are individual 'cases' of two larger case studies (Yin, 2003). In order to better understand the larger school community structuring the focal students' academic experiences, I interview teachers, staff, and active community members, about the achievements and struggles of their school. In order to collect data on the demographics of each school, I collect artifacts and enrollment statistics indicating students' home language and ethnicity. Since district documents do not disaggregate data by grade level, I survey all students in the classrooms of the 21 focal students regarding their home language to provide a more accurate portrait of the linguistic differences among students in the fourth and fifth grade at each school. By drawing upon these data points this section provides a comprehensive description of each school community.

### **Linguistic and ethnic divisions across the research sites**

Altamont and Lincoln were selected as research sites because both schools enroll students across multiple ethnic, racial, and linguistic backgrounds. However, while students' varied backgrounds create multiple differences across students and families in the school community, these differences operate in distinct ways. I purposely use the term divisions, as opposed to diversity, in this section because while each school is composed of students from multiple language and ethnic backgrounds, these markers become points of division across the student population. By the fourth grade, the grade the focal students were in when observations began, students group themselves by language, which in turn impacts the ethnic and racial divisions across students' social networks. For some focal students, there is minimal contact with those students who do not share a home language or a similar ethnic background, and the teacher typically imposes the contact that does occur in academic settings. As a result, the divisions created through students' social networks



support the types of friendships students create and do not create, which in turn impacts the students' relational resources informing their language identity. For this reason, I'm careful to use the term differences and divisions, in lieu of diversity.

Differences across the school community are represented in socioeconomics, language, ethnicity, and race. Language and ethnicity become the two variables structuring students' interactions with others, which in turn impacts their language identities. At Altamont, the language programs<sup>18</sup> and students' home language divides students into social networks, these networks determine who the students eat lunch with and play with at recess. At Lincoln, the language programs do not necessarily divide students by language and ethnicity, but socioeconomics is a factor determining who students spend time with during lunch, recess, and after school, which subsequently divides students by language, ethnicity, and race. Table 1 represents the three largest ethnic groups at Lincoln and Altamont<sup>19</sup> from Fall 2012, 6 months into the study. It is important to note that while these statistics represent information from surveys parents completed on their child's ethnicity, in the following analytical chapters I complicate this data by discussing how students make sense of their identities as bilingual, Latino students.

Lincoln		Altamont	
Latino	42%	Latino	55.7%
Other White/ Caucasian	40.1%	Chinese	27.2%
African American	4.6%	Other White/ Caucasian	7.9%

**Table 1. Three largest ethnic groups across Altamont and Lincoln**

As the table indicates, Latino and Other White/Caucasian are the two largest ethnic groups at Lincoln, while Altamont's two largest ethnic groups are Latino and Chinese. In Fall 2012, 25.3% of the students at Lincoln are identified limited English proficient (LEP),<sup>20</sup> while 54.9% of the Altamont student population is identified as LEP. Each school's ethnic breakdown can be partly explained by the school's language program. Altamont has a Chinese bilingual, Spanish dual language, and English-only program. Lincoln has the two latter programs.

### **Home language classification**

Each school attracts families who speak one of multiple languages and from varied ethnic backgrounds. Upon enrolling a child in the school system, each caregiver/parent must complete a home language survey. The survey asks the parent/caregiver to identify their child's home language and includes the following 4 questions:

<sup>18</sup> Altamont's three language programs are a Chinese bilingual program, a Spanish dual language program, and an English-only program.

<sup>19</sup> Upon enrolling a child in the school district, the parent/caregiver is asked to identify the ethnicity of the child by choosing among several different ethnic groups.

<sup>20</sup> *Limited English proficient (LEP)* is the label on district documents. However, the term *English language learners (ELL)* is also a label the school district uses, and the label that all classroom teachers use in conversation about the focal students.

1. Which language did your child learn when he/she first began to talk?
2. Which language does your child most frequently speak at home?
3. Which language do you (the parents or guardians) most frequently use when speaking with your child?
4. Which language is most often spoken by adults in the home? (parents, guardians, grandparents, or any other adults)

If the parent or caregiver answers something other than English to one of these questions, the child is given the exam, California English Language Development Test (CELDT)<sup>21</sup>, to determine English proficiency. Students are classified *limited English proficient* (LEP) if they receive an overall score of *Beginning*, *Early Intermediate*, or *Intermediate* on the CELDT. In order to be reclassified to *fluent English proficient* (FEP), meaning that students are no longer affixed with linguistic labels, students must meet three criteria:

- (1) Students must receive an overall score of 'Early-advanced' or 'Advanced' on the CELDT, as well as scoring 'Intermediate' on each of the four areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- (2) Student must score 'Basic' or above on standardized tests.
- (3) Students must have teachers' signed consent that the student is performing on grade level with the coursework.

When the study began, all 21 participating focal students were labeled LEP, although teachers and staff commonly use the term *English language learners*<sup>22</sup> (ELL). At the beginning of the study, while all focal students are labeled LEP, they are at later stages in their English language development meaning they are able to communicate fluently in English, but need support in reading and writing. District documents refer to these students as *developing* English language learners, rather than *limited* English language learners. I purposely invited focal students labeled as *developing*, meaning they scored *intermediate* on the CELDT, because I am investigating students who are at a critical juncture in their academic lives as they are on the cusp of being labeled a *long-term English language learner* upon entering middle school. Research of *long-term English language learners* in middle and high school reveal how students are marginalized through systems of tracking and isolation and limit future academic opportunities (Olsen, 1997; Valenzuela, 1999). In this study, focal student selection is focused on *developing* LEP students and the research design utilizes methods to complicate how learning a language also involves constructing an identity with the language. For these students, their experiences learning English in school plays a critical role in shaping the language identities students are able to take up, impacting how they engage with school, and their success in getting reclassified.

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<sup>21</sup> The CELDT has four parts: listening, speaking, reading and writing. After taking the test, students receive a score for each section as well as an overall score. Students receive one of five individual and overall scores: 1) Beginning, 2) Early Intermediate, 3) Intermediate, 4) Early Advanced, or 5) Advanced. The CELDT (California English Language Development Test) is a test administered each Fall to all students labeled LEP.

<sup>22</sup> The literature refers to these students as English language learners, but official district documents label these students LEP.

### **Focal student selection**

In this last section, I identify criteria used to select the focal students and then use data to represent the linguistic differences in the classrooms of the 21 focal students across the two schools. Since all focal students are enrolled in the fourth and fifth grade dual language program, it is important to understand the linguistic differences across the students in these two grades and in this program.

During the first eight months of the study, specific criteria were used to select the focal students. At the beginning of the study, all students were labeled LEP, with strong listening and speaking skills in English and struggled more with reading and writing. School records and initial observations were used to select students. School records indicate that all parents/caregivers of the focal students identify them as Latino, *developing* LEP, and at similar points in their Spanish and English language development. Differences across the focal students are related to how students engage with school and the identities they construct through their academic experiences. These differences surface during data collection and will be discussed in later chapters.

Selecting students to participate in the project occurs at two different points during the project's tenure. In December 2011 with CPHS approval, I selected a fourth-grade classroom at each school to observe. Initial student selection occurred by choosing the LEP students enrolled in this fourth grade classroom, so that students could be observed for more than one academic year. At each school there were additional fourth grade students enrolled in a split, fourth/fifth grade classroom to reduce class size, but during this initial year of data collection it was important to select the classroom composed of only fourth graders for two reasons. First, selecting all students in one classroom focused my classroom observations to one academic space so I could collect a significant amount of data on students' participation in academic activities as they interacted with English and Spanish-dominant peers. In addition, focusing my observations on one classroom provided me time to get to know the focal students, and observe them in non-academic activities outside the classroom. During this first 6 months of data collection, I selected a total of 17 focal students, 11 Altamont and 6 Lincoln students. All students volunteered to participate in the study.

In August 2012, changes in the language programs and student enrollment across the schools impact the focal students participating in the study. During the 2012-2013 academic year, there was a programmatic shift at Altamont resulting in three mixed classrooms of fourth and fifth graders. These programmatic changes meant that the focal students were no longer in the same classroom. At Altamont, since students were more familiar with the goals of the study and my presence in the school community, several students approached me to participate in the study. In the case of one student, Joshua, his teacher asked me to invite him into the study because he was struggling both academically and socially in school, and the teacher believed the interviews would provide him time to reflect on his school experiences. Since I was more familiar with the Altamont community and approached by both teachers and students, I was motivated to invite all remaining students who fit the criteria to participate in the study. In the end, four additional students entered the study increasing the number of focal students to 15.

Three students were not interested in participating in interviews, which resulted in my sample size to be 83% of the total number of Altamont students classified LEP. Changes in the student participants at Lincoln did not shift the number of participants, but rather the individual students participating in the study. Two focal students transferred to a local charter school so I invited the two remaining students classified LEP to participate in the study, maintaining the number of focal students to 6. This number represented 100% of those students who fit the selection criteria. With these changes, there are a total of 21 focal student participants, 6 students attend Lincoln and 15 students attend Altamont. All focal students meet the following criteria:

- a) Students are from Spanish speaking homes
- b) Students are enrolled in dual language programs
- c) Students were immigrants or first-generation immigrants from Central America or Mexico
- d) Students receive free or reduced lunch
- e) Students are classified at 'intermediate level' *limited English proficient (LEP)*

### **Home language differences across focal students**

Students' home language is an indicator of how students create their social networks in school, and often determines how students use language among friends in non-academic activities. District data does not provide the breakdown of students' home language by grade, so I surveyed all 145 students enrolled in the fourth and fifth grade dual language program across the two Lincoln and Altamont since some focal students are enrolled in a split, fourth-fifth grade classroom. Each student surveyed is asked the question, *what language do you use at home, or when you are not at school?* If a student's response is that both Spanish and English is used, I ask the student to identify what language they use with each individual in their home, and the language they use more frequently. These responses are one representation of the linguistic differences across student population at each school. The responses are discussed below.

### **Altamont Elementary School**

Since all Altamont focal students are enrolled in one of three dual language classrooms with students in both the fourth and fifth grade, it is important to understand differences among students' home languages across these two grades. All 76 Altamont students in the fourth and fifth grade, dual language program are asked the questions outlined above. The table below represents students' responses and identifies the percentages of students' dominant, home language. Data was gathered in September 2012, during non-academic times of recess or lunch. When data was collected, all focal students were fifth graders and enrolled in classrooms with fourth and fifth graders. For this reason, the table disaggregates fifth graders from the total number of students surveyed. It is important to note that focal students are in class with fourth graders, but during non-academic times of recess and lunch students primarily interact with peers in their grade. All 76 students' responses, including the 15 focal students, are represented in Table 2.

<b>Language</b>	<b>Fifth grade ONLY (33 students)</b>	<b>Fourth &amp; Fifth grade (43 students)</b>
Spanish	61.29%	51.4%
English	12.90%	27.78%
Spanish/English	25.81%	22.22%

**Table 2. Home language differences, Altamont, 2012-2013**

When students tell me they speak both Spanish and English in the home, they are questioned which language they speak more frequently. All students share they speak more Spanish, clarifying that English is used primarily to communicate with siblings and cousins. Spanish, to varying degrees, is a language used by the majority of 5<sup>th</sup> grade students. During data collection, 55% of the fifth graders are classified LEP, however as the table indicates approximately 87% of the students report they speak Spanish outside of school, meaning that these students were once classified LEP, but reclassified, or come from bilingual backgrounds. This data represents the differences across students' language backgrounds, and indicates how Spanish is the dominant language among the fifth grade students. This is not the case for those students attending Lincoln, where the percentage of classified LEP students is almost equivalent to those students who report speaking Spanish in the home.

### **Lincoln Elementary School**

English is the language used by the majority of fifth graders at Lincoln. Program structures at Lincoln are slightly different than Altamont's structures. Lincoln has 1 fifth grade dual language classroom, and during the 2012-2013 academic year, the second year of data collection, five of the six focal students are enrolled in this fifth grade classroom. To reduce class size, the remaining focal student, Roselyn, is placed in a fourth grade classroom with five of her fifth grade peers. Of these fifth graders enrolled in a fourth grade classroom, Roselyn is the only student classified LEP, as well as the only student from a Spanish-dominant home. Table 3 represents the linguistic breakdown of those fourth and fifth grade students. Similar to Altamont, data is generated by asking students at recess the language they speak at home.

<b>Language</b>	<b>Fifth grade ONLY (33 students)</b>	<b>Fourth grade ONLY (36 students)</b>
Spanish	27%	42%
English	73%	53%
Spanish/English	0%	5%

**Table 3. Home language differences, Lincoln, 2012-2013**

At Lincoln, a greater percentage of fifth grade students speak English in the home. English is the language used in 73% of the homes, and Spanish is spoken in the remaining 27%. There are also no students who claim to use both Spanish and English in the home. The linguistic breakdown of the fourth graders is inserted in the table because 1 focal student, Roselyn, is in a classroom where the majority of students are fourth graders. It is important to note that Roselyn's five fifth grade classroom peers identify English to be their home language. While Roselyn is in a classroom with a greater percentage of Spanish-dominant students, all of these students are fourth graders, who

she interacts with minimally. Unlike Altamont, English is the language used among the majority of fifth grade students. Chapter 5 discusses how this linguistic breakdown mediates students' social networks, and subsequently structures their relationships with peers and friends, or the relational resources informing students' language identities.

In summary, this study investigates the experiences of 21 focal students across two schools to understand students' participation in academic and non-academic school-based activities, and how this participation in the school community provides students with a certain set of resources to inform their language identities. Language is the focus of students' identities under investigation because all focal students are classified LEP and in dual language programs. In the analytical chapters that follow, I argue that the types of community resources students were able to access through participation in school-based activities informs the types of language identities students are able to construct. Language identities have a relationship in students' language classification status, and the success they have in losing the LEP classification so they are not reclassified as *long-term English language learners*. These identities are informed by how students use language to participate with peers and friends in school-based activities, as well as how students perceive the function each language serves in their academic and personal lives. Before moving to the final section in this chapter where I discuss data collection and coding, I want to return to the research questions guiding the study.

1. What is the range of identities language learners are able to take up while learning two languages in a dual language program in elementary school?
2. In what way are these identities related to important outcomes including:  
a) reclassification, b) academic achievement, and c) social relationships?
3. How do the programs and local school context support the ways in which students are constructing identities?

## **Data Collection and Analysis**

### **Data Collection**

An ethnographic, case study approach is used to understand the 21 focal students' language use and their beliefs about themselves as language learners. Data collection methods include: 1) structured and semi-structured interviews with the focal students, 2) formal observations of the focal students in academic and non-academic settings, 3) collecting students' educational artifacts including school documents, student work, and performance on state tests, and 4) teachers' interviews on focal students' academic and social progress.

To answer the first research question, *what is the range of identities language learners are able to take up while learning two languages in a dual language program in elementary school*, formal interviews are conducted with each focal student 2 to 4 times during the study. Interviews occur during three different time periods<sup>23</sup>. During April and May 2012, and then again from November 2012 to January 2013, and a final round of

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<sup>23</sup> All focal student interviews are located in Appendix A, Focal Students Across Schools.

interviews occurs from March to May 2013 before students exit elementary school.<sup>24</sup> All interviews are transcribed and coded using Dedoose<sup>TM</sup> and Microsoft Excel. Codes and the coding process used to identify the types of language identities that surface from the interviews will be discussed in the following section.

To answer the second research question, *in what way are students identities related to important outcomes including: a) reclassification, b) academic achievement, and c) social relationships*, data is collected on students' academic progress and educational artifacts of writing samples, reading records, and performance on standardized tests. This data provides information about how students' English literacy skills are developing, students' LEP classification or reclassification status, and additional academic evidence to understand why students are either successful or challenged in losing these linguistic labels. To understand how language identities are related to social relationships, observations of student participation with their peers and friends occur weekly or bi-weekly, and field notes are generated from these observations. From December 2012 through May 2013, Lincoln students are observed for approximately 324 hours, and approximately 262 hours are spent on Altamont's campus observing students. Each day that is spent at a school site, observational field notes are generated within 24 hours. These field notes document student participation in academic and non-academic activities. Academic activities occur primarily in the classroom during instruction of all content areas in Spanish and English. Non-academic activities occur during lunch and recess, and this provides data on how students organize themselves in social networks, or what is also understood to be students' friend groups. Field notes are organized first by school and then by focal student, and serve as data points to identify how and with whom students are interacting with in and outside of class, and the languages they use during these interactions. Data generated from observational field notes is also used to answer the third research question, *how do the programs and local school context support the ways in which students are constructing identities?*

### **Coding & Analysis: Chapters 4, 5 & 6**

In Chapters 4, 5 and 6 I argue students' participation in school-based activities provides, or denies, them access to two types of community resources, ideational and relational resources, which inform their language identities. Findings reveal how language identities are fluid and dynamic as they change over time. Students construct one of three language identities – dual, separation, or distant – through their participation with peers, teachers, and friends in school-based activities. Across the two schools, these language identities function in slightly different ways, however consistent across both schools is the relationship between a distant identity and a students' language classification status. All students who construct a distant language identity during at least one point in the study's tenure exit elementary school maintaining the LEP classification or are reclassified as *long-term English language learners* because they are enrolled in the school for five academic years. This section outlines the methods used to arrive at these findings.

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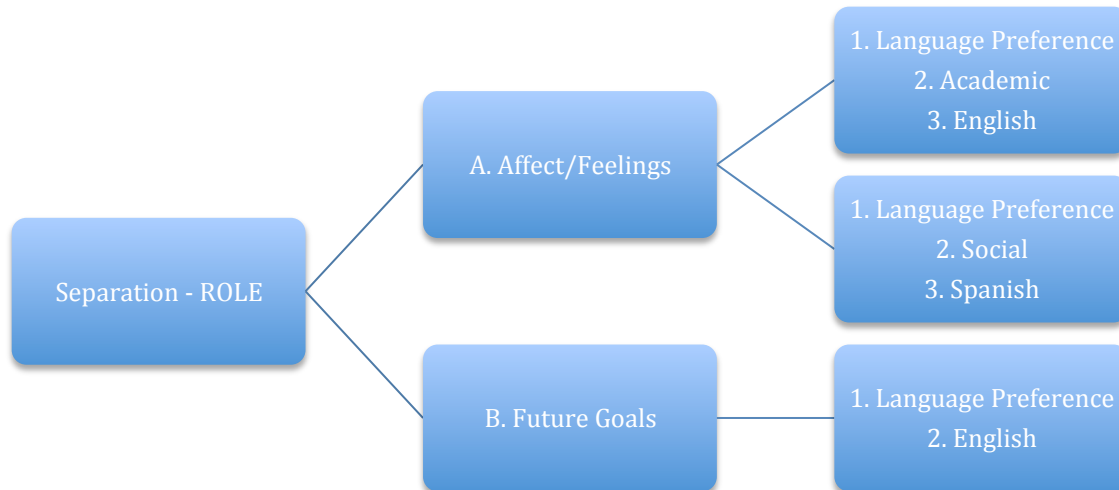
<sup>24</sup> All protocols used to structure and guide the student interviews are in the appendix. Tables outlining when each focal student completed the interviews is also located in the Appendix.

Data from student interviews, field notes, and academic achievement records are triangulated to generate the findings discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. First, attribute codes (Saldaña, 2013) are applied to all district documents. These codes identify each focal student's language proficiency, scores on state exams, home language, gender, and school placements. Student interviews and student field notes of their participation in school-based activities also serve as important data points. All interviews are coded using qualitative research software, Dedoose<sup>TM</sup>, as well as Microsoft Excel.

Interviews are coded in two cycles (Saldaña, 2013). During the first coding cycle three different elemental coding methods are used including descriptive coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994), structural coding (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012; Namey, Guest, Thairu, & Johnson, 2008), and in vivo coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In order to unearth themes and connections across the data during the first coding cycle, analytical memos are written each time a new coding method is employed. The first round of coding involves descriptive coding, where the categories and codes summarize in a short word or phrase the focus of an interview excerpt. Examples of these codes include: family, friends/friend group, academic strengths, language preference, educational goals, and school background. This first round of coding organizes data into large sub-sections. The second round of coding uses structural codes. Structural codes are more closely aligned to the research questions. During this iteration of coding many of the descriptive codes are coded simultaneously with new codes. For example, for the code *'family'*, the passage is coded again to indicate the language used when communicating with family, as well as students' preference in language use if this is different from actual language use. The final iteration in this first cycle of coding includes in vivo codes. In vivo codes capture the language the students use in their interviews. For example, *'we all speak Spanish'* and *'we all like being with each other'* are two in vivo codes from an excerpt that is previously coded *'friends/friend group'*, *'Spanish speakers'*, and *'Spanish'* in prior iterations of coding.

In reviewing and analyzing the analytical memos, I am able to generate interrelated themes across the data and collapse the codes used during the first round of coding. Through this process, the larger themes now driving the coding process is the role and function languages serve in the focal students' lives. During the second cycle of coding a system of axial coding (Charmaz, 2006) is used to collapse codes and reorganize the data so that these collapsed codes create larger categories to identify connections across the data. For example, through this process of collapsing the codes, the *'separation'* code is created. The *'separation'* code provides a connection between several sets of codes from the first cycle of coding. The codes *'affect/feeling'* and *'educational goals'* are combined with *'language preference'*, *'academic'*, *'social'*, *'Spanish'* and *'English'* to create the *'separation'* code. Below Figure 1 is an example of a hierarchy chart to illustrate the ways in which categories emerge during this second cycle of coding.





**Figure 1. Second coding cycle hierarchy**

The 38 codes used during the first cycle of coding are collapsed or eliminated, resulting in a total of eight codes that are used during the second cycle of coding. The interviews are first separated by school, and then by student. Each set of student interviews are coded at one time, where an analytical memo is written immediately after the coding to highlight and identify change across time. The field notes about this specific student, as well as teachers' reflections on the student are also coded. Through this process, data is triangulated across student interviews, teacher interviews, and field notes. During this second cycle of coding, I return to theories of identity development and build upon the ideas of ideational and relational resources in practice-linked identities (Nasir, 2012; Nasir & Cooks, 2009) to apply the theory to language learning among elementary school students. Chapters 4 - 6 discuss how data from this dissertation builds upon this theory to generate the three different types of language identities: dual, separation, and distant language identity. Analysis of the findings from Altamont and Lincoln are separated in Chapters 5 and 6 because there are differences in how these language identities function across the schools.

### **Coding & Analysis: Chapter 7**

I am interested in understanding the relationship between students' language identity, the school context, and their ethnic identities. I thought there would be a relationship between these three variables, and while no consistent relationship emerges between students' language identity and understandings of their racial and ethnic selves, students' understandings of ethnic categories do emerge from the data. It is important to understand how students' understandings emerge because this data reveals how students are comparing themselves to their peers and this becomes a partial explanation of why there are divisions among students across social networks. In addition, the focal students' ethnic identities of themselves and their peers illustrate the different ways students are socialized into the school context of Lincoln and Altamont. For all focal students their understandings of ethnicity are closely tied to place of birth. As a result, I control for place of birth and analyze only interviews of those focal students who are born in the United States. Two students are not included in this analysis because they are born in Mexico, reducing the student sample size from 19 of the 21 focal students.

A slightly modified coding process is used to analyze the data in Chapter 7. After completing the first cycle of coding explained above, there are 14 structural codes that identify aspects to the racial and ethnic categories students reveal in the interviews. Before beginning the second cycle of coding for these 14 structural codes to arrive at the findings discussed in Chapter 7, data is first organized by student. Analytical memos are written to synthesize themes across each set of student interviews. After reviewing these analytical memos, the fourteen structural codes are collapsed into three emerging themes about students' understandings of race and ethnicity. These three themes include students' definitions of a: 1) Latino, 2) Latino/a- American, and 3) American. During the second cycle of coding, student interviews are recoded and analytical memos are written after each set of student interviews. Chapter 7 discusses the patterns that emerge in how students are developing their understandings of identity at the intersection of ethnicity, race, and language.

### **Research Positionality**

With all types of research, the researcher's lens impacts the data collection and analysis. With qualitative research, it is important to reflect on how the researcher's presence may interrupt the day-to-day interactions under observation, the interview process, and the relationships with participants. In this final section, I discuss the ways in which I was aware of the position I held as a researcher, how I maintained this level of awareness, and how I structured data collection to minimize the impact my position may have had on all aspects of data collection and analysis.

Relationships are critical in qualitative research. The researcher must establish a level of trust with the participants in the community, while maintaining their role as a researcher who is somewhat removed from the community. In many respects the role of the qualitative researcher contradicts itself in that trust with participants must be established while creating and sustaining a level of emotional distance to preserve a neutral research lens. In order to develop a relationship with participants at the two school sites, I was in the schools for 6 months before I began formal data collection. This process of developing relationships looked quite different across schools.

At Altamont, five years prior to the study I was a fourth and fifth grade literacy teacher. There were considerable changes to the staff during the five years when I left the school as a teacher and returned as a researcher. As a result, all teachers I had previously worked with as a literacy specialist had either left the school or taught in a different grade and therefore were not focal participants in the study. My presence as a former teacher at Altamont provided me with a level of credibility to the teachers that I held knowledge and expertise in working with language learners. Since the teachers were aware of my prior work, on occasion they would ask for my opinion and possible intervention strategies regarding a student's reading and writing development. All of these conversations occurred after school. During school and in the classroom, I assumed the role of a researcher observing the focal students of the study. Teachers were extremely accepting of this role and my research goals. As a result, in class the teachers treated me not as a teacher, nor an assistant, but as a researcher who was there to observe students.

The classroom teachers taught and interacted with students paying little attention to my actions. Similarly, students paid little attention to me in class. I did not begin audiotaping lessons until the majority of students completed their first round of interviews, so the students in many ways associated me with the audio-recorder and said little when I placed it on or near their desks to record a conversation in class.

At Lincoln, the dynamics were slightly different because I had no relationship with the school until I began informal observations for this study. Lincoln's school community was different from Altamont's in that there were more parent volunteers and student teachers in the classrooms. While students and classroom teachers were accustomed to having visitors in the classroom, these visitors assisted and engaged in lessons. For this reason, it took a longer period of time to assume the role of a researcher and observer. In the end my role as an observer at Lincoln was different from that at Altamont. At times, especially in the beginning of the study I would assist Lincoln teachers, whether it was cleaning up after a science project or reading with a small group of students who were struggling to understand an assignment. These were jobs that were asked of me by the teacher and I obliged since I was in their space and this was the role that most visitors assumed. If I wanted to observe a particular focal student or try to record the interactions of a group of students, I would often inform the teacher in advance. Over time, the teachers asked less of me and my role became one of an observer and researcher, rather than a participant in their classroom.

In terms of my relationship with the students, I am a White, native English speaker who speaks Spanish with an accent that was different from many of the students. Students identified these differences in multiple ways. The students and I spoke mainly about language in our interviews, and during this time many of the students coined my accent as 'funny' or 'different'. My racial, ethnic, and linguistic background created certain divisions between the focal students and myself. For this reason, I entered the schools in August of 2011, formal data collection began in December 2011, and the first round of interviews began in March 2012. Approximately 6 to 7 months passed before I conducted the first round of student interviews because I wanted to build a level of trust and comfort with the students. All students were invited to participate in interviews. After the first interview, many students repeatedly asked me when they would be able to participate in another interview. Students' eagerness to engage in the interviews could be for multiple reasons. Seldom were students provided the opportunity to talk about themselves with an adult, and the interviews provided them a space to do so. During the second set of interviews, there were multiple questions about friends and friend groups, for many of the students they were entering adolescence, a time where their friendships began to shift or were challenged. The interviews appeared to provide them a space to share their feelings about these changing relationships and the social issues they started to confront as they approached adolescence. Finally, the interviews were held during school hours and some students may have simply wanted a break from being in their classroom.

In terms of my racial, ethnic, and linguistic background, I was extremely cognizant of the differences between myself and the students and their families, as well as the similarities I held with many of their classroom teachers who were also White females. The students

were aware of these differences, and if anyone asked me a question about my background I answered the question. I began each set of interviews explaining what questions I was going to ask and why I was going to ask those particular questions. I explained to them that I was interested in understanding the experiences of students learning two languages in school, particularly students who came to school learning English as a new language. I explained how I was always interested in students learning English as a new language because my mom was a student who also had to learn a new language of English in school. Some of the students were a bit surprised by this and asked if I was Latina. This would lead into a conversation about my Italian background, and the fact that many students come to school speaking all different types of languages. During the last two interviews there was a section devoted to students' understandings of race and ethnicity. As will be explained in Chapter 7, many students were constructing their racial and ethnic understandings through our conversations, and some of them compared their race, ethnicity, or past experience against mine in trying to explain what they understood to be the differences between the terms Latino/a, White, or American.

It is difficult to sustain a truly unbiased lens as a qualitative researcher that is collecting data over extended periods of time. Over time, one develops participant-researcher relationships, and like any relationship this one will at times evoke emotion. I used several techniques to monitor and filter my emotions from data collection to maintain a level of purity in my observations. After each day spent at the school site collecting data, I spent two to three hours reviewing and 'clearing up' and 'cleaning up' my field notes. I use the term 'clearing up' because I literally edited my work adding to fragmented sentences, or any words or phrases I might have quickly typed to remind me of a key event or observation. In this way, I was adding more information to the notes. 'Cleaning up' the data occurred when I reread my field notes and highlighted any text in red where I expressed an opinion or an emotion about what I had observed. None of the data highlighted in red was coded. Finally, I severed all relationships with students and teachers after data collection ended and during data analysis. Physical and emotional distance was needed from both the research sites and research participants so I could transition as participant-observer to an analytical researcher. In the chapters that follow are the findings and theories that surfaced from this transition.

## Chapter 4: Language and identity: The role and function of language for language learners

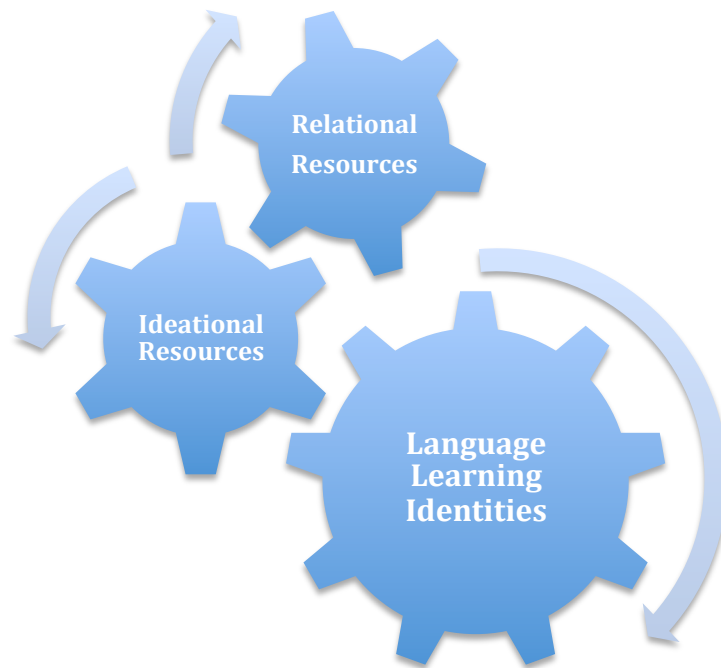
### Introduction

In this chapter, I argue that language learners construct one of three types of language-learning identities - dual, separation, distant - which shift over time and are related to students' language classification as *limited English proficient* (LEP), *fluent English proficient* (FEP), or *long-term English language learner*. As described in Chapter 3, both schools are comparative research sites because of each school's dual language program. The sites differ in terms of the variation of students' home language and ethnic backgrounds. All focal students are enrolled in dual language programs to develop academic proficiency in English and Spanish, and while Lincoln has a higher reclassification rate for LEP students, Lincoln also has fewer students from Spanish-speaking homes and classified LEP when compared to Altamont. The linguistic, and subsequent ethnic differences across the school communities structure how languages function in students' lives, how students use language and are positioned through language, and the types of language identities students are able to construct. This chapter begins by reviewing the relationship between *practice-linked identities* and community resources (Nasir & Cooks, 2009) as it applies to the theory of language-learning identities. Identifying the different community resources (the ideational and relational resources) students are able to access explains the differences in the three types of identities. The second section of this chapter outlines the ways in which these community resources function differently in dual and separation identities across Lincoln and Altamont. The chapter concludes by outlining how the ideational and relational resources become limitations for students with a distant identity. Across both schools, students with a distant identity are socialized in certain ways and positioned to take up an identity that does not allow them to draw upon their resources. In the end, students with a distant identity exit elementary school and maintain the LEP classification or are reclassified as a *long-term English language learner*.

### Theoretical Framework

Across both school sites students' language-learning identities are dynamic, fluid, and supported by the resources students are able to access through participation in school-based activities. The conceptual framework guiding data analysis is a modified version of Nasir and Cooks' (2009) theory of *practice-linked identities*. In this theory, students' identities are constructed through the types of resources students are able to access as they participate in activities. The framework positions identity as "the sense of self we bring, but the sense of self we are offered" (Presentation, Nasir, February 6, 2014) in different environments. This 'sense of self we are offered' occurs through the types of resources students are able to access in social environments. Returning to the ideas introduced in Chapter 2, I draw upon the concepts of ideational and relational resources (Nasir & Cooks, 2009) to illustrate how students' language identities are constructed and how these identities function in school. Students' participation in academic and non-academic school-based activities make available ideational and relational resources to support a language identity. Friendships students create and maintain as they learn

Spanish and English in school, as well as their relationships with teachers become relational resources. Students' confidence as a bilingual individual, and their beliefs of themselves as language learners and academic students, as well as their beliefs in regards to the function Spanish and English serve in their lives define ideational resources. Figure 2 represents how a language identity is created through the types of ideational and relational resources students are able to access.



**Figure 2. Language-learning identities**

In this figure, the three moving gears and the relationship between them illustrate the conceptual framework of a language-learning identity. The two smaller gears represent the ideational and relational resources students are able to access in their learning. Both types of resources define the *use* and *function* of English and Spanish in students' lives. Ideational resources are students' ideas and beliefs in how they understand and describe the *use* and *function* English and Spanish serve in their schooling. These resources also take into account students' confidence to use language. Relational resources identify students' actual use of language to negotiate classroom participation, as well as how language is used in their relationships with peers, teachers, family, and friends. Language identities are dynamic, fluid, and change over time through participation in school-based activities. The figure's arrows indicate the dynamic characteristic of language identities. In summary, a language identity is constructed as students take up the different ideational and relational resources they are offered in school, but specifically through their participation in school-based activities. These resources incorporate students' beliefs about themselves as students, language learners, and individuals, as well as the students' relationships supporting such beliefs. Table 4 identifies the three different types of language identities.

<b>Language Identity</b>	<b>Description</b>
Dual language identity	Students construct a similar role and function for Spanish and English in life.
Separation language identity	Students construct a distinct, or a separate, role and function for Spanish and English in life.
Distant language identity	Students construct a social distance with Spanish or English in life.

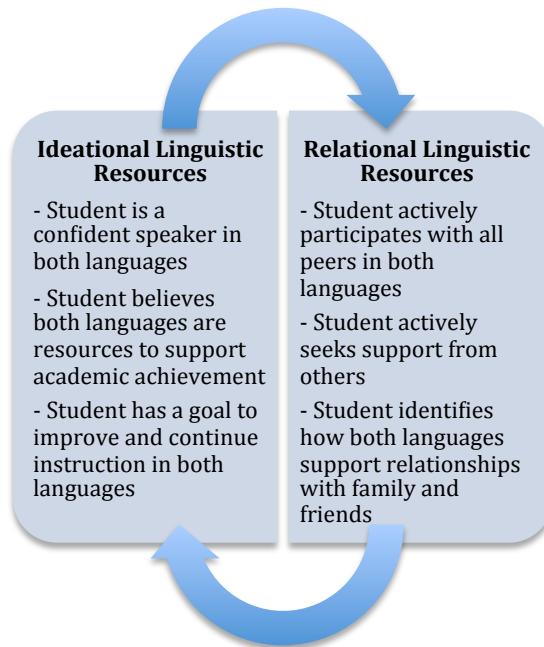
**Table 4. Language learning identities**

Students at Altamont and Lincoln are given access to relational and ideational resources as they participate in school-based activities to learn and use Spanish and English. In other words, as students are socialized into school, they are positioned through language. Furthermore, this positioning determines the types of ideational and relational resources students are able to access, or denied access to and this informs students' language identity. If students are successful in accessing a certain set of relational and ideational resources through their schooling, they ultimately construct a dual or a separation identity. If students are denied to access such resources, these resources become limitations (Nasir, 2012). These limitations position students to create distance with a part of their linguistic self they initially brought to school, and cause them to construct a distant language identity. Students with a distant identity are positioned through language in school-based activities and are forced to create a social distance with Spanish or English in life. A distant identity indicates that students are socialized to reject the role that Spanish or English serve in life, and this causes them to become disengaged not only with learning that language, but also become disengaged with their overall academics where they exit elementary school maintaining the classification LEP or reclassified as a *long-term English language learner*. The following sections outline in greater detail the characteristics of the three types of language identities.

## **Dual and Separation Identities: Linguistic Resources**

### **Dual language identity**

Students with a dual identity identify a similar role and function for Spanish and English in life. A dual language identity functions in similar ways across both schools because all students at either Altamont or Lincoln access a similar set of relational and ideational resources. Both types of resources are accessed as students engage in school-based activities. Ideational resources include students' level of academic and linguistic confidence, their beliefs in regards to the function Spanish and English serve in life, and their goals in developing their bilingualism. Relational resources are the positive relationships with peers, teachers, and friends. Below, Figure 3 outlines the relational and ideational resources supporting a dual language identity and the ways in which these resources operate. The arrows identify the interconnected relationship between these two resources.



**Figure 3. Dual language identity, Altamont & Lincoln**

Ideational resources function in unique ways for students with a dual language identity. These resources are defined as students' beliefs about themselves as language learners, as well as their level of confidence in their Spanish and English skills. This similar level of confidence across Spanish and English has a positive impact on academic engagement and achievement. Furthermore, students want to continue instruction in two languages as they transition to middle school. As a result of these ideational resources, both Spanish and English function in similar ways to support students' belief that they are strong academic students and language users.

Participation in academic activities with English and Spanish-dominant peers makes available multiple relational resources to support academic achievement. With a dual language identity, students actively seek support from all peers by using both languages in certain ways. Students participate with all peers regardless of language background or content area. Both Spanish and English function in similar ways because both languages are understood by the student to be resources to support academic relationships. In the home and non-academic spaces, Spanish also becomes a linguistic resource to support relationships with family, caregivers, and friends. Relational and ideational resources are strengthened and supported by each other. Students believe they can and will do well in school, which in turn provides them with a level of confidence to access relationships with all English and Spanish-dominant peers to support academic achievement.

### **Separation language identity: Altamont Elementary School**

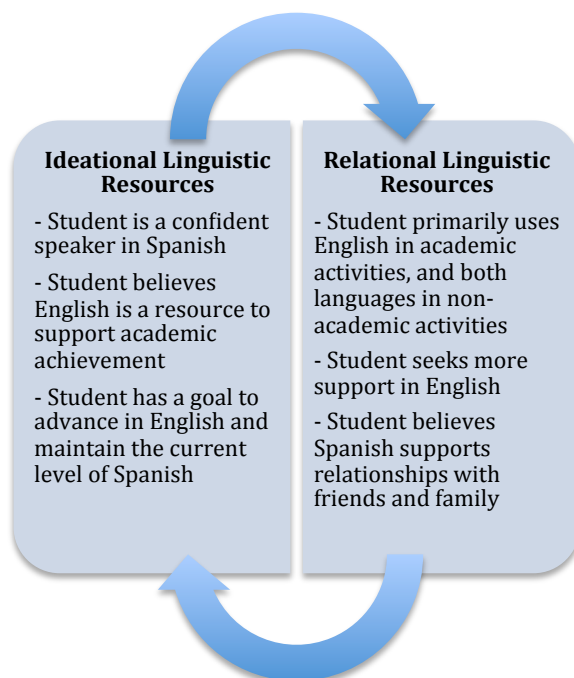
For students with a separation language identity Spanish and English have distinct, or separate roles in life. Ideational and relational resources function in distinct ways for students with a separation language identity. There are differences both in how a separation identity functions in comparison to a dual identity, as well as differences in how a separation identity functions at each school. This section begins by outlining the



ideational and relational resources Altamont students are able to access to construct a separation identity, and then moves to describe the differences in the ideational and relational resources Lincoln students are able to access which produces a slightly different separation identity.

For students at Altamont with a separation identity there is a shift in students' understandings about themselves as students and English language learners. These understandings become ideational resources. Students with a separation identity speak about their Spanish skills with confidence, and see these skills as linguistic strengths. However, these same students do not hold a similar level of confidence in their English skills, and as a result they express a need to develop these skills. As students are socialized through language in their learning they are positioned in distinct ways where English gains importance over Spanish. This positioning challenges the students' confidence as English and Spanish speakers, where students begin to lack confidence in their English skills and identity as an English speaker. This positioning also impacts students' belief in regards to the function each language plays in their academic and personal lives. Furthermore, English takes precedence in school and becomes aligned to academic achievement, while Spanish is used to support relationships with family and friends. It is English though, that begins to function as the language that holds greater value and power and comes to symbolize academic progress.

Students with a separation identity are positioned in certain ways to structure how language is used in their relationships. Moreover, the relational resources separating how students use language also separates the role and function of Spanish and English in their lives. Relationships with family and friends support the role and function of Spanish. Relationships within school, primarily with teachers and English-dominant peers, support the role and function of English. The ideational and relational resources supporting a separation language identity are represented in Figure 4.



**Figure 4. Separation language identity, Altamont**

Due to the shift in the role Spanish and English serves in the home and school, a separation language identity is distinct from a dual language identity. In terms of ideational resources, students hold a level of confidence in their Spanish skills, but less so in English. Students struggle to develop a level of academic English, and the ways in which they are positioned at school as a result of these struggles, impacts students' confidence in speaking and learning English. Through this positioning, students are socialized into a belief system where English proficiency determines academic achievement. Furthermore, students' desire to advance and continue their instruction in English takes precedence. Students' level of linguistic confidence in Spanish supports their conviction that they will be able to maintain a level of Spanish once they exit elementary school so that the language will continue to function as a resource to support personal relationships, which supports their desire to attend an English-only middle school. In terms of relational resources, students pursue academic relationships with peers and teachers to support their English development. Since students are socialized into school to understand that English's role and function is to create what many students describe as a 'better life' in the United States, students seek out relationships to support their academic achievement in English, but do so less in Spanish. These relationships have a direct impact on students' engagement across classes, meaning that students actively participate in English literacy and content area classes, but less so in their Spanish literacy classrooms.

#### **Separation language identity: Lincoln Elementary School**

Lincoln's school community supports the ways in which separation language identities function, which are comparatively different from a separation identity at Altamont. There are few language learners at Lincoln providing students with minimal opportunities to create relationships with students from Spanish speaking or bilingual homes, this impacts

the types of relational resources students are able to access. In terms of ideational resources, the function Spanish serves in students' home life impacts a goal to develop their bilingualism. Unlike Altamont students, Lincoln students with a separation identity hold a level of confidence in their English and Spanish skills, however they are less confident they will be able to maintain their Spanish proficiency. These students are socialized in a school where English is the dominant language used among students in non-academic spaces. As a result, the relational resources focal students are able to access support the primary use of English, impacting their lack of confidence to maintain their Spanish without the support of instruction. For these students, maintaining Spanish proficiency is important because it is the language used among family. Figure 5 outlines how relational and ideational resources function to support a separation identity at Lincoln. The bolded text indicates the differences between separation identities at Lincoln and Altamont.

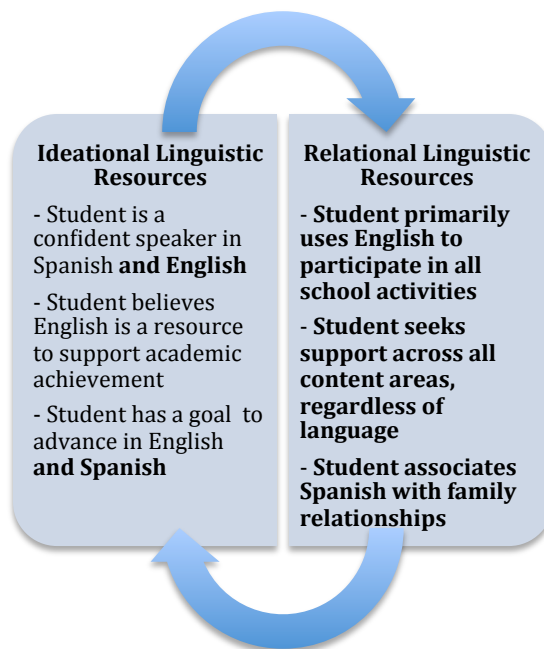


Figure 5. Separation language identity, Lincoln

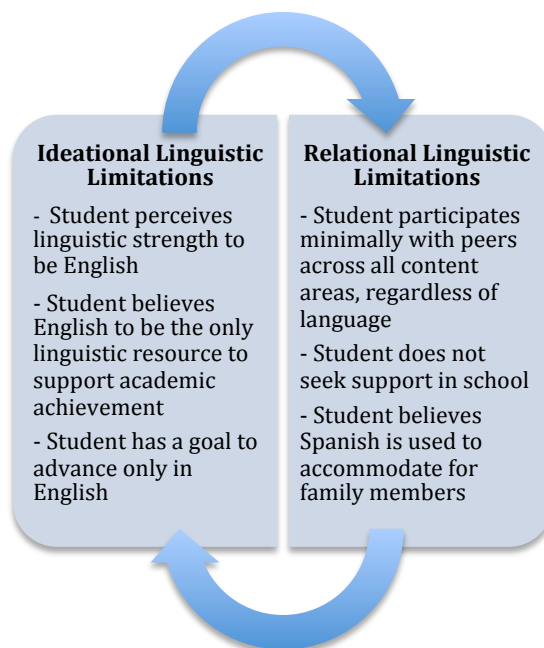
There are distinct differences in how Lincoln students are socialized through Spanish and English impacting the types of relational and ideational resources they are able to access to construct a separation identity. One of these differences is in how each language functions in school, which in turn impacts students' academic relationships and engagement. At Altamont, students with a separation identity engage and participate in different ways in their Spanish as compared to their English language arts class. This is not evident at Lincoln when triangulating the data across teacher interviews, student interviews, and observational field notes. The experiences of two focal students discussed in Chapter 6 illustrate how both students engage and participate in activities to develop their Spanish literacy skills. At times, these students use English with their peers during Spanish instruction, especially during group work, however this use of English in Spanish classrooms is a means to communicate with peers and does not indicate the quality of work or effort students put into developing their Spanish. Their engagement in Spanish doesn't falter because both focal students want to develop and maintain their Spanish to

support a relationship with family. Relational resources students are able to access in their academic settings support the use of English, however students seek support in their teacher relationships to support their use and develop Spanish.

Language socialization processes at each school determines how students are positioned to use language and the resources students are able to access through this positioning. This positioning determines whether students are able to take up a dual or separation identity and how these identities function at each school. This chapter concludes with a discussion of students with distant identities and explains how these students are positioned in school-based activities in certain ways forcing them to create a distance with a part of their linguistic and academic self they initially brought with them to school.

### **Distant Identity: Linguistic Limitations**

While there are differences in how a distant identity functions at Lincoln and Altamont, there are important characteristics of the identity consistent across the schools. At both schools, students with a distant identity are socialized into school and positioned in distinct ways causing them to distance themselves from a language. Since learning occurs through language this results in students distancing themselves from their overall academic experience. As a result, students with a distant identity do not engage in their academics, despite language of instruction or content area, and they do not seek support from peers or teachers. Relational and ideational resources that once supported a dual or separation identities are transformed into limitations. Furthermore, a critical findings of this study is that through this process of language socialization students with a distant identity exit elementary maintaining LEP classification or become reclassified as a *long-term English language learners* because they are enrolled in school for five years. Figure 6 below outlines how ideational and relational resources are transformed into limitations for Altamont students with distant identities. These students perceive their linguistic strength to be English, but at the expense of Spanish.



**Figure 6. Distant language identity, Altamont**

At Altamont, students with a distant language identity struggle to develop and use English with ease, fluency, and precision, but despite these challenges they perceive their linguistic strength to be English because they are socialized in an academic space where English holds more value at the expense of Spanish. While Spanish is the students' first language and a language they use in life, students believe the role of Spanish is to primarily accommodate, rather than support familial relationships. As students are socialized into school, their academic and social challenges erode the resources they once carried with them to school. Students struggle to recognize the function Spanish serves in their academic life, and in doing so create a linguistic distance with Spanish, which impacts their overall engagement, participation, and achievement in school.

At Lincoln, ideational and relational resources are also transformed into limitations, but these limitations function in nuanced ways. Due to the small number of Lincoln focal students participating in the study because of the low number of LEP classified students, there is one focal student who exits elementary school with a distant identity. The striking difference between how a distant identity guides student learning across the two schools is in terms of language. Unlike those students at Altamont, the Lincoln focal student with a distant identity creates a social distance with English. Figure 7 outlines the ideational and relational limitations of a distant identity at Lincoln. The relational limitations that are consistent across Lincoln and Altamont are underlined.

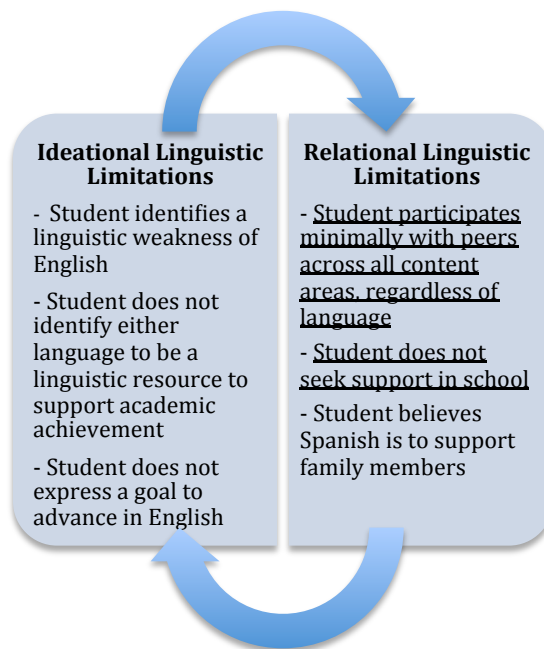


Figure 7. Distant language identity, Lincoln

Chapter 6 argues how the school context of Lincoln, specifically the small number of Spanish-dominant students enrolled in the grade of the focal students, positions one Lincoln student with a distant identity. The focal student with a distant identity, Roselyn, creates a social network with several of her peers where this network only speaks Spanish. As they are socialized into school, and through their positioning in an English-dominant school culture these students are isolated and could not assimilate into this larger school culture. Over time, this social network of girls begins to dismantle.

Ultimately the pressures that are placed on this group of girls to create a sense of belonging for each other because they are isolated from the larger school community causes the group to dissolve. In the end, socialization processes cause Roselyn to create a distance with English, which impacts all aspects of her schooling because English holds significant social power among the student community. As a result, friendships that are once relational resources become limitations for Roselyn, where she begins to create a social distance with school in general, and in particular with English. English is the larger linguistic culture of the school, and symbolizes the larger linguistic culture she is isolated from and could not penetrate.

I want to conclude this chapter with Tables 5, 6, and 7 that outline the 21 focal students' language identities, the ways in which these identities change over time, and students' reclassification status upon exiting elementary in May 2013. Table 5 identifies all Altamont and Lincoln students who maintain a dual identity throughout the study's tenure. In their last 18 months of elementary school all students listed in Table 5 take up a dual identity where they identify how Spanish and English maintain a similar function in their life. All students with a dual identity actively participate in academic activities to develop both their English and Spanish, and were reclassified during some point in the study. Table 5 identifies the students' name, school, and when they were reclassified. Students are organized by their date of reclassification, from those that reclassified early into the study to those that were reclassified during the last six months of the study.

<b>Student</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Reclassification Date</b>
Elizabeth	Altamont	January 2012
Alex	Altamont	January 2012
Diego	Altamont	May 2012
Giselle	Altamont	January 2013
Daniel	Altamont	January 2013
Michael	Altamont	January 2013
Nora	Lincoln	January 2013

**Table 5. Focal Students, Dual language identity**

Across both schools there were 5 students exiting elementary school with a separation language identity. Students with a separation identity separate the role and function of Spanish and English in their life. English is associated with academic success, and Spanish is associated with the home and family. While there are differences across Lincoln and Altamont in how students use Spanish in school, all students differentiate, or separate the role each language plays in life. Two of these students from Lincoln, Oscar and Matthew, maintain a separation identity throughout the study's tenure. However, there were four additional students who started the study with a dual identity, but over time take up a separation identity. Table 6 outlines these four students, their school, and their reclassification status. As will be discussed in Chapter 5, one of the students, Christopher, exits elementary school with a separation identity, but is still reclassified as a *long-term English language learner*. While Christopher exited elementary school with this language classification, he is able to access a sufficient amount of relational resources supporting him to not take up a distant language identity.

Student	School	Reclassification Status
Diana	Altamont	January 2012
Antonia	Lincoln	January 2012
Jesly	Altamont	January 2013
Christopher	Altamont	Long-term English language learner

**Table 6. Focal students, Changes from a dual to a separation identity**

Across both schools students with a distant identity distance themselves from either Spanish or English, which in turn creates a distance between the student and his or her academic identity. Table 7 identifies all students who take up a distant identity at some point in the study's tenure. For example, both Maria and Isabella take up a distant identity during the first part year of the study, but begin to shift to a separation identity during the last 6 months of elementary school. Despite this shift, they both exit elementary school maintaining their classification as a language learner. Maria remains classified as *limited English proficient* because she is enrolled in the district for less than five years, while Isabella is reclassified as a *long-term English language learner* because she is enrolled in the school for more than 5 years. Table 7 identifies the students with a distant identity, their school, and their reclassification status upon exiting elementary school.

Student	School	Reclassification Status
Dylan	Altamont	Reclassified - May 2012
Yessica	Altamont	Reclassified - January 2013
Maria	Altamont	Limited English Proficient
Isabella	Altamont	Long-term English language learner
Pedro	Altamont	Long-term English language learner
Joshua	Altamont	Long-term English language learner
Roselyn	Lincoln	Long-term English language learner

**Table 7. Focal Students, Distant language identity**

The following two chapters, Chapters 5 and 6, highlight the experiences of 8 focal students across both schools to provide evidence on how students construct one of three types of language-learning identities - *dual*, *separation*, or *distant* – in their unique school communities of Lincoln or Altamont. These case studies illustrate how identities change over time and are related to students' language classification status of *limited English proficient* (LEP), reclassified *fluent English proficient* (FEP), or *long-term English language learner*.

## **Chapter 5: Shifts over time: How language identities function at Altamont**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I build upon the argument that is introduced in Chapter 1 and explained more deeply in Chapter 4 which identifies how language learners construct one of three language-learning identities - dual, separation, distant - which shift over time and are related to students' language classification as *limited English proficient* (LEP), *fluent English proficient* (FEP), or *long-term English language learner*. The focus of this chapter builds on this argument by describing the experiences of 4 focal students and illustrates how students are socialized to use language as they participate in school-based activities. Processes of socialization determine how students are given, or denied, access to certain ideational and relational resources, which in turn shapes their language identities and structures how these identities change over time. In terms of relational resources, the large population of Altamont language learners provides more opportunities for students to create relationships with peers from Spanish speaking or bilingual homes. For Christopher, an Altamont focal student who struggles to develop his English literacy skills, these relationships support his engagement with school and create a space of belonging for him to maintain a separation identity rather than shift to a distant identity. In terms of ideational resources, the ways in which students are positioned to use language in their life impacts future linguistic goals to either develop bilingualism or proficiency in only English. This positioning supports students' confidence as a language learner. In this chapter, I highlight the experiences of 4 focal students to provide evidence in how language identities change over time through participation in school-based activities. Two students represent cases of how a specific set of ideational and relational resources mediate students shift from a dual to a separation identity. Two additional students represent cases of how a distant identity is mediated by limited access to resources.

### **The Case of Jesly: A shift from a dual to a separation identity**

Jesly is a case of how language identities change over time and mediated by socialization processes that structure how language functions in students' lives. Jesly's experiences as an Altamont student demonstrates how relational and ideational resources are used and then reconfigured to support a shift from a dual to a separation identity. Early into the study, Jesly's participation in academic activities provides her with resources to construct a dual language identity. During her initial interview, she holds a level of linguistic confidence as she identifies an academic goal of learning multiple languages in life. However, over time Jesly no longer expresses a goal of learning multiple languages, but rather identifies the need to only develop English. As Jesly is socialized in school through language she faces more struggles to develop her English literacy skills of reading and writing. Through this socialization process, English holds greater value, and she is positioned in certain ways to believe she lacks linguistic skills in English. Over time data collected through observations and interviews indicate a separation in the role and function Spanish and English serve in Jesly's personal and academic life. This section highlights the process of socialization and positioning that support Jesly's transition from a dual to a separation language identity.



### *Jesly's dual language identity*

Jesly may have a small, lean stature but her confident, determined, and energetic personality made her presence be felt and heard in the largest of crowds and this personality guides her through school. These aspects to her personality can be observed in more structured, academic spaces as she asks for help from her teachers or peers with little hesitation. Similarly, these qualities also guide her interactions during more unstructured, non-academic times as she freely rotates between the different friend groups in her grade, playing with multiple children from varied language backgrounds during the daily 15-minute recess. Yet, learning English did not come easy for Jesly. While her determination and perseverance supports her language development and overall academic achievement, Jesly struggles with school.

It is near the end of fourth grade when Jesly completes her initial interview, and she first expresses a desire to continue to learn Spanish and English in middle school. At this time, she is confident in her Spanish skills and is motivated to develop a level of multilingualism as she speculates other languages to learn explaining, “I speak really good Spanish, and I want to speak other languages like, like (pause) French and umm:: and yeah. I want to speak French, so like for me it’s going to be easy because I speak really good Spanish.” Jesly describes learning Spanish as ‘fun’ as it provides her with the skills to communicate with many people in her life and increases the opportunities she would be able to access in her future.

Jesly’s interviews and classroom observations indicate how she linguistically accommodates for her Spanish and English-dominant peers. She is an independent student, who describes herself as a person ‘who helps’ and someone who ‘talks a lot’. She often moves through her English and Spanish classrooms asking and offering help to her peers with little hesitation. For the most part, Jesly follows the linguistic norms of the school<sup>25</sup>, although at times she pushes the school’s imposed linguistic boundaries. In October 2012, I observe Jesly working on a small group science project with two Spanish-dominant students, Kimberly and Gisele, where she frequently changes between Spanish and English when working with either girl. When I question her language use during this activity she explains, “well that’s because Kimberly doesn’t know much English.” While Jesly is aware of how she pushes the school’s linguistic norms, she recognizes that she does so to support her peers’ academic understanding. Similarly, in our November 2012 interview she explains her linguistic choice in class by describing how she uses language to communicate with her English-dominant peer, Alice. “Well, Alice, I feel uncomfortable [talking to her in Spanish] because she comes from like an English place, so like, she does know Spanish, but she doesn’t know some words, so I’d rather talk to her in English.” In making accommodations for her English-dominant peers, Jesly is aware of the linguistic differences between herself and these students, but she saw her skills as the means to support these peers. Furthermore, certain activities, and the individuals she engages with in these activities, socializes her use of language and her

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<sup>25</sup> At Altamont, language is used in specific ways to structure student learning. English is the language of instruction during science and English language arts, while Spanish is used to teach social studies, math, and Spanish language arts. Students are expected to only use the language of instruction during classroom exchanges with teacher and peers.

confidence as a bilingual student as she moves between English and Spanish with ease. Jesly is academically engaged and is able to identify her academic success and the role language plays in this success. Confidence and pride are manifestations of how she is socialized through language in school.

School-based activities within and outside of the classroom make available ideational and relational resources to support Jesly's dual language identity. Figure 3 below is introduced in Chapter 4 and outlines the characteristics of dual language identities.

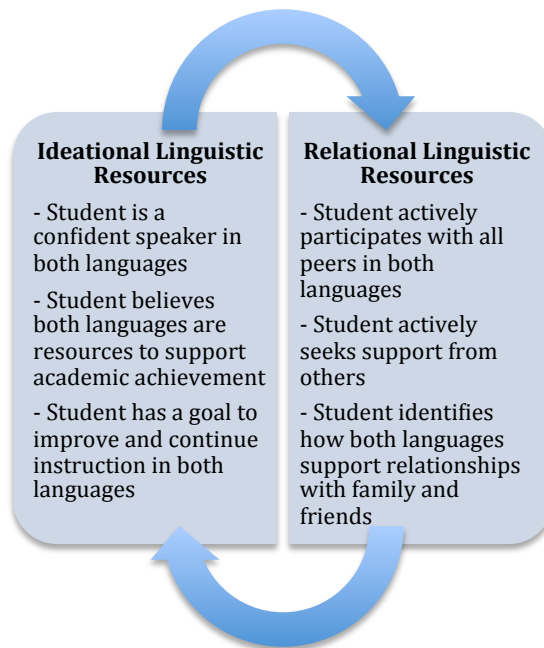


Figure 3. Dual language identity, Altamont & Lincoln

In terms of ideational resources, Jesly's confidence in her bilingualism is evident in how she uses language to support her peers. With a sense of pride and satisfaction, Jesly speaks about how her strong language skills support academic achievement. These beliefs become resources to support her engagement with school, as well as a desire to continue instruction in both languages as she transitions to middle school.

Personal relationships are important to Jesly and she identifies her bilingualism as a skill to support these relationships. This is evident in how language becomes a resource to support her peers in academic activities, whether it is in using Spanish to explain a science concept to Kimberly, or in working with Alice and using Alice's linguistic strength of English. Spanish also becomes a skill she accesses to support her family as she translates for her mother in a department store or her father at his work place. She is extremely transparent that her parents are undocumented immigrants who came to the U.S. in search of "better life", and she sees her bilingualism as way to support her family to create this better life. These relationships function as relational resources to support her dual identity as a confident bilingual. Socialization practices in school support her linguistic confidence as she is able to access her bilingualism to participate in school-based activities. Relationships become relational resources for students like Jesly

providing them the opportunity to access Spanish and English in positive, gratifying, and distinct ways. While Spanish is a valued resource to support family, both English and Spanish are resources to support academic achievement and peer relationships.

Three variables influence the function and use of language for students with a dual identity where they are socialized through language and are able to gain access to specific relational and ideational resources. First, the ways in which students use Spanish and English in school-based activities shape the function of each language. This function determines how and under what conditions the languages become resources. For Jesly, Spanish and English function in similar ways through participation in school-based academic activities, and the languages become resources to support her academic engagement. In her personal life, Spanish's function extends to support her family. Second, students' social networks play an important role in how students' language use positions students in relation to their peers. Engaging in multiple school activities provide opportunities for students to use both languages to support their peer relationships. Finally, students' academic progress has a direct relationship in how students understand the role language plays in their academic lives. Learning is not easy for Jesly, she is rarely the first to complete an assignment, but with time she experiences success whether it is through completing an assignment, doing well on a test, or advancing to a higher *English language development*<sup>26</sup>. Students with a dual language identity experience academic success, are confident students and language learners, and express a desire to develop their bilingualism in middle school.

### ***Jesly's separation language identity***

In our April 2013 interview Jesly shares the following academic goal:

*I want to go to a [middle] school where I can learn English 'cause Spanish I talk like everywhere except for school, well sometimes in school and like that's how I can like learn more English and learn more words in English.*

In this comment, Jesly illustrates aspects to a separation language identity. As she transitions to middle school, Jesly's linguistic goals begin to shift. While she values the function of Spanish in her life as it allows her to support her relationships with family and friends, developing English in school becomes a primary goal. In this way, she separates the function of Spanish and English in her life. This is one of the distinct differences between a dual and separation language identity. First, as represented in Jesly's April 2013 comment, Altamont students with a separation identity are socialized in school through language in distinct ways and this shapes the function of each language. Students' social networks, as well as their academic progress, impacts how ideational and relational resources function to support a separation identity. Over time, Jesly is socialized in an academic space where she begins to believe she lacks certain skills, this positioning shifts her engagement in academic activities and how she identifies as a learner. In this section, data collected in our final interview and classroom observations

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<sup>26</sup> English language development (ELD) classes occur during the first 30 minutes of the day. Students' score on the CELDT (California English Language Development Test) determine their placement in an ELD classroom. There are 16 ELD classrooms at Altamont. These classrooms are homogenous language groups, where students in each class have a similar CELDT score.

from the last few months of school are highlighted to illustrate how language identities change through socialization processes.

Jesly's third grade teacher describes her Spanish literacy skills as "strong" and her English skills as "developing". Standardized tests mirror these reflections. In third grade, Jesly scores *proficient* in her Spanish math and literacy exams and scores slightly lower in English, classifying her as *basic* in her English literacy skills.<sup>27</sup> It can be argued that the school's programmatic structures support her performance on these standardized tests. At Altamont, kindergarten students receive 90% of their instruction in Spanish. With each subsequent year, the amount of English instructional time gradually increases until the fourth grade where instruction is evenly split between English and Spanish. It makes sense that Jesly would perform higher in Spanish since this is her dominant language upon entering elementary school, and the majority of the instruction she receives occurs in Spanish. However, in fourth and fifth grade her scores in Spanish across math and literacy consistently drop, while her English scores minimally increase by a few points each year. For the scope of this project I need to incorporate standardized test scores as data points because of the pivotal role these scores play in reclassifying students from *limited English proficient* to *fluent English proficient*. In addition, teachers recognize these scores to be a strong indicator of students' academic development and use the data to create intervention groups across content areas. In the case of Jesly, her performance on these standardized tests concerns her fifth grade teachers and supports their discussion as to whether she should be reclassified from *limited English proficient* to *fluent English proficient*. After much debate, her teachers move forward in reclassifying her so she does not enter middle school with the label *long-term English language learner*, but teachers also place her in intervention groups.

Changes in Jesly's academic achievement structure impacts how she is socialized into school. Spanish becomes a tool that positions her as holding a linguistic strength in relation to her English struggles, which impacts her confidence as a bilingual student. Data collected from our April 2013 interview and classroom observations indicate her lack of academic and linguistic confidence in English. She continues to carry a level of linguistic confidence in Spanish, explaining, "Spanish is very easy, you just have to practice, well not really practice like it's very easy to learn." However, this level of confidence does not translate to English as she explains, "like English has more like words that are like complicated, and, Spanish have like easy words." Shifts in her linguistic confidence is evident in how Jesly prefers Spanish and explains with certainty how she is better at Spanish because it is her first language, but identifies her difficulty learning English. Over time, Jesly's changing confidence is grounded in academic achievement and becomes an ideational resource to support her shift from a dual to separation identity.

Over time, Jesly is socialized into an academic space where learning Spanish and English hold a different value. Learning becomes increasingly difficult in fifth grade; her

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<sup>27</sup> Students take the California State Test (CST) each Spring. Depending on their score, students are classified as one of the following: 1) Far Below Basic, 2) Below Basic, 3) Basic, 4) Proficient, 5) Advanced. Students are considered performing 'on grade level' when they receive a score of either *proficient* or *advanced*.

participation in academic activities supports the belief that learning is difficult. When students return to school in January 2013, Jesly's Spanish math teacher invites her to participate in an afterschool with other Spanish-dominant peers to develop basic math skills. Participation in these activities validate Jesly's academic struggle that learning English is difficult, but more important for academic success. However, her pride causes her to place these linguistic struggles in the past in sharing, "um, like, cause like I used to think that um, English was so hard and now I think like it's easy." As she is socialized through language in school, the beliefs of herself as a student who need to develop English because this is a skill of greater value becomes an ideational resource to further support her separation identity. Figure 4 below, which is introduced in Chapter 4, identifies the characteristics of the separation identity Jesly constructs at the end of fifth grade before transitioning to middle school.

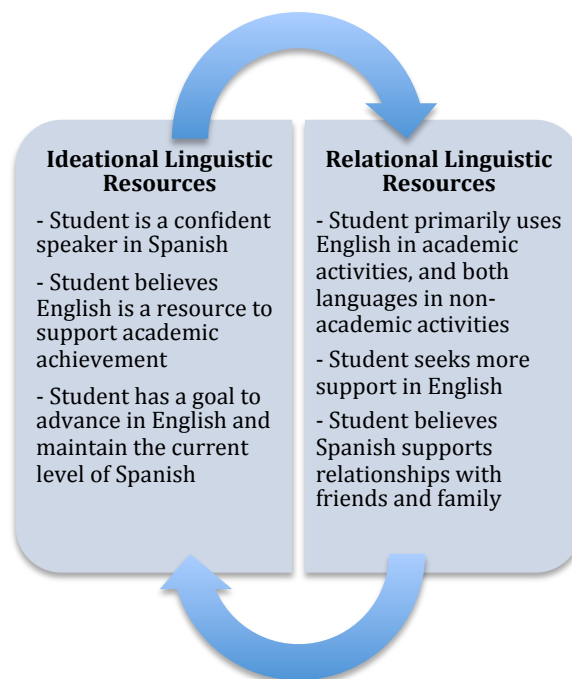


Figure 4. Separation language identity, Altamont

Spanish still serves a critical role in Jesly's life, but its function changes. In defining her relationship with family and friends, Jesly acknowledges Spanish's role in explaining, "because some people, well you know they can't like, like, I know some people, I go to the bank with my dad and my mom, they don't have good English," Jesly identifies the linguistic challenges her parents face living in the United States with limited English. In doing so, she recognizes how bilingualism provides her with a skill set to support her parents, and while she values her bilingualism, she identifies the importance English serves in life as she reveals stories of her parents' struggles with the language, as well as in identifying her future goal to attend an English-only middle school. Over time, Jesly's engagement in school also gradually shifts. Her Spanish literacy teacher shares she is eager to learn academically, but it is difficult for her to engage in Spanish reading and writing. Jesly struggles to stay engaged to develop her Spanish in school, although, her teacher clarifies this is a disposition shared among several students. In many ways,

Jesly's belief that she spoke Spanish "perfectly", but needs to "learn more words in English," supports her deeper level of engagement in English coursework.

Socialization practices occur both in and outside of school. In her interviews, Jesly is extremely cognizant, albeit at 10 years old, of the political power of English in the United States sharing stories of how she supports her parents to linguistically negotiate an English-dominant country. Understandings of English's political power becomes more transparent in the last interview as she equates knowing English to creating "a better life", and explains how her undocumented parents came to the United States for that better life, but their limited English is inhibiting them to accomplish this goal.

Furthermore, the relational resources of her parents begin to function in a way to support the need to maintain her Spanish, but develop her English.

Multiple factors contribute to Jesly's change from a dual to a separation identity. As Jesly moves through school she is positioned through language in certain ways to shape her identity as a student. Placement in a remedial math group, the additional support she receives in English reading and writing, and how she begins to engage less frequently with her English-dominant peers also become places where she is positioned as holding academic and linguistic deficits. It is impossible to determine the degree to which each factor contributes to this shift, but while these factors are meant to support her academic and linguistic struggles, they instead confirm these struggles. Despite these obstacles, Jesly maintains a strong and positive perception of herself as a student who will achieve. When asked in her final interview what she would write in a personal narrative, she shares, "I'm proud of being myself." She continues to explain, "Like nobody is going to tell you what to do and how you act or what language you need to speak or like you have to speak." Jesly embodies this persona of a student who has a strong sense of self, but acknowledges that part of this self that speaks Spanish should not be developed in school. In her last year of elementary school, her struggles with school and learning English become increasingly apparent as she engages in coursework. These struggles do not cause her to lose sight of the importance Spanish serves in her life, but rather realigns its importance. As a result, she begins to incorporate a separation language identity where she separates the function, but not the importance, of Spanish.

### **The Case of Christopher: A shift from a dual to a separation identity**

Christopher represents a case of a student that struggles immensely with school, but in particular struggles with learning English. However, as I argue in this section with Christopher's case study, relational resources become a critical source of support to help Christopher maintain a separation identity, as oppose to shifting to a distant identity. In this next section, I compare Christopher and Jesly's experiences to show how relational and ideational resources function in slightly nuanced ways for each student to support a separation identity. While Christopher's academic struggles are more pronounced than Jesly's, his friend becomes a relational resource to make available structures of academic support to construct a separation identity.

#### ***Christopher's separation identity***

Christopher follows a similar trajectory to Jesly in how his identity shifts over time. At the beginning of the study, Christopher is in the fourth grade and exhibits many

characteristics of a dual language identity. He is engaged with school and often stays in during recess to work. In using Spanish regularly in class with his peers and friends, Christopher expresses a desire to continue learning two languages in middle school. However, in the beginning of fifth grade changes in how Christopher uses Spanish to engage in academic and non-academic activities, and his beliefs about the role and function both languages serve in his life cause him to shift in terms of his future linguistic goals and how he engages in school.

Christopher is extremely honest about his struggles learning English, however, unlike Jesly, Christopher is positioned as a language learner in slightly nuanced ways as he compares his English skills to his English-dominant peers. At Altamont, the first 30 minutes of the day is designated as *English Language Development* (ELD) where students are placed in classes based on their English proficiency to develop their English skills. Placement in these classes is determined by students' performance on the *California English Language Development Test* (CELDT). All English-dominant students are placed in a *Spanish Language Development* (SLD) classroom to support Spanish skills. While all students express awareness and understanding of the differences between ELD and SLD, students differ in their ability to explain the function of the classes. In our final interview Christopher is cognizant of ELD's purpose explaining with certainty how students' level of English determines their ELD placement, where his ELD class is for those with more limited English. As he compares his class to other classrooms, specifically the SLD classroom, which is comprised of students from English-dominant, or English-only homes, he explains how the students in the SLD class "really know[s] English, 'cause they come from somewhere that only speak in English." In this way, Christopher understands his English skills in relation to his English-dominant peers through students' participation in the ELD class. This positioning causes him to identify his English skills as not developing in relation to his linguistic strengths of Spanish, but instead as limiting in relation to the skills of his English-dominant peers. Academic classes and activities, as we see in the ELD program, made available ideational resources that Christopher lacks a level of English proficiency. Confidence in his Spanish literacy skills is apparent as he explains, "I learned Spanish perfectly", however, he believed English holds more value in school because there's "more English in school" and "here [in] San Francisco the language you will hear will be English." Referring to his English-dominant peers as the English speakers, or "the girls that speak in English", Christopher's belief that he is a strong Spanish speaker is constructed at the expense of English and functions as an ideational resource to construct a separation identity.

Beginning in fifth grade, Christopher begins to challenge the linguistic norms of the school by using English during Spanish instruction, and is constantly reminded by his teacher to speak in Spanish as she tells him, "*en español, por favor.*" As Christopher is socialized through language in school he begins to shift in how he uses language in this space, where he ultimately separates the function of English and Spanish. Spanish supports a relationship with his family, while English supports academic achievement. Over time, Christopher becomes increasingly disengaged in all aspects of his literacy development, but there is a greater resistance to participate in Spanish. His fifth grade Spanish teacher describes him as a student who, "if we were working on a social studies

text, he could do [his work]. He lacked the motivation to do [his work], like he didn't seem to want to do [his work].” Christopher left elementary school with the label *long-term English language learner*. In my observations and interviews with Christopher, I would clarify his teacher's statement that learning is important to him, but he struggles with this learning, to academically achieve, and to lose such labels like *long-term English language learner*. While he is not familiar with this exact term, and while he is not aware that these labels are on his transcript, he feels these labels as he engages in school activities. Processes of socialization position him as lacking important English linguistic skills to achieve, and over time he begins to distance himself from these spaces. Furthermore, the academic challenge he faces contributes to how he begins to question the role of Spanish in school. While Christopher once believed Spanish supported his academic engagement, he now sees it as inhibiting his academic success.

Christopher and Jesly both construct separation identities where their ideational resources function in similar ways, however they are socialized through language in unique ways and this impacts how these resources are created. Christopher holds a level of confidence in Spanish, but because of his struggles learning English and the way he compares his English skills to his English-dominant peers impacts his lack of confidence as an English speaker. In contrast, while Jesly struggles to learn English she doesn't compare her English skills to her English-dominant peers, but instead acknowledges these peers in explaining how she makes modifications in her language use to meet their linguistic needs. So while Jesly and Christopher access a similar set of ideational resources where they both believe they are strong Spanish speakers but need to improve in English, the ways in which these resources are constructed differ.

Socialization processes also structure how students are able to access relational resources. Jesly and Christopher access similar relational resources in their friendships, but how the larger group of students in their grade organizes themselves into social networks determines how these resources function. Jesly's friends extend across several social networks of girls; but by the fifth grade these networks are separated by language where she participates in non-academic activities with only networks of Spanish-dominant students. Due to the small percentage of English-dominant girls, there is one network of English-dominant students as opposed to the multiple Spanish-dominant networks. In many ways, Jesly's confidence and independence guides the way she participates in several Spanish-dominant networks. The social networks among Altamont boys are structured differently than the girls. Each boy has one or two good friends, but plays within larger groups during recess where at times up to 45 boys participate in large kickball games. Through interviews, the boys candidly identify their best friends and the similarities they share with this person. Christopher's friendship with his best friend Alex, another focal student, is revealed in their individual interviews as they share touching stories of this friendship. Over time, collected data provides evidence in how this friendship becomes an important relational resource to support Christopher's separation identity.

### ***Relational Resource of Alex***

Unlike Christopher, Alex is extremely engaged in school and at the top of his class. In December 2012, Alex describes himself as the “sort of the person who likes to get



challenged.” This is reflected in his desire to develop his English and Spanish capabilities, explaining, “I just don’t want to leave it [Spanish and English] at this level, I want to go higher and learn better how to speak.” Confidence, motivation, and engagement guide Alex’s schooling and this supports him to maintain a dual language identity throughout the study’s tenure.

Alex is able to cultivate not only positive and rewarding experiences with his academics, but also with his peer relationships. In class, he is often observed supporting his peers, including Christopher. Alex and Christopher are in the same fourth and fifth grade class, and are close throughout this time as they participate in the same social and academic school-based activities. Alex and Christopher’s friendship becomes a positive relational resource for Christopher to support his engagement in all aspects of school including academic activities. In addition, this relationship supports the role Spanish plays in his academics. Alex becomes a relational resource for Christopher to construct a separation language identity, but of equal importance this friendship provides Christopher with a set of resources so he does not construct a distant language identity. As explained in further detail in the final section of this chapter, students with distant identities have access to limited relational resources, where they create a social distance with Spanish and overall academics.

Jesly and Christopher’s experiences illustrate how the larger school structures at Altamont shape how ideational and relational resources function, and the ways in which students are able to access resources to support a separation identity. School becomes a space that challenges Jesly and Christopher’s understandings of themselves as students, as well as the role and function Spanish and English serve in their life. As they move through school, they are positioned through language in unique ways causing shifts in their identities. It is through this positioning where they begin to question the role their Spanish identity plays in school-based activities, and for someone like Christopher this positioning reiterates that non-native speakers of English lack a certain skill set that can only be achieved if the Spanish identity is contained. Jesly exits school without the label *long-term English language learner*, but Christopher is reclassified with the label. Labels socialize students in the classes they take and those they interact with, impacting their perceived language skills. As we saw in Christopher’s experience, he understands his ELD class is for students with more limited English and this supports his lack of confidence as a student and language learner. His friendship with Alex becomes an important, and pivotal, relational resource to support him in maintaining a separation identity and not shifting to a distant identity which is the focus of the final section.

### **Distant Language Identities**

In this final section, I describe the third language-learning identity, a distant language identity. There is a range in how students take up separation and dual language identities and how these identities impact students’ academic engagement, achievement, and status of reclassification. All students constructing distant language identities maintain the label *English language learners* or are re-labeled *long-term English language learners* upon exiting elementary school. In addition, the once ideational and relational resources students are able to access to construct dual and separation language identities become limitations (Nasir, 2012) for those students constructing distant language identities. For

these students, the academic activities they participate in, coupled with their desire to academically and linguistically assimilate into school, force them to position English as an achievable end only if they disassociate with their home language of Spanish. Similar to the cases of Jesly and Christopher, the experiences of Maria and Joshua described in this section provide further evidence in how students are being positioned through language as they participate in school-based activities. This positioning supports how they see themselves through the dominant discourse that immigrants and/or non-native speakers of English lack a set of skills, and a certain identity to assimilate, be accepted, and achieve in school. By describing the experiences of two focal students, Maria and Joshua, this final section identifies how ideational and relational resources become limitations for students with a distant language identity.

### **The Case of Maria: A distant identity**

In April 2012, Maria is finishing fourth grade when she shares this reflection.

*Jen: Is there anything you would change about the school?*

*Maria: I wish we could only speak English cuz in my life I speak more English than Spanish cuz my cousin, he was born here [United States] and then he went to Mexico and he always showed me how to speak English.*

At this time, Maria perceives her linguistic strength to be English. She prefers English, she identifies with English, and as she reveals in the statement above, she wants to create more academic opportunities to learn and use English. Through data gathered from classroom observations and interviews, Maria, in this comment, illustrates aspects to a distant language identity.

Maria enters the school district in the second grade after emigrating from Mexico with her mother and brother. Upon her enrollment in the school district, Maria is placed in a *Spanish transitional school* where the majority of her instruction is in Spanish and her peers are also recent immigrants from Spanish speaking countries. In 2010, at the beginning of Maria's second year in the district, she is transferred to a third grade classroom in Altamont's dual language program where she receives 60% of her instruction in Spanish and 40% in English. At the end of third grade, Maria's Spanish language arts and math teacher describe her as a cautious, but conscientious student. Maria has the same English teacher in both the third and fifth grade, and in reflecting on her English development in the third grade, her teacher shares how she excels in developing her English oral language remarking, 'she did really well in terms of learning like conversational stuff, social stuff [in English], really quickly, like right away. Even the accent was not bad when speaking English.' Standardized tests mirror teachers' reflections, where her Spanish literacy skills are a clear academic strength.

Despite the fact that Maria is the only focal student born outside of the United States, she met the selection criteria and I thought she would offer a unique perspective to the research questions. Maria met the two variables used to identify focal students including: 1) Students score *intermediate* or above on the CELDT, and 2) Students are labeled *limited English proficient*. During the 2011-2012 administration of the CELDT, Maria

scores *intermediate*, which is a high score for an immigrant student. Maria's use of English is similar to other language learners in her grade who were born in the U.S. and attended Altamont since kindergarten. Maria is also invited to participate in the study because her linguistic strengths are in Spanish, but her quiet and reserved manner make it difficult to observe these strengths. While she may appear to be disengaged, Maria is never a distraction to others. If anything, her demeanor causes her to fade into the background. I also invited Maria to participate in the project without knowing her birthplace. I purposely did not speak with teachers until students participated in at least one interview in hopes of establishing my researcher's lens on the students, where data from teacher interviews provided a second perspective about the students' experiences. For these reasons, it wasn't until our second interview in December 2012 when Maria expresses confusion in her birthplace do I question teachers and find her Mexican birth certificate in her cumulative folder. I decide to keep her in the study because of her distinct perspective that becomes transparent in her interviews, a perspective that is shared by some of her peers that are 1<sup>st</sup> generation students.

Maria participates in four interviews.<sup>28</sup> In April 2012, data collected reveals aspects to Maria's distant identity. Quiet and reserved describe Maria's classroom participation. It is not unusual for her to go the day uttering only a few words in class. In her first interview, English is her preferred language to use with friends in school-based activities, as well as, her perceived linguistic strength. Returning to Maria's comment introduced in the beginning of the section:

*I wish we could only speak English cuz in my life I speak more English than Spanish cuz my cousin, he was born here [United States] and then he went to Mexico and he always showed me how to speak English.*

This quote illustrates how language is what she does not like about Altamont, and consequently what she wants to change. In identifying her relationship with her cousin who taught her English and who was born 'here', meaning the U.S., she also establishes a direct relationship between birthplace and language proficiency. In this interview Maria favors English in multiple ways as she speaks about ways of wanting to change the curriculum to include only English, the ease it is for her to express herself in English, and the struggles she faces using her Spanish. Maria expresses her discontent with her ELD class describing it as a class where she learns "baby English". She acknowledges how the class is for speakers with limited English, but she believes she does not belong in this class. Maria distances herself from Spanish, and this distancing supports a stronger identity with English. At Altamont, Maria becomes socialized in a space through language, where she is being positioned and positions herself vis-à-vis the dominant discourse of a native, English-speaking, non-immigrant causing her to create distance with her Spanish-dominant, Mexican identity.

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<sup>28</sup> Observations occurred: April 2012, December 2012, March 2013, April 2013. Maria is one of several students whose identity with language and school change throughout the study's tenure. For many of the students who exhibit observable, and at times, pronounced shifts in their identity, they are invited to participate in an additional interview in order to understand these observed changes. For these reasons, Maria is a student who was invited in for a fourth interview.

In our first two interviews it is clear how English takes precedence in her life at the expense of Spanish. Maria perceives herself to be a monolingual English speaker remarking, “the only thing I know is English”, providing evidence for this English-only identity in sharing examples of her confusions speaking Spanish, “I don’t like talking in Spanish, like sometimes I get confused, when I’m trying to say like, *espera*, I say *espero*.” When she is asked to explain why it might be important for students to learn two languages in school, she speaks to the importance she sees in only learning English explaining, “because when you grow up here [United States] there’s better like, there’s good university and when you come over here [United States] and you don’t speak English, they don’t accept you.” Unlike, her peers constructing a separation linguistic identity, Maria is not separating the use and function of Spanish and English in life, but only identifies the function of English.

Beliefs about the role Spanish serves in Maria’s life are a limitation in how she takes up her language identity. At home, Spanish is the language Maria uses to communicate with her mother, who in her eyes is competent, to a certain degree, in English. While she acknowledges her mother’s linguistic strength and proficiency in Spanish, Maria explains how she talks to her mother in English who responds to her in Spanish because her mother is developing her English skills. Through this structure, Maria identifies a relationship between her home and English. In school, Maria perceives English to be her linguistic strength, but this perception is not aligned to actual skills. The same can be said for Spanish, where her perceived struggles with Spanish are not aligned to her Spanish skills. In April 2012, when Maria’s fifth grade teacher is asked to reflect on her academic engagement and achievement, her teacher identifies Spanish to be Maria’s linguistic strength in reading and writing. Throughout the year, Maria participates minimally in class and rarely completes homework assignments resulting in a 100-point decrease in her Spanish literacy and math exams. Maria emotionally distances herself from Spanish, which in turn impacts her academic engagement and achievement. Minimal motivation in Spanish guides her schoolwork, and the effort she does bring to her academics during third grade slowly begins to disappear. This lack of engagement also impacts her English language development as she makes minimal progress in developing English. Despite the struggles she faces in learning English, she believes this to be her linguistic strength and does not acknowledge her use of Spanish.

Maria is one of two focal students born outside of the U.S. Her desire to linguistically and socially assimilate is evident in her interview. It is important to understand how Maria’s perceptions may run counter to her capabilities, but her desire to assimilate into the fabric of schooling causes her to distance herself with school because she does not feel comfortable acknowledging and accessing her identity as a speaker. In the end, those resources Christopher and Jesly are able to access become limitations in Maria’s academic world. Despite the fact that she receives instruction in Spanish, her experiences and struggles with school and her desire to develop a level of academic English comparable to her peers, forces her to create a social and academic distance with learning. Maria’s experiences are not unique, several of her peers who were born in the U.S., also creates a distance between their academic self and Spanish. For these students,

the academic activities they participate in, coupled with their desire to academically and linguistically assimilate into school, forces them to position English as an achievable end only if they disassociate with Spanish.

### **The Case of Joshua: A distant identity**

Unlike Maria, Joshua is born in the United States and enters Altamont in kindergarten as a Spanish-dominant speaker and Joshua's case represents how students who are born in this country also take up distant identities. Similar to Maria, his identity with Spanish and English illustrate a distant language identity that he uses to negotiate his last year in elementary school. Joshua shares similarities with Maria in terms of how he perceives the role English serves in his life and how he uses English to support his relationships with friends and academics. Instead, Spanish is a language he uses to accommodate and support his family and friends. Joshua prefers English and believes he is a stronger student in English, explaining, "because it's easier to say the words, in Spanish I really don't understand that much words." Citing examples of how he struggles with Spanish, he explains when he needs to write a note to his mother or grandmother he forgets Spanish words like "house". In reflecting on his friendships, he sees English as the language he uses to communicate with his peers, and clarifies that he uses Spanish because 'sometimes when they don't get the words I just have to say it in Spanish.' Joshua believes his linguistic strength is English, Spanish is used to accommodate for the linguistic deficits of others. "I was stuck in English, I didn't really know that much Spanish so my mom put me in Spanish class", are his understandings of why he is learning two languages in school.

Joshua's kindergarten and first grade teacher, where he received 90% instruction in Spanish, described him as a "wonderful" student and while his academics were at the "lower end", "his language was very rich. For a kindergartener and 1<sup>st</sup> grader, he had really good vocabulary in Spanish. Verb tenses were really well defined. He was so well versed in Spanish that he could speak in the conditional tense, and all those tenses that a lot of kids don't speak in." Joshua's fifth grade teachers did not describe his engagement in a similar light. Participation is minimal in Spanish, and his English teacher describes his literacy skills as "low" and his writing skills were "really low". By the end of the fifth grade, Joshua produces few written artifacts in either Spanish or English. His scores on Spanish standardized tests see a significant drop, while his English scores increase insignificantly by a few points from third to fifth grade. Over his elementary school academic experience Joshua shifts in his language identity. Academic engagement and participation falter as Joshua moves through school and as he is positioned through language he becomes socialized into an academic space where English proficiency is aligned to achievement.

Joshua and Maria's experiences illustrate aspects to a distant language identity. Both students perceive their linguistic strength and preference to be English. They acknowledge English to be a linguistic resource in life, both in how they engage with their friends and classwork. Spanish, in turn, is not perceived to be a resource per se, but rather a means to linguistically accommodate for others who struggle with English. Spanish serves a far different role and function and something that is forced upon them,

as opposed to a skill they want and are proud to use in life. As students are socialized through language in school, students with distant identities need to create distance with the linguistic self they bring with them to school. It is through participation in school-based activities where students are positioned through the dominant English discourse, and where students begin to believe that assimilating into school is equated to letting go a part of their Spanish identity. At Altamont, in terms of academic development, all those students who construct distant language identities are not reclassified and maintain the label *limited English proficient*, which for students who are enrolled in the school district for five or more years is changed to the label *long-term English language learner* upon exiting elementary school.

## **Conclusion**

In Volk & Angelova's (2007) study of peer interactions among first graders in a dual language program, the authors illustrate how Spanish-dominant students accommodate for the English-dominant students in classroom-based activities. The authors argue that this linguistic accommodation is controlled by the larger language ideologies (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994) of the school and society. This chapter deepens this argument by providing evidence about how students' academic experiences structure their use of language, impacting how students perceive themselves as language learners. Altamont students' experiences highlighted in this chapter identify how school socializes students in academic spaces making available and restricting their access to ideational and relational resources.

Language is not only connected to the spoken utterance, but rather it is a representation of the whole person (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Students who are socialized in spaces to take up a distant language identity did not identify Spanish as a form of linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1991), and therefore Spanish holds little value in school and in students' lives. In these students' larger academic worlds, mastering English is legitimized and holds more power in their personal and academic lives. As students are socialized into spaces that legitimize English, this forces students to deny aspects to who they are as individuals. As a result, students' perceptions of themselves as language learners are not aligned to their actual linguistic skills and capabilities. The students in this study live between two linguistic worlds, and their lives exist at the intersection of English and Spanish. However, their struggles with English compromise the role and function Spanish serves in their academic and personal life. It is not surprising why these students want to strengthen and develop their level of English, but they believe in order to do so they need to create a distance with their Spanish identity. In the end, students with a distant identity come to understand the sense of self they are offered at school runs counter to the self they brought with them to school causing them to create a distance with not only language, but their larger academic identity.

## **Chapter 6: The secret linguistic garden: How social networks at Lincoln support language identities**

### **Introduction**

Linguistic and ethnic divisions between Altamont and Lincoln are distinct and impact not only how students organize themselves in school-based activities, but also the types of ideational and relational resources students are able to access in these activities. This dynamic creates nuanced differences in how separation and distant identities function at Lincoln. Lincoln was selected as a comparative research site because of these distinctions. The school is also recognized as having one of the highest reclassification rates in the district, but also has a significant achievement gap between the population of Latino, language learners and White, English-dominant students. In the grade level of the focal students there is also a small percentage of students who claim to speak a level of Spanish in the home where 27% of Lincoln students identify Spanish to be a language spoken in the home, as opposed to the 87% at Altamont. Findings in this chapter are similar to Chapter 5 in that students' language identities shift over time, however in this chapter I argue and illustrate through the experiences of 4 focal students how differences in Lincoln's learning community impacts students' language identities. The chapter begins by describing the unique aspects of the Lincoln community, and then moves to describe the social networks among the Lincoln boys and argues how the relational resources 2 boys are able to access through these networks support each boy's separation identity. The chapter concludes by sharing the experience of one student, Roselyn, who exits elementary school reclassified as a *long-term English language learner*, and argues how the social networks of Lincoln position her to take up an identity where she is distanced from English.

### **Lincoln's school community**

Lincoln is a highly sought after school for both English and Spanish-dominant parents. Reclassification rates and performance on state exams are some of the highest in the district. Leslie, an English-dominant, White parent who lives in the neighborhood and whose three children are graduates from the school discusses with me the metamorphosis she observed in Lincoln's school community over the past decade. When her children were students at the school Leslie was a regular volunteer, but then hired as an outside financial consultant to develop and fund academic and extracurricular programs. In an interview Leslie describes the demographic changes she observed during her tenure as the school population shifted from a predominately African American and Latino community to the school it is today, where approximately 50% of the families identify as White and live in Bay Heights, Lincoln's school neighborhood. To a certain degree, programmatic changes in the school supported these demographic shifts. When Lincoln was predominately African American and Latino many students lived in housing developments located in the southeast corner of the city and traveled up to 4 miles to attend Lincoln. In creating a dual language program, a greater percentage of families living in Bay Heights began to enroll their children in the school. Through this transition, families from the neighborhood, many are from more affluent backgrounds and identify as White, began to send their children to Lincoln shifting the school's demographics.

Over time, changes occurred not only to the linguistic, racial, and ethnic make-up of Lincoln's families and students, but also to the economic revenue the school community generated. While there are multiple differences between Lincoln and Altamont's school structures, one of the most visible differences is in regards to the programmatic structures of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), a parent run organization. Each school in the district has a PTA; however, the PTA at each school functions in unique ways due to the resources the PTA is able to generate. Over the years, as Lincoln's PTA grew in size it began to play a more significant and powerful role in the school community. By the 2011-2012 academic year, the PTA increases its number of parent participants and volunteers to include 15 parents who serve on the executive board, and over 100 parents who are general members, meaning they attend general meetings and vote in larger elections. In terms of the financial mark and the political position of Lincoln's current PTA, by this same year the PTA raises over \$350,000 and funds many programs, including the science, art, and gardening programs. While there are general PTA meetings to elicit opinions from the larger parent community to decide how funds should be allocated, those 15 parents serving on the executive board make all final decisions about fund allocation. Executive meetings are held in English and all but one parent's first language is not English. Anna, the non-native English speaker, is the PTA co-president, and is fluent in English, French, and Spanish. Despite the fact there are constant debates among the community in regards to how PTA money should be spent, both Spanish and English-dominant parents share with me they are grateful for the PTA funded programs as they recognize many schools in the district do not have these programs due to insufficient funds.

Lincoln students are also aware of the academic advantages these programs provide. Oscar, a focal student whose experiences are discussed in this chapter shares with me shortly into our first interview that he is happy to be at Lincoln because, "there's classes that other school's don't have like art, computer, or drama." These classes are also PTA funded programs. Ultimately, with these changes in the school's population came changes to the amount of financial resources for the community, as well as new divisions across the community.

In August 2011, when I entered Lincoln to begin informal observations I was aware of its reputation in the district, and some of the changes the school had endured over the past decade. I was not aware of the extent to these changes until December 2011 when formal data collection commenced. Data collected of field notes of PTA, community, and staff meetings reveals both the changes and divisions in the Lincoln community. The divisions across ethnicity and language that structure parent meetings also guide students' interactions. This chapter argues how these divisions across language and ethnicity structure students' participation in school-based activities and affect the resources students are able to access to construct a language identity. By focusing on the academic experiences of four students, the chapter discusses how a separation, dual and distant language identity function at Lincoln. Research on schools has discussed how students organize themselves into groups defined by race, ethnicity, and language (Lewis, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999), and these similar observations occur at both Lincoln and Altamont. The structures specific to each school determines how different linguistic and ethnic



groups operate, and in turn impacts the ideational and relational resources students are able to access. The chapter begins by using the experiences of two focal students, Matthew and Oscar, to illustrate the differences in how resources function to support a separation language identity among Lincoln boys. The chapter then explains the experiences of Nora and Roselyn to argue how a dual and distant language identity operates among the girls.

### **Linguistic Divisions at Lincoln**

Spanish and English mark distinct divisions across multiple spaces at Lincoln. Matthew, a Lincoln focal student, describes the linguistic division in an accurate, but unique way. In April 2012, Matthew identifies the non-academic school spaces of the school garden where his peers generally speak Spanish.

*Jen: Why do you think mostly everybody chooses to speak English?*

*Matthew: Cuz, everybody mostly talks English outside.*

*Jen: Everyone?*

*Matthew: Yeah.*

*Jen: What do you mean, who's everyone?*

*Matthew: Like all the boys and the girls. But most, but most of the girls, the girls that are helping in the garden talk Spanish.*

*Jen: The girls that are helping in the garden? When do you guys work in the garden?*

*Matthew: Umm, umm we have a garden class and umm we just like learn about plants.*

*Jen: Oh.*

*Matthew: And sometimes, and, and, and in the middle of recess the girls go to the garden, or the secret garden to umm help the garden teacher, and they talk Spanish.*

In this exchange Matthew identifies how language structures students' participation in non-academic activities. The *secret garden* is the actual name of Lincoln's large garden where students learn aspects to horticulture as they plant and care for multiple fruits and vegetables during gardening class. The garden, as well as the gardening teacher, Becky, and her gardening class is a PTA funded program. Students appear to enjoy this somewhat non-traditional academic space as they learn multiple aspects of gardening and horticulture. In our above exchange, Matthew accurately describes the ways in which language is used during non-academic times. Aside from the academic spaces where students are taught in Spanish, the majority of Lincoln students rarely use Spanish during non-academic times of lunch and recess. A small group of Spanish-dominant girls is an exception to this practice and Spanish is used among these girls to communicate. At times, as Matthew describes, these girls retreat to the secret garden to play or assist the garden teacher. In the second section of this chapter, I return to these girls to describe how Spanish functions in their academic lives in and outside the *secret garden*.

### **The case of Matthew: Separation identities at Lincoln**

Matthew is a case of a how separation identities function at Lincoln. Lincoln's unique social network of boys structure how students access resources to form a separation identity. Matthew is one of three boys in his grade whose home language is Spanish. Oscar and Matthew are the two students who met the selection criteria to participate in the study. While both boys take up a separation identity, the differences in how the two

boys are positioned through language impacts their participation in school activities, the types of relational and ideational resources the boys access, and how their separation identity functions. In describing the social dynamics among the Lincoln boys, the section argues how the relational and ideational resources each boy is able to access through the way in which they are positioned in school shapes their separation identity.

### **Matthew: The role and function of English**

Matthew is able to acquire a level of oral and written English with relative ease, and as a result he is one of the first students to reclassify out of LEP status in his grade. His social, emotional, and academic development is never a concern to his teachers. Matthew's fourth grade teacher tried to get him into a local, independent, private school because of this achievement explaining, "I tried to get him into The Academy, they were ready to take him, but he didn't want to leave. He's going to be just fine. He is able to get along and keep up, beyond some of his peers." In data collected across interviews and observations, Matthew explains why he enjoys school, and as this section illustrates, the social network at Lincoln provides Matthew opportunities to access relational resources to support his separation identity.

English serves a distinct role in Matthew's academic life, where the language defines and structures his school interactions. Students' social networks create and support the relational resources Matthew is able to access to support his separation identity. Among the fifth grade boys, English structures these social networks and students are positioned through English in academic and non-academic settings.

"Cuz, everybody mostly talks English outside," are Matthew's reflection about how language is used among Lincoln students. In interviews Matthew explains how he uses English to speak with friends because this is the school's linguistic norm. Over the two academic years of data collection, there are 3 boys in his grade who speak Spanish in the home. Despite the fact that instruction is evenly split across Spanish and English, English dominates academic spaces among students. English is the home language of the majority of students, and this is also the language favored by students in and outside of class.

Relational resources are structured through English. Friendships and language determine how students organize themselves and how they interact with each other in activities during recess. Matthew's good friends are all students with a home language of English. As a result, Matthew becomes socialized in a space where English structures his friendships and subsequently the relational resources he uses to support his separation identity. For these reasons, Matthew separates the role and function of Spanish and English in life. As discussed in Chapter 5, Altamont students separate the two languages along academic lines, where Spanish serves an important function to sustain and develop personal relationships among family and friends in and outside of school. At Altamont, Jesly's academic experiences support her use of English in academic spaces where she accommodates her English-speaking peers. While she is friendly with these peers she does not develop strong relationships with them. Furthermore, Spanish maintains its important function to communicate with her Spanish-dominant friends in non-academic spaces. Similar to Jesly, Matthew accommodates for his English-dominant peers in class

and uses English. However, unlike Jesly, this level of accommodation extends to non-academic spaces of recess and lunch because Matthew's friendships are with English-dominant peers. Among Lincoln boys the role of Spanish is isolated to academic activities when students are required to use the language. Partly due to the frustration English-dominant students face in expressing themselves in Spanish, many students push these linguistic norms in class and use English. Matthew is cognizant of these norms and follows them, but acknowledges how this choice of language is imposed on him by sharing, "when she [his fourth grade teacher] talks in Spanish, we need to talk in Spanish." In this quote, he does not acknowledge the role and function Spanish serves in learning, but rather the way in which the language is imposed on learning.

Matthew's participation in extracurricular activities is structured through English. Kickball is a game the fifth grade students often play during recess, and English is used among students to play this game. While soccer is also a game students play in a small area of the yard, it is played by Spanish-dominant, fourth grade students. While soccer plays a role in Matthew's life, he does not participate in the soccer games at school because it is not played among his friends. As a result, soccer is an activity associated outside of school. While it is an activity connected to Spanish, it is an activity that is bounded by the social context resting outside of school. In school, soccer is affiliated with primarily Spanish-dominant, fourth grade boys and kickball is played by primarily English-dominant fifth grade boys, and seldom do these two groups integrate. Matthew's friends speak English and play kickball, and these students are his social network in school and serve as relational resources he accesses to construct his language identity.

### **Matthew: The role and function of Spanish**

Soccer plays an important role in Matthew's life. In all three interviews Matthew identifies its role as he explains his love for the game and how his father coaches his team. While his father is not fluent in English or in his overall literacy skills, he coaches the soccer team affiliated with Lincoln, a team where many of Matthew's English-dominant peers play. Soccer becomes an activity where Spanish is used and valued, however, it is an activity that remains outside of school.

Spanish symbolizes a connection to his family and the language becomes a relational resource outside of school. While Matthew separates the function Spanish serves in his life to his home, he wants to continue his education in Spanish because he does not want to lose the language. He touches upon this idea in all three interviews. In April 2012, Matthew explains to me why he is placed in a bilingual program, "She [my mom] doesn't know how to talk in English and she wants me to learn English so I can translate for her." In December 2012, Matthew reiterates this point when asked why he is in a bilingual program and explains, "So, I can understand what people are trying to tell her [my mom] when she doesn't understand." Finally, in our Spring 2013 interview, Matthew's desire and reasoning to continue to develop his bilingualism in middle school is explained by sharing, "Most, a lot of people can't talk English and I want to talk to them but I can't, since they don't talk English. Matthew refers to his family and his community outside of school in sharing, 'a lot of people can't talk English.' Relational resources outside of school support a Spanish identity. Spanish becomes a valuable tool to not only support

his relationship with his family, but to support a relationship between his family and the English-dominant society in which they live.

### **Matthew's separation language identity**

Matthew's participation in school-based activities provides him with a set of ideational and relational resources to construct a separation identity. As he engages in these activities, Matthew is positioned through English in social and academic spaces. Lincoln teachers teach the same group of students in Spanish and English and therefore have an understanding their students' proficiency in both languages. At times, teachers switch to English to explain a complicated concept they believe their English-dominant students struggle to understand, or switch to Spanish for similar reasons. However, in fourth grade, Matthew's teacher often switches to English to explain difficult concepts she is teaching in Spanish. Through these experiences, English becomes the tool to translate and to support student learning. Teachers' use of language, as well as how the Lincoln boys independently use the languages in academic and non-academic relationships influence how English serves as a relational resource. Relationships with both teachers and peers support the role and function of English and Matthew's relationships outside of school support the role and function of Spanish. It is through activities, and subsequently through relationships that these activities support Matthew separates the role and function of each language. Spanish serves a minimal role in Matthew's relationships in school. English supports his school friendships, as well as with his relationship with his academics. Figure 5, which is first introduced in Chapter 4, outlines how the relational and ideational resources function to support Matthew's separation language identity. The bolded text indicates the differences between separation identities at Lincoln and Altamont.

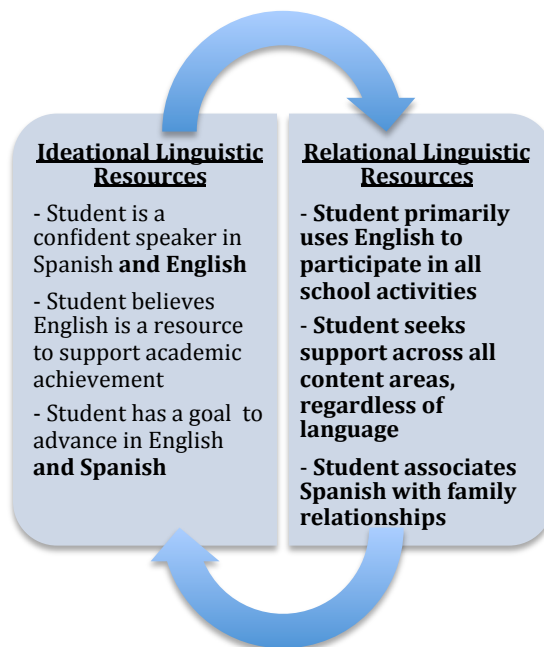


Figure 5. Separation language identity, Lincoln

Distinct differences in how Spanish and English function across Lincoln impacts the types of relational and ideational resources students are able to access and the

characteristics of a separation identity. Relational resources students are able to access in academic settings support the use of English, however students seek support in relationships with teachers to support their development of Spanish. One of the differences between how separation identities function at Lincoln as opposed to Altamont is in terms of students' academic relationships and engagement. At Altamont, students engage and participate less frequently in their Spanish language arts. This is not evident at Lincoln when triangulating the data across teacher and student interviews, and observational field notes. Matthew, and Oscar who will be discussed later, both engage and participate in activities to develop their Spanish literacy skills. At times, they use English with their peers during Spanish instruction, especially during group work, but this language choice is a means to communicate with peers and does not indicate the quality of work or effort they put in their Spanish work. Their engagement in Spanish does not falter because both boys want to develop and maintain their Spanish to support familial relationships.

The structures at Lincoln impact not only the relational resources, but also the ideational resources Matthew is able to access in his academics. Ideational resources are the ideas and beliefs about the role and function Spanish and English serve in life. In addition, Matthew's confidence that is guiding his learning also becomes an ideational resource to support his separation identity. Matthew's confidence in English can be observed in multiple ways. Matthew is one of the first students to be reclassified and is therefore no longer enrolled in an ELD class, but rather in a class where the majority of students' home language is English. When questioned why students are placed in different English classes during the first 30 minutes of the day, Matthew explains to me that, "well, some people they, the people that need English development like [*names those students who are still classified LEP*], they go to different classes." He further explains that he is not in this class because, "I'm good at English already." Lincoln's programmatic structures support how he sees himself as a strong English speaker and his ideas about how English supports his academic achievement. Matthew's English skills and his personal relationships structure the ways he is able to engage with school, the types of ideational and relational resources he is able to access, and ultimately the separation identity he is able to construct.

Oscar, Matthew's peer who also constructs a separation identity, struggles with English and these academic challenges impact Oscar's confidence as a language learner. Unlike Matthew, Oscar struggles to create strong ties with his English-dominant peers, impacting how Oscar participates in school-based academic and non-academic activities and the resources he is able to access through these activities. The following section illustrates how Oscar's participation in certain activities structures his separation identity.

### **The case of Oscar: Processes of socialization and access to resources**

Oscar is a case of how his positioning in school among the social network of Lincoln boys, structures how he is able to access certain relational resources to construct a separation identity. Oscar is a quiet and reserved student. His fifth grade teacher places him in the front row because of this silence and his learning struggles. His fourth grade teacher describes him as a "dependent" and "passive" learner, who is engaged with school, but struggles with English reading and despite these struggles he tends to

“migrate towards English.” There are several similarities between how language is used to structure Matthew and Oscar’s language identity. English structures personal and academic relationships in school. Spanish serves an important function with family outside of school, and bilingualism is a valued skill set used to translate for his parents. However, unlike Matthew, Oscar struggles academically in English and affects his success in assimilating into the English-dominant culture among the fifth grade boys. Social relationships are defined and redefined in primarily in two non-academic spaces, on the yard during recess and in the cafeteria during lunch. At both schools, language positions students among their peers during lunch. Among the Lincoln fifth grade boys in Oscar and Matthew’s class, students for the most part sit at one end of a table in the same seating arrangement. During data collection, students seating arrangement is charted weekly. Below, Figure 8 is created from January 29, 2013 field notes of Oscar and Matthew’s lunch table. In our December 2012 interview, I ask Oscar to draw a seating chart of how students organize themselves during lunch, and his seating chart represents the same information of Figure 8. Aside from Oscar and Matthew’s names, students’ names are replaced with students’ home language and gender to provide a picture of student’ arrangement.

Spanish Girl	Spanish Girl	Spanish Girl				<i>Oscar</i>	1.English Boy	<b>2.English Boy</b>	3.English Boy
Spanish Girl	Spanish Girl			<b>7.Spanish Boy</b>		4.English Boy	5.English Boy	<i>Matthew</i>	6.English Girl

Figure 8. Lunch arrangement, January 29, 2013

In many ways, this lunch seating arrangement illustrates the differences between Oscar and Matthew’s social positioning at Lincoln. Among the fifth grade boys, Oscar is on the peripheral of the social network, not to the extent of the boy seated in position 7 of Figure 8, which represents the boy who recently emigrated from Mexico, but still on the peripheral. Matthew instead is an active participant and this is symbolized by his central location at the lunch table. Neither Oscar, nor Matthew, identifies the other as a good friend, but instead both boys identify Jack, who is seated in position 2 of Figure 8, as a good friend. In analyzing field notes, Jack and Matthew are visibly close, but Oscar and Jack are not. In school, Jack and Matthew sit in the back of the class, exchanging looks, comments, and laughs. During non-academic activities, Jack and Matthew play together during recess, and sit across or next to each other at lunch. Outside of school, Matthew and Jack are on the same soccer team and Matthew shares that he went on a few ‘play dates’ to Jack’s house. In contrast, when Oscar is asked to share similarities between Jack and himself, or the activities they enjoy to play with each other, Oscar is at loss of words. Regardless of his inability to explain this friendship, Oscar identifies Jack as one of his close friends throughout multiple interviews.

In December 2012, Oscar and I discuss the social networks among the boys and have the following exchange.

*Jen: Why do you think this [referring to the lunch seating arrangement he sketched] happens?*

*Oscar: Since the beginning of the year, we kind of decided everybody that would be our seats. Well, with the boys only, that would be our, like [our] seats, where we would always sit.*

*Jen: Oh, who was in charge of who was going to sit where?*

*Oscar: Mmm, well we just all, well, it just came up.*

*Jen: It just came up?*

*Oscar: Yeah. The first days we sat where we sat, and then we just sat the next day and the next day, and then Jack, well Jack gave the idea that we would sit there, they would like kind of be permanent seats.*

*Jen: Jack gave the idea that you would sit and made them permanent seats. Do you like sitting over here (pointing to his location)?*

*Oscar: Well, I prefer sitting next to Jack, but Matthew came.*

*Jen: Oh.*

*Oscar: Or sometimes Aidan (boy seated in position 1. English boy) sits next to Jack and I sit here.*

*Jen: You know what I've noticed sometimes the kids are talking and it's hard for you to talk with them?*

*Oscar: Mmm, sometimes yeah.*

*Jen: Do you wish you were able to talk more?*

*Oscar: Mmm, if I could sit next to Jack all the time, I would.*

*Jen: But why don't you?*

*Oscar: Cuz, Matthew sometimes like, he comes here before me to the cafeteria.*

Jack holds a powerful position at the school. Academically, he is at the top of the class. Socially, he often serves as team captain of one of the kickball teams and selects students for his team. As Oscar describes in the exchange above, this social position is also enacted in how he guides the lunch seating arrangement. Jack symbolizes the struggle Oscar faces in assimilating into the social structure at Lincoln, a struggle that Matthew does not face during the study's tenure. The lunch seating arrangement and the role Jack and Matthew play in this dynamic symbolize this struggle. Language also becomes a factor that challenges Oscar to assimilate into the social network at Lincoln because Oscar struggles with English. While he is reclassified a few months before leaving elementary school, his fifth grade teacher debates about his reclassification because his reading and writing does not compare to his peers. His personality also hinders his assimilation; he is quiet, reserved and lacks the confidence Matthew exudes. Oscar is aware of these personality traits explaining, "I don't really talk to most of my classmates", which is illustrated in the fact that he often plays four-square with a group of fourth grade students, but is uncertain of their names. Oscar is positioned through language and social networks at Lincoln, which prevents him from using his separation identity to penetrate the larger community of boys in his grade.

### **Relational and Ideational Resources: Oscar versus Matthew**

Highlighting the social dynamics at Lincoln illustrates the differences in how Oscar and Matthew are able to gain access to relational and ideational resources to support a separation identity. Matthew gains access to multiple relational resources with his English-dominant students, access that Oscar is not given. Access to certain relational resources occurs through activities Matthew engages in with his English-dominant peers including his participation in the soccer league, his enrollment in the non-ELD class, and how he engages in kickball games during recess or in conversations with his English-dominant peers during lunch. In contrast, several factors impact how Oscar is unable to participate in these same activities. Some of these factors include Oscar's English skills, personality, and family obligations to church restrict his participation in the soccer league. These differences structure Oscar's opportunity to participate in certain activities and access relational resources that determine how his separation identity functions at school.

At Lincoln, English structures the social networks among the boys and impacts students' ideational resources. The difference in Matthew and Oscar's confidence in English is determined by each boy's challenges and successes to learn the language. Oscar prefers English, a language he struggles with but a language he needs to use in order to assimilate into Lincoln's social structure. Matthew does not struggle with English, so he is able to separate the languages with confidence and ease to participate in activities. Oscar does not engage in activities with this same level of confidence, which is represented in how he remains in a peripheral position among his peers at lunch. While it is a position he wants to change, he is not successful in doing so because of multiple factors including his confidence, personality, and how his peers place him in a certain role as an inactive member in their group of friends. Lincoln structures a unique set of activities for Oscar and Matthew impacting the relational and ideational resources they are able to access to construct a language identity. While the two boys construct a separation identity, different processes of socialization determine how this identity constructs and guide each boy's learning.

### **Language use in and outside the secret garden**

At Lincoln, it is visible how gender impacts students' participation in activities. Observational field notes identify differences in how boys and girls engage in these activities. There are more Spanish-dominant girls in Matthew and Oscar's grade, which structure the social networks among the girls and impacts the language identities the girls are able to take up. In the following exchange with Nora, a focal student, she explains these structural differences across the social networks of girls by identifying the struggle she faces in creating a community at Lincoln.

*Jen: What do you mean most of the people in your class talk English?*

*Nora: Like, I'm going to tell you the only people that talk Spanish with their families. It's Michael, Karla, Roselyn, Karla, Natalia, Matthew, who else? Oscar, Antonia. Umm, let's see, Inez, and that's it, and me. Only eight people talk Spanish and the rest, there's 26 in our class and only 8 of them talk Spanish at their house.*



Reiterating and emphasizing how ‘only’ 8 students in her grade speak Spanish in the home, Nora explains how this ratio impacts her ability to construct a social network. Later in this interview she explains how this ratio is something she wants to change about Lincoln.

During the 2011-2012 academic year when the study began, six girls in the fourth grade are from Spanish-speaking homes. All six students, with the exception of one, are classified as an English language learner because they receive an overall score of *intermediate* on the CELDT. At the end of this year, two girls transfer to a local charter school, but are replaced by two girls who recently emigrate from Mexico. These new students, Karla and Natalia, are labeled as *newcomers*, meaning they are recent immigrants and their emerging English skills do not classify them at an *intermediate* level on the CELDT. While these students are not focal students because of their English proficiency, Karla and Natalia serve an important role to restructure the social networks among Lincoln’s fifth grade Spanish-dominant girls. These social networks are highlighted in the following section to illustrate how dual and distant language identities function at Lincoln. The following section discusses the experiences of two students, Nora and Roselyn, to illustrate how language, Spanish in particular, is used among the Spanish-dominant girls in academic and non-academic activities to inform the girls’ dual and distant language identity.

#### **The case of Nora: A dual language identity**

Nora is a case of a student with a dual language identity, but illustrates how relational resources structure the ways in which this identity guides her through school. Nora is a determined and assertive, but sensitive child and this determination drives her academic engagement and achievement. Albeit difficult, Nora experiences academic success but struggles to create a community of friends at Lincoln to support this success. During the 18-months of data collection, enrollment among the Spanish-dominant girls in Nora’s grade changes. Nora is not only aware of these changes, but she is able to reflect on the ways in which these changes impact her social networks. In December 2012, she explains how these changes create a space of acceptance and comfort for her at Lincoln, which is something she struggles to find.

*Jen: Why do you think you’re [Karla, Natalia, Roselyn] all friends?*

*Nora: Because we don’t want to be lonely. Cuz, first I only had Maria Emma. On kindergarten, I only had Maria Emma, then on first grade, I only had Maria Emma, and all the years I had Maria Emma, and then last year I had Maria Emma and Roselyn. And then this year I thought I was going to be lonely cuz, cuz, we didn’t talk that much with Roselyn. Sometimes, we didn’t talk that much with Roselyn, so I thought I was going to be lonely this year, but no, cuz I found, I found Karla and Natalia.*

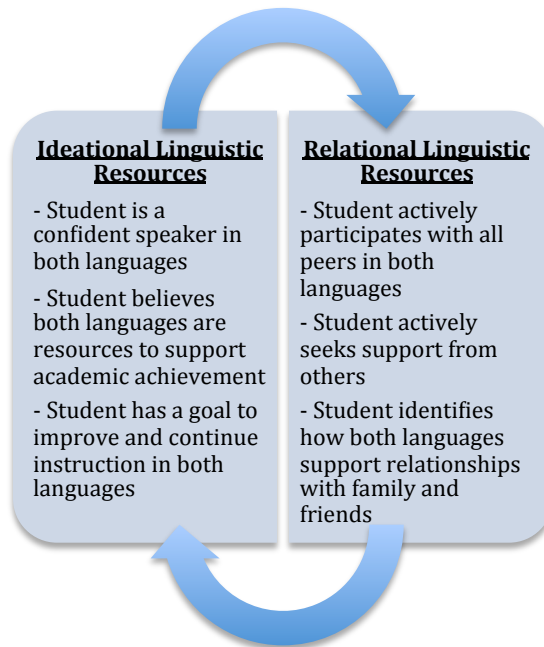
As Nora explains above, she longed for a community at school because she doesn’t “want to be lonely”. Albeit her community is small, her fears at the end of fourth grade that she will be lonely due to the fact that Maria Emma left are put at bay with Karla and Natalia’s arrival. During the first half of the 2012-2013 academic year, Nora, Karla, Natalia, and Roselyn form a strong social network. These friendships quickly strengthen during the

first few months of school and become relational resources Nora is able to access to support the role Spanish serves in her schooling.

Nora's level of linguistic confidence becomes an ideational resource for her dual identity. Nora prefers Spanish explaining, "Because I was born that way." She is cognizant of the linguistic differences between her peers both in numbers, as she explains the number of Spanish-dominant students in relation to the entire class, and through students' perceived language skills. Nora explains that she does not write in English as much as her peers because of her English language development (ELD) level. While Nora references ELD to compare her production of written English to her peers, she is still confident in herself as a learner and English speaker. As she recognizes her linguistic strengths in Spanish, she believes it is normal for her English-dominant peers to be stronger students in English because as she explains, "their family already has English in their blood." Nora holds a level of confidence and pride in her Spanish literacy skills, and a level of determination to develop her English literacy skills. In December 2012, after getting transferred to the non-ELD class because she is reclassified, she believes her English skills are developing, explaining with a sense of pride that she "passed the test". The test she refers to is the CELDT. Participation in certain activities including the non-ELD class and a ceremony for winning a district-award for one of her bilingual poems support a level of confidence and pride in her bilingualism. Furthermore, participation in these activities fosters confidence in her language skills, as well as her belief that she is an intelligent student. These beliefs become ideational resources for her dual identity.

### **Nora's dual language identity**

Throughout her time at Lincoln Nora is able to construct a dual language identity. Spanish and English serve an important role in her academic and personal life. She holds a level of confidence in her bilingualism, and while she expresses her linguistic struggles with English, by her last interview the linguistic confidence guiding her engagement in school is evident in two explicit ways. First, she believes she is strong in both languages because she moves between the two languages to express her ideas. Second, she challenges the belief several of her peers hold that English-dominant students are smarter. She shares with me, "the English people, they think that they are so, they're so better than anyone, and everyone", but she continues to explain how she believes both the English-dominant and Spanish-dominant students have academic strengths, and identifies how both groups of students academically excel across content areas. Connecting this idea back to her own academics, she explains how she is a strong math student, but needs to improve in science to support her goal of becoming a doctor. Nora's beliefs of herself as a bilingual student function as ideational resources. She is able to access these resources to support her dual language identity. Furthermore, her belief in the similar role and function Spanish and English serve in her life becomes an ideational resource. Nora's dual identity functions in a similar way as it did for those Altamont students. Figure 3 illustrates how Nora's dual language identity holds the same characteristics as the Altamont students.



**Figure 3. Dual language identity, Altamont & Lincoln**

The ideational and relational resources Nora is able to access support her ability to construct a dual identity. In terms of the relational resources, while her friendships change throughout the study's tenure, she looks to her teachers and all of her peers, including her English-dominant peers, as resources to support her language and academic development. Despite the fact that she is not friendly with her English-dominant peers, she participates with them during academic activities. Friendships with her Spanish-dominant peers become relational resources to support the role Spanish serves in both her personal and academic life. Unlike Altamont students constructing a dual language identity, Nora speaks about her friendships with her Spanish-dominant students in opposition to her English-dominant peers. In our April 2013 interview, she identifies her close ties with four of the five other Spanish-dominant girls. Language is the first characteristic she identifies as something that is shared among her friends. In our two interviews from the 2012-2013 academic year, Nora identifies and separates her friends, who spoke in Spanish from her peers who spoke in English. In this way, her friendships with Spanish-dominant students become relational resources to support the important role and function Spanish serves in her academic and personal life. Spanish plays an extremely important role in creating a bond with this group of girls, but the language also functions as a way to divide Nora's friends from her English-dominant peers.

Nora and her friends create a *community of resistance* (hooks, 1990) through Spanish. This community supports Nora in not feeling "lonely" and allows her to fulfill a role of "a great friend", which is something she speaks about in all interviews. This community helps her create a space of belonging at Lincoln, something she struggles to create throughout her time at the school. In many ways, the community of Spanish-dominant girls allows her to step outside the secret garden where she often retreats to with her friends. During fourth grade, the secret garden becomes a place where Nora, Roselyn,

who will be discussed in the following section, and their friend often return to during non-academic times; it is a place where they feel safe and create a space of belonging as they use Spanish. During fifth grade, Nora and Roselyn's community changes with the arrival of Karla and Natalia, and when Inez, another Spanish-dominant student join their group of friends. Nora's social network with these girls creates relational resources for her to construct her language identity. In this way, these five girls, Nora, Karla, Natalia, Inez, and Roselyn use Spanish to form a space of belonging at Lincoln. In this final section, I use the experiences of Roselyn to illustrate the characteristics of a distant language identity. In doing so, I situate Roselyn's experience in the larger social context of Lincoln, as well as the small social network of these Spanish-dominant girls to identify how resources become limitations to support Roselyn's distant identity.

### **The case of Roselyn: A shift from a separation to a distant identity**

Roselyn is a case of how a Lincoln students shifts from a separation to a distant identity. However, she is also a case that demonstrates how the differences in the school communities of Lincoln and Altamont structure the differences in how a distant identity functions at Lincoln and Altamont. Beginning in January 2013, Roselyn begins to shift in how she uses language in school to interact with others and by May 2013, shortly before she graduates from Lincoln, Roselyn creates a social distance with English. As Roselyn moves through elementary school, she struggles with English, but in the latter part of her fifth grade year these struggles support minimal participation in her English classes. Over time, Roselyn is positioned through language at Lincoln where she ultimately creates a social distance between her lived experiences at school and her use of English. This is different than Altamont students with a distant identity because these students create a social distance with Spanish. However, similar to Altamont students with a distant identity, the ideational and relational resources become limitations for Roselyn to construct a distant identity.

### **Classroom structures supporting Roselyn's shifting identity**

In our April 2013 interview, I ask Roselyn to share with me what she would write about herself in a personal narrative. With little hesitation, Roselyn shares that she "is a good drawer, shy, and I like to talk Spanish." Roselyn's relationship with Spanish is similar to Nora's connection to the language. Roselyn prefers Spanish and she believes she is a stronger student in Spanish explaining, "because in English sometimes I don't understand words, and Spanish I understand every word." At the same time, she identifies the role English plays in her life and believes it is more important to learn English in school to support her future employment opportunities. Roselyn separates the role and function Spanish serves in life. Spanish is a valued resource as it provides her with a skill set to support and communicate with her family, and provides her with the space to structure a network of friends in school. Roselyn considers Nora to be her closest friend, and believes their greatest similarity is their ability to speak Spanish.

Roselyn is positioned through English, and subsequently marginalized through the language in school, causing her to create a physical and academic distance with school, her peers, and ultimately with English. Similar to Nora, Roselyn also struggles learning English in school, however while Nora struggles with English, she is able to participate in multiple activities to support her linguistic confidence. Roselyn is not provided a similar

set of opportunities. Instead, Roselyn participates in multiple activities to provide her extra support in English. These activities are focused on improving her English whether it is through her ELD class or her participation in the English afterschool-tutoring program. Shortly into the study, Roselyn's fourth grade classroom teacher expresses concerns about her academic development because she receives the lowest score on the English language arts state test and her engagement with school starts to change. While her Spanish reading scores minimally increase, her English reading development scores drop significantly. In January 2013, a meeting occurs and additional academic testing is requested to see if Roselyn has a learning disability. During this meeting it is revealed that Roselyn suffers from anxiety, is diagnosed with *General Anxiety Disorder*, and receives counseling services from the city. Despite this diagnosis, tests do not indicate a learning disability. After this time, I tell her classroom teacher that if Roselyn agrees, I would begin reading with her independently to support her reading. I only conceded to the arrangement if our time reading together is student-directed where she identifies the book we read. When we first begin our reading sessions, she likes the fact that she is able to leave the classroom. At times she would remind me during lunch to come get her to read. I came to realize that sometimes her 'reminder' to me is simply an assurance that she is be able to leave the classroom.

Our reading sessions and interviews provide me with data to understand how Roselyn engages with school and how she identifies as a learner. Roselyn is not in a classroom with Nora and her other Spanish-dominant friends, but rather in a classroom where the majority of her peers are fourth graders. She is one of six fifth graders, but the only one who speaks Spanish at home. During classroom observations she is a student who works alone. Roselyn's nature to work alone is observed across content areas, but as the academic year progresses I observe how her peers often impose this structure of independence on her. At times, her peers exclude her from group projects and Roselyn does not ask for help or assert her role as an active group member. This dynamic is often observed during science class, which is taught by a PTA funded science teacher who has a large budget to fund hands-on, science projects. During one project, students are placed in groups of four to construct a model of a windmill and test the efficacy of their model. During these activities Roselyn often assumes a more passive role, but her efforts to participate are often ignored resulting in her to work alone. The field notes below capture her participation working in a small group during the windmill activity. On this particular day, students are at the final stage in their windmill project. The teacher requires they create a presentation to share with the class why and how they constructed their windmill, the degree to which their model is effective, and the changes they would make to their model.

*Roselyn is working in a group with three English-dominant girls. The girls are passing around their windmill and placing it on their heads to balance. Roselyn is staring at them. Roselyn leaves the group and moves closer to the poster Ms. T has on the chalkboard. She begins to write something on her paper. She writes the steps they must follow, and the questions they must answer to create a presentation. Meanwhile the three girls remain at the table, and begin answering the questions Roselyn went to write down.*

*Student 2: We changed the angle.*

*Student 3: No, at first we didn't have an angle and then we put an angle.*

*Student 2: Can I see this? (Looking over at Student 3's piece of paper)*

*Roselyn returns to the group, but chooses the seat apart from the group, located on the other side of the table. The three girls are standing around their windmill. Student 2 and 4 are holding the blades and the three girls are debating whether this was their initial design. Student 3, "We did have a first design before this, didn't we?" In a low voice Roselyn asks, "What did we learn?" The girls continue to talk and do not answer her question. She asks again, "What did we learn?" The girls continue to debate about whether the model they were holding was their initial design. Roselyn begins to answer the questions independently. After 10 or so minutes, Roselyn asks Student 2 to read her work. Student 2 does not respond to Roselyn's question. Student 2 picks up the blade and identifies a place in the blades where it is coming undone. This student shows Student 3 what has happened and tells her it needs to be fixed. Roselyn begins to read what she has written aloud but to herself in a quiet voice. When she is done, she comes to me, shows me her work, and asks, "Is this okay?"*

This captures the role Roselyn often assumes during group projects. It is not in her nature to speak up or assert herself as Nora might have done. The ways Roselyn is positioned in this group support a physical and academic distance with her peers where she is marginalized from the curriculum through the social dynamics among her peers.

### **Roselyn's distant language identity**

During the last two months of school, Roselyn's engagement with school and motivation to complete her work begins to change significantly. Multiple teachers across content areas identify this change. Roselyn's quiet and passive nature that once guided her learning becomes one where she pushes boundaries. Creating a social and academic distance with school, Roselyn starts to act out. Her math teacher who teaches a small class comprised of the six fifth graders from Roselyn's class describes her shift in behavior. He cites numerous examples sharing how she refuses to complete work, and acts out where she once walks up to the front board, erases the homework, and announces that there is no homework for the evening. Refusing to read in English, Roselyn only chooses to read in Spanish. To avoid participating in her after-school English tutoring program, she begins to lie to her mother and the program's director. She tells her mother the program ended, and tells the program's director that she switched after-school programs and would no longer be able to attend. Roselyn's ideas of herself as both a student and bilingual learner become limitations and affect her engagement with school. As a result, her beliefs about herself as a student, beliefs that once serve as ideational resources transform into ideational limitations. These limitations are illustrated through her struggles to learn in both languages and how she distances herself from this learning. This is evident in how she attempts to finish projects on her own, as illustrated in the excerpt above, to the ways in which she begins to disengage in her academics as she stops completing her classwork and homework, as well as attending support services as seen in the after-school reading program.

For Roselyn, her relational resources also become limitations. The community of friends that she belongs to slowly begins to disintegrate. In the last few weeks of school, divisions form across Nora and Roselyn's network of friends they both appreciate and value. Nora, Roselyn, and their friendship with the three Spanish-dominant girls create a space for them to speak Spanish, which transform over time into a space of belonging. However, this social network slowly begins to unravel and with it this space of belonging is disrupted. As explained above through Nora's experience, this network of Spanish-dominant girls become a strong and powerful support system over a short period of time as Roselyn, Nora, Karla, Natalia, and Inez create a safe space in school, what I define as a *community of resistance* (hooks, 1990). As illustrated in Chapter 5, the friendships among the Altamont girls also become relational resources and while Spanish serves an important role in supporting a level of communication among friends, the language does not function, define, or differentiate the different friend groups at Altamont. In contrast, at Lincoln, Spanish becomes the tool that helps build a friendship between Roselyn, Nora and their friends and also becomes the characteristic that defines the group in opposition to the other friend groups in their grade. While the girls have other things in common the girls define themselves and function as a collective group by their Spanish language. Over time this group begins to unravel as it becomes extremely insular and the girls begin to become jealous of the individual friendships that are forming among them. Friendships that once serve to be a relational resource to support and nurture Roselyn's belonging at Lincoln soon become a limitation to construct a distant identity with English and her overall identity as a Lincoln student. During mid-May, only weeks before her fifth grade graduation, Roselyn and I speak about some of these changes. At first she is reluctant to talk, but she then shares she is 'tired' and 'angry'. Through our conversation, she explains how her tire is a result of the disagreements and fighting that occur between her friends, and her anger grows from how she is treated by her English-dominant peers.

Lincoln becomes a place where Roselyn struggles to learn and to belong. Academic struggles she faces across content areas and in learning English, as well as the classes she engages in, and the peers she works alongside become ideational and relational limitations. Her belief that she can academically excel is compromised by the structure of her classes and how she is positioned by her peers. A lack of confidence and the ways in which she is forced to question her identity as a learner become ideational limitations and creates an academic distance with English. Similarly, the change in her friendships with her Spanish-dominant peers, and the ways in which she is positioned in academic spaces by her English-dominant peers become limitations in the relational resources she is able to access. These relational limitations support her in creating a social distance with English. At the end of elementary school, Roselyn's academic and social experiences provide her with minimal resources and as a result she distances herself from English creating a distant identity.

## **Conclusion**

In describing Roselyn, Nora, Oscar, and Matthew's experiences, this chapter argues how Lincoln's social networks among the fifth grade students, which are divided by gender, structures students' participation in school-based activities and provides opportunities for students to access certain ideational and relational resources to support a dual, separation,

or distant identity. Participation differs for each student in terms of the role the student assumes in activities, which in turn impacts how the student engages in coursework and relationships with the large population of English-dominant peers. All Lincoln students are socialized through language and the ways they are positioned through social networks structures their language identities. At Lincoln, Roselyn becomes socialized in a space through language, where she is being positioned and positions herself vis-à-vis the dominant discourse of a native, English-speaking, non-immigrant causing her to create distance with her English identity.

Differences in students' English proficiency and their relationships with peers determine how students participate in school. For Matthew, his academic and linguistic skills provide him with opportunities to build confidence as a student, and this confidence becomes an ideational resource. Matthew's academic skills provide him with the opportunity to participate in class and form friendships with his English-dominant peers, relationships that later become relational resources. Oscar's personality, as well as his linguistic and academic skills affects how he is able to engage in activities. In navigating through his school experience, Oscar constructs a separation identity, however the ways in which his separation identity functions differ from Matthew because of their academic experiences.

Lincoln students use language to separate and integrate themselves in social networks. These networks are visible on the playground during recess and in the cafeteria during lunch. While this also occurred at Altamont, the divisions at Lincoln are more distinct in terms of language and gender since there are few language learners in the fifth grade and the majority of these language learners are girls. Findings discussed in this chapter support findings from previous studies that identify the role that socioeconomics, gender, and language dialect play in how elementary, school-aged students organize and group themselves in school-based activities (MacRuairé, 2011; Rymes & Anderson, 2004; Volk & Angelova, 2007). In studying 54 working-class Irish students in their last year in a Dublin elementary school, MacRuairé (2011) identifies a relationship between the ways in which students organize themselves by gender, socioeconomics, and linguistic dialects. As a result, students create friend groups where several of these groups see the need to reject the linguistic norms of the school in order to sustain their identity as a working-class student. While the study is situated in Ireland, it supports findings from U.S. studies in how high school students may construct identities that are not aligned with school and do not support academic engagement, but do preserve a sense of who the students are as individuals (Carter, 2005; Nasir, 2012; Valenzuela, 1999).

At Lincoln, gender and language set distinct boundaries on how students organize themselves, and subsequently organize students' experiences and the roles they assume in both academic and non-academic activities. Oscar is unable to integrate into the English-dominant group of boys to the extent of Matthew who is an active member and participant in academic and non-academic activities with his English-dominant peers. In comparison, Nora's determination and assertive personality provides her with a set of skills to engage in certain activities in order to access ideational and relational resources to construct a dual language identity. While she struggles to create a community, her



participation in activities and the ways in which her personality guides her through these experiences provides her with a set of resources to construct a dual identity. Roselyn's experience is unique, but represents the idea that school can create experiences that marginalize and limit students' opportunities to believe that academic achievement is a possibility through how students are able to participate with peers in academic activities. For Roselyn, she is unable to participate in positive activities to foster a level of engagement in her learning. Relationships with her classroom peers develop into limitations causing her to distance herself from her coursework. In addition, her friendships with her Spanish-dominant peers suffer because there is no space of belonging in the larger school community for this group of students. For each Lincoln student, school creates a unique set of experiences to support a language identity. It is through these experiences and the ways in which the school supports and sustains these experiences, where students are either provided opportunities to access resources or limitations to construct their language identities.

## **Chapter 7: “I was born with Spanish”– The relationship between language learning, ethnicity, and race for young language learners**

### **Introduction**

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 argue that learning and language identities are informed by each other, where students’ learning in school informs the students’ language-learning identity and these identities in turn inform students’ learning experiences. In highlighting the experiences of 8 focal students across Lincoln and Altamont these chapters examine the processes of socialization that position students to take up one of three language identities – dual, separation, distant - and the implications these identities have on students’ academic participation, language use, and classification status. In this chapter, I argue how students’ language identities are also connected to students’ ethnic and racial identities. Data collected through student interviews illustrates how the 21 focal students are beginning to think about their ethnicity, and this ethnic identity is related to students’ language use and the function language serves in their learning environments. Furthermore, early into students’ academic career, schools become spaces where they not only learn how to use language, but also work through who they are in terms of their racial and ethnic selves in relation to this language use. Data presented in this chapter illustrates how it is through language that students construct a sense of their ethnic selves as they position themselves and are positioned through language learning experiences. Through an analysis of 19 of the 21 student<sup>29</sup> interviews, this chapter reveals the ways in which language becomes a variable to shape students’ understandings of what it means to be an American<sup>30</sup>, a Latino/a, or a Latino/a-American living in the U.S.

### **Relationships between language and ethnicity**

Language is a tool used to evaluate and delineate dimensions of ethnicity (Fishman, 1989) and membership in societal social and cultural groups. This idea is represented below in my exchange with two Altamont focal students, Diana and Jesly.

*Jen: All those people that you mentioned, are they Latinas?*

*Diana: No, they’re American.*

*Jen: Do you guys think your American?*

*Jesly: No, because I was born with Spanish, because Latinos are born with Spanish.*

*Diana: We’re born, we talk Spanish at our house, we speak Spanish and then we came to school.*

*Jen: Okay, so how would you describe an American?*

*Jesly: Like they came from, like when they were born, they were born already with English.*

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<sup>29</sup> For this analysis, I analyzed the interviews of first generation students. There is 1 student at each school who was born in Mexico, but participated in the study due to their developed English language skills. For the purposes of this analysis, I control students’ place of birth since this is a variable impacting students’ definitions of what it means to be Latino/a and/or American.

<sup>30</sup> I used the terms students offer in their interviews. Therefore, the term American is used if the students use the term. In one instance, a student at Altamont uses the term the *United States*; and then this becomes the word used throughout the duration of the interview. The majority of students use the term American or America.

As Diana and Jesly illustrate above, language becomes a signifier of what it means to be an American or a Latina. Hall (1991) argues that the concept of an identity must be understood as not only the sense of self the individual believes is shared with the immediate community, but also what the individual identifies as a difference. Relating this idea specifically to ethnicity, in his writing Fishman (1989) identifies the complex and dynamic nature of ethnicity and theorizes how an individual's ethnicity is related to three concepts: paternity, patrimony, and phenomenology. First, ethnicity is thought of as something that is inherited from family, which is referred to as paternity. Second, ethnicity is related to one's behavior, defined as patrimony. Finally, ethnicity is related to phenomenology, which is defined as the meanings that the individual affixes to ethnicity, meanings that are inherited and related to behavior. Fishman (1989) writes, "if we fully understand how actors understand ethnicity we simultaneously understand at least part (and often more than just a small part) of how they understand the world at large and their relation to it" (Fishman, 1989, p.30). In terms of ethnic phenomenology, language plays a pivotal role in defining ethnicity where it becomes "the symbol of ethnicity" because it is related to all three concepts of paternity, patrimony, and phenomenology. Using Fishman's definition of phenomenology ethnicity and its relationship to language, this chapter argues how students develop understandings of their ethnic selves through language and their relationship with the U.S. This process of ethnic identity development occurs as students analyze their school community through language in comparing the differences between their Spanish-dominant and English-dominant peers. As students are positioned through their language use, language becomes an indicator of how students identify as a Latino, which for many of them means they are not American.

### **Talking about ethnicity with children**

Socialization processes impact not only students' language use, but also students' understandings of the different ethnic groups at their school. Language use and parents' place of birth are two variables used by multiple Altamont focal students to define the word Latino. Altamont students often introduce the word Latino/a in their interviews. For example, shortly into Pedro's first interview I ask him to reflect on his learning experiences in Spanish and English, and ask whether he prefers to learn in one of the languages. Pedro quickly responds he prefers Spanish and explains, "cuz like if you're from, if you're Latino, it's easier to know Spanish and you know every word in Spanish." This statement encourages me to question his understandings of what it means to be a Latino. Later in the interview when I ask him to define Latino, he explains, "that we all know Spanish, we're different than Americans, we don't talk a lot of English." In this example, Pedro not only uses the term Latino, but also defines the term through language and compares Latinos to what he believes they are not, Americans. Similarly, moments into an interview with another Altamont focal student, Daniel, I ask him if he likes Altamont and whether he would change anything about the school. He responds by explaining that he would like, "more Latinos, [and] more African American," to attend the school. I return to this statement and ask him to describe what he means by Latino, he explains, "It means that you're Mexican, you're from Mexico or you talk Mexi, you talk Spanish." Similar to Pedro, Daniel uses his experiences both in and outside of school to construct definitions of different ethnic groups. Language, as well as parents' place of birth is used to construct his understandings of what it means to be a Latino.

Both Pedro and Daniel's experiences in and outside of school shape their understandings of the ethnic categories and groups they believe exist at their respective schools, and in the larger United States. Academic experiences shape the ways in which Jesly, Diana, Pedro, Daniel, and their peers at Altamont and Lincoln begin to identify ethnically. With ethnographic research, interview protocols are modified as the researcher becomes more familiar with the social and cultural aspects of the community under investigation. This is the case with the student interviews in this study. Due to the fact that interviews occur at multiple points throughout the study, protocols are revised using information gained from previous interview transcripts. After students' initial interview, I added questions in the second and third set of interviews to themes that surfaced from the initial interview. These themes include how students identify with their family's home country and the United States, or what many students refer to as 'America'. The chapter begins by outlining the ways in which focal students across the two schools construct broader definitions of ethnic categories through language. The chapter concludes by using the experiences of three Lincoln students to illustrate how Lincoln's social context shapes students' ethnic identity.

### **Interview Protocol: Students' relationship with language and ethnicity**

Students' social networks of friends become more defined and visible during non-academic times of lunch and recess when students are given more liberty to choose the peers they interact with. During the second set of interviews conducted in November and December 2012, students are asked in their interviews to identify their close friends, as well as other friend groups in school. These conversations led to discussions about what it means to be a Latina and an American, where students often use the term 'American' to describe the English-dominant friend groups at their school. After analyzing this data, during the third set of interviews conducted in March-May 2013 students are asked to share their relationship with the U.S, and the ways in which this relationship impacts their ethnic identity.

In analyzing interviews across the two schools, there are differences in how students respond to questions focused on ethnicity and their relationship to the U.S. For those students at Altamont and Lincoln who do not use the term Latin or Latino/a without prompting, they are asked, *have you ever heard the word Latino/a*, and then are asked to share their understandings of the term and the last time they used, or heard someone use the term in conversation. The majority of the Altamont students answered the question with confidence and little hesitation. Many of the students are a bit confused by the simplicity of the question, *have you ever heard the word Latino/a*, and answer it with a smile and the simple phrase, 'of course.' Conversations with Lincoln students do not unfold in a similar way. During the first set of interviews when students are asked to share their familiarity with the term Latino/a, many students initially answer they haven't heard the word and do not know its meaning. While Lincoln students struggle to define the term Latino/a, they can speak to their relationship with Mexico and Mexican culture. Five parents of the Lincoln focal students are from Mexico, and the remaining focal student emigrated from the country. In this case, one can only speculate the role the Lincoln school community played in developing students' understandings and their use

of the term Mexican in lieu of Latino/a. Over time and across interviews, Lincoln students' understanding and confidence to speak about ethnic identities develop.

Altamont students' families are from Mexico, as well as multiple countries in Central America including Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala. Students use the term Latino freely to describe their relationship with peers from these countries. In this way, the larger Altamont community and students' relationships with their peers support their use and understanding of the word Latino/a. In addition, observational field notes reveal how Altamont students will independently discuss with each other their understandings of what it means to be a Latino, or their relationship to their parents' home country. For example, in a set of field notes from February 28, 2013, after reading a text about Cinco de Mayo a group of boys, which includes four focal students, Dylan, Pedro, Christopher and Alex, engage in a small debate about the different states in Mexico and the students' connection to the states. The boys discuss whether Cinco de Mayo is the result of French occupation of Puebla, and use their connection to Mexico, and more specifically to the state of Puebla to support their understanding of the article. At Lincoln, similar student-directed conversations are not observed. Conversations regarding students' connections to countries outside of the U.S., particularly to parents' home country of Mexico, are either teacher directed or occur as a result of student presentations. The following section discusses the range in students' understandings of the categories Latino/a, Latino/a-American, Mexican-American, or American, and the ways in which students identify with one of these groups and how they position their peers in these categories.

### **Ethnic Identities**

In analyzing students' interviews, three ethnic categories surface: 1) Latino/a (or country specific, i.e. Mexican, El Salvadorian, etc.), 2) Latino-American (or country-specific-American, i.e. Mexican-American, El Salvadorian-American), 3) American. Students use multiple variables to define and explain these different ethnic categories, but all 19 focal students use four variables:

- 1) The student's first language
- 2) The student's language use in and outside of school
- 3) The student's place of birth
- 4) The student's family's place of birth

All students use language and place of birth, both their place of birth and their parents' place of birth, as two variables that determine students' relationship with the U.S and their ethnicity. The first two categories: *Latino/a* and *Latino/a-American* are closely related to each other. For many students, their ethnic identity moves across the two categories of Latino/a and Latino/a-American in all interviews. At times, some students redefine their ethnic identity in our conversations as they move from a *Latino/a* to a *Latino/a-American* identity, and vice versa. The third ethnic identity of *American* rests alone. Oscar, a student at Lincoln, is the only student who identifies as an American. He describes an American as someone who is born "here", meaning the United States, and "[has] a chance at a better life," and for this reason he identifies as an American. For the remaining 18 students across Lincoln and Altamont the ethnic category *American* is used

to describe English-dominant students who are from English speaking homes. Table 8 outlines students' definition of the three ethnic categories: 1) Latino/a, 2) Latino/a-American, and 3) American.

Variables used to define ethnic categories	Ethnic Categories		
	1. Latino/a	2. Latino/a-American	3. American
Student's first language	- Spanish	- Spanish	- English
Student's language use in and outside of school	- Spanish - English	- English - Spanish	- English
Student's place of birth	- United States: (Students used the term <i>here</i> )	- United States: (Students used the term <i>here</i> )	- United States: (Students used the term <i>here</i> )
Student's family's place of birth	- Mexico - Central America	- Mexico - Central America	- United States: (Students used the term <i>here</i> ) - Europe - Germany

Table 8. Students' ethnic identity

### Definitions of a Latino/a

In the table above, the column labeled Latino/a indicates the characteristics students use to explain what it means to be Latino/a. This category includes students who identify their ethnic identity as it relates directly to their families' home country, for example Salvadoran, Mexican<sup>31</sup>, or Nicaraguan. All students in this first category do not identify as an American. Returning to the exchange between Jesly, Diana, and myself from the beginning of the chapter, these girls do not believe they are American because Americans "were born already with English." For these students language determines one's ethnicity and differentiates Latinos from Americans. In addition, parents' place of birth is also an important variable to identify whether a student is a Latina/o. For these students, a Latino/a means that their parents were not born "here", meaning the U.S. but rather in Mexico or Central America.

Both girls collectively, and in separate interviews distance themselves from an American identity due to the fact they were born in the U.S., and were born "speaking Spanish." In my first interview with Diana in April 2012, she uses the term *American* without prompting to describe those students that she speaks to in English. She explains her language choice and the connections she makes to one's ethnicity in our exchange below.

<sup>31</sup> There is one Lincoln student, Roselyn, who believes there is a difference between Latinos and Mexicans. She believes Latinos are from Mexico but do not speak Spanish. Mexicans, like herself, are able to speak Spanish.

1. *Jen: And now who do you speak English to in school?*
2. *Diana: Yessica [ ] Ashley, Eliza, Nicole, and Rachel.*
3. *Jen: And why do you speak English with them?*
4. *Diana: I speak English with Eliza, Nicole, and Ashley because, kind of, they don't*
5. *know Spanish that much.*
6. *Jen: Why don't they know Spanish that much?*
7. *Diana: Because they're American.*

Diana uses pronouns throughout all of her interviews to indicate the differences she acknowledges between herself and her Spanish-dominant peers, whom she refers to as 'us', and those peers who are English-dominant, whom she refers to as 'they'. In doing so, Diana uses language to create ethnic categories among her peers. Spanish becomes a linguistic tool that represents her connection to her parents' home country and to her ethnicity, and also signals that she is not American and therefore distinctly different from her English-dominant peers. Several students across both Lincoln and Altamont distance themselves from an American identity to identify as a Latino/a and use language as the vehicle to do so.

### **Definitions of a Latino/a-American**

The second box outlines those students who identify as both a Latino/a and an American. These students express their ethnic identity in multiple ways. Some students use specific terms, as in Latino-American, Mexican-American, while others describe their American and Latino/a ethnicity in terms of percentages. For example, Yessica, an Altamont focal student explains how her Mexican-American identity is closely tied to place of birth in sharing, "100 % American [means] that your parents were born here, that you were born here and they were born here, your family is born here." Later in our conversation, she uses percentages again to explain her own ethnicity. Our exchange is below.

*Jen: Ok. Would you say you're 100% American?*

*Yessica: [she shakes her head no]*

*Jen: No?*

*Yessica: 50, 50*

*Jen: 50 what?*

*Yessica: 50% Mexican, 50% American.*

Yessica is a student who struggles to participate in school-based activities and this supports her to construct a separation identity as she separates the role and function English and Spanish serve in her life. While she resists using Spanish in class, and does not want to transition to middle school and continue to learn the two languages, she identifies with her parents' home country of Mexico, as she uses percentages to define her own ethnic identity in relation to Mexico and America. Through this process, she too creates ethnic categories where she sees her Mexican-American identity as something inherently different than the American identity she associates with her English-dominant peers. Furthermore, Yessica defines her ethnic self through language, but more specifically English. While Yessica linguistically resists Spanish and prefers English in school, she believes her relationship with English and her English-dominant peers'

relationship with English is different because of her relationship with Mexico and Spanish. In this way, she separates the role and function of Spanish and English in her life, Spanish becomes a signifier of her family, her Latina identity, as well as the vehicle that allows her to distance herself from her English-dominant peers to construct a Latina-American identity.

### **Definitions of an American**

The ethnic categories Latino-American and American are inherently different for all but one student<sup>32</sup>. These students set clear divisions between their relationship with America and their English-dominant peers' relationship with America.

Students use the term *American* in multiple ways. Some students refer to Americans as "100% American", similar to what Yessica had done in the section above, while Antonia, a focal student at Lincoln uses the label, "just American", to describe her American, English-dominant peers. For 18 of the 19 students, the term American describes those students who only speak English in their home and in school, and whose parents are born 'here', meaning the U.S. Some students acknowledge how the parents' birthplace of American students can be 'Europe' or specific countries, as in Germany. All students, aside from Oscar, separates the American, English-dominant peers from those students who they see as either Latino/a or Latino/a-American. Those students who may move between Latino/a and Latino/a-American categories across interviews or over the course of a single interview create clear divisions between themselves and their peers who they believe to be American, "100% American", or "just American."

Antonia, a Lincoln focal student, identifies as part American, but she identifies her English-dominant peers as "just American." Lincoln's community shapes students use of term. There are several fifth grade Lincoln students who are 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Mexican, as well as three students who are adopted from Guatemala but are being raised by White, English-dominant families. These are possible reasons why Antonia uses the term "just Americans" to describe her English-dominant students who speak English in their home, but who also have what she describes as "lighter skin." In her second interview Antonia explains that the differences between her and her friends<sup>33</sup> and those students who she refers to as "just Americans" includes differences in "hair, different attitude, different skin tone, and different accents, [a] different way to learn." Antonia is not alone in using race as a signifier of being an American. There are four Lincoln focal students and three Altamont students who use race as an indicator of ethnicity. Race is not a variable that is consistent across all focal students' responses and therefore race is not used as a variable in Table 8. It is through language and birthplace where students construct the ethnic categories present at their respective schools.

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<sup>32</sup> As mentioned before Oscar has a slightly different definition of American. Similarly, Roselyn believes Latinos are something different than Mexicans. In doing so, these students create definitions outside the three categories presented in the beginning of this chapter. These differences are discussed in the last section of the chapter.

<sup>33</sup> Antonia has a diverse friend group. She is friendly with the 1 African American in her grade, and several 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Mexican students.



As students develop understandings of ethnic categories, they are conscious of the boundaries that set them apart and bring them together with certain peers. Fishman (1989) writes “ethnic identity logically requires not only boundaries (contrast) but opposition across boundaries for such identity to be most fully articulated” (Fishman, 1989, p. 33). The focal students’ opposition across boundaries is observed in how students create the three ethnic categories of Latino/a, Latino/a-American, and American. It is through language where students delineate the ethnic categories at their school. This, by no means is a surprise given the role language plays in students’ learning, but it builds upon theories of ethnicity and language (Fishman, 1989) to provide evidence in how young students begin to construct ethnic categories through language.

An argument that ran through all analytical chapters is the need to understand how identities are constructed through language socialization processes. Language is used in unique ways across Lincoln and Altamont. Language determines how students participate in school-based activities. In Chapters 5 and 6 I separate the data on students’ language identities by school because language is used in unique ways at both schools. Language is used to create social networks across friend groups, which in turn structures the school-based activities where students are participants, the resources students have access to through these activities, and the language identities students are able to take up. Drawing upon this framework, I use examples from three Lincoln focal students to illustrate how Lincoln’s school community shapes the ethnic categories students create, and the role race may play in this process.

### **Relationship between social context and social categories**

In this section, three Lincoln focal students, Matthew, Oscar, and Roselyn are used to describe how the social context of Lincoln’s community shape students’ understandings of the ethnic categories at their school. I focus on Lincoln because there is a greater range in students’ responses and students appear to work through some of their understandings in our conversations by situating themselves in the larger Lincoln community. The section begins with Matthew, who is one of three Spanish-dominant boys in his grade and is able to assimilate into the social network of English-dominant boys. The section ends with the definitions Roselyn and Oscar generate of the ethnic categories at their school. As described in Chapter 6, Roselyn and Oscar struggle to assimilate into the social networks at Lincoln and I argue this struggle also impacts how they identify ethnically in relation to their peers.

### **Matthew’s use of race to create ethnic differences**

Chapter 6 identifies how Matthew’s academic and social experiences at Lincoln provide him the opportunity to access multiple relational and ideational resources to construct a separation language identity. This section highlights how language, race, and ethnicity become variables that he uses to identify the difference between his social experiences outside of Lincoln from those experiences he shares in school with his English-dominant peers who become friends.

With relative ease, Matthew is provided opportunities to form relationships with his English-dominant peers. Academically, he is a strong student and in the top third of his class. Socially, he develops strong friendships with several boys who are vocal, assertive,

and in a similar academic standing. Matthew's fifth grade teacher believes that soccer and his academic achievement are reasons why Matthew experiences little difficulty assimilating into the English-dominant culture at Lincoln. While he appears to assimilate into Lincoln's social structure of fifth graders with relative ease, there are differences that set Matthew apart from his fifth grade peers. He is one of three boys in his grade from a Spanish speaking home, and in our interviews he identifies how language and race set him apart from his peers. Connections to Mexico, his preference to speak in Spanish, and his parent's birthplace define Matthew's ethnic identity. In April 2013, Matthew shares this connection in a few powerful words. Our exchange is below:

*Matthew: Well my parents are from Mexico and I was born here but I have, I don't know how to explain it.*

*Jen: But you have?*

*Matthew: Mexican blood.*

Matthew struggles at points in our conversation to share with me his understandings of language and ethnicity, but he is certain that his parents' place of birth and his connection to Mexico, his 'Mexican blood', set him apart from his friends. Similarities between him and his friends are identified in terms of sports. When asked to explain differences between him and his friends, he is at a loss of words until he differentiates himself from his group of friends to define an American as opposed to a Latino. "Well, Latinos are sort of more dark skinned and American are more light skin." He continues to explain that Jack and Arnold, his two good friends are both "light skin" and "American." In this exchange, race becomes the signifier that distinguishes Matthew from his group of friends. This group consists of fifth grade, English-dominant boys, the majority of whom are White. It is a group that often organizes and chooses the kickball teams during recess, assumes leadership roles in small classroom activities, and therefore appears to be more popular and hold more social power in the grade.

The fifth grade boys seldom use Spanish, which includes Matthew and his friends. There are visible tensions between how Matthew linguistically and socially assimilates into school to gain acceptance into his group of friends and how Matthew identifies as Mexican. Believing his Mexican identity is in his 'blood', and although he rarely speaks Spanish in school, he wants to continue to learn the language because it is a connection to his family. Race becomes the tool Matthew uses to acknowledge the differences and divisions between himself and his friends, but also something he shies away from discussing. In many ways, Matthew's experiences illustrate the ways in which he is negotiating the cultural borders that exist between his home and school communities (Carter, 2005). In her ethnographic account of Black and Latino high school students in an urban school, Carter (2005) identifies three distinct ways students negotiate and engage with school. Cultural mainstreamers are the students who adopt the dominant culture, which are also associated with the White, middle-class culture at their school. Matthew is a cultural mainstreamer in that he sheds much of his Latino identity, and uses academic and linguistic resources to assimilate into the larger school culture at Lincoln.

### **Oscar's ethnic identity as an American**

Oscar is a case of how his social positioning at Lincoln that sets him apart from the larger English-dominant network of fifth grade boys provides him with a space to create different ethnic categories, where he ultimately constructs a slightly nuanced definition of an American in order to be able to define himself as an American. Oscar and Matthew share many of the same characteristics. Both boys attend the school since kindergarten, are from Spanish-dominant homes, and live at home with their siblings and two parents who emigrated from Mexico. As described in Chapter 6, Oscar is not able to achieve the level of social acceptance that Matthew gains from his peers. This is partly due to Oscar's academic and linguistic struggles and his quiet, timid nature. As a result, during recess and non-structured classroom time Oscar is often found finishing work independently or when he is observed playing with a group of students, the group participants tend to fluctuate.

The ways in which Oscar is positioned by his peers and through the structures at Lincoln he becomes a student who is not part of any one specific social network at Lincoln. He spends much of his time alone, and while he expresses to me that he wants to change this, this positioning also provides him with the experience to create categories and beliefs that are not shared by his peers. This becomes increasingly apparent when we speak about his relationship and identity to the United States. Oscar is the only boy who identifies as an American because he does not describe an American by ethnicity, language, race, or more importantly, a characteristic he associates with his English-dominant peers. Instead, Oscar describes an American using the experiences of his family, primarily his siblings and parents, and explains how an American is a person who is "born there [United States]" and "[had] a chance at a better life," explaining, "because if you were born here you could have a chance of getting a better job."

All students aside from Oscar construct a definition of an American through their experiences using language in their respective schools. As all focal students move through the fifth grade, social networks of friends and how they identify with these social networks structure aspects to their ethnic and language identities. As these students enter middle school, the social positioning of the different social groups becomes increasingly important and influential in how students interact in school and construct their identities with school (Davidson, 1996; Nasir, 2012) and as language learners (Olsen 1997, Valenzuela 1999). In the case of Oscar, his lack of entry into one specific group did not expose him to feelings of acceptance or to the ideas of his peers. However, this independence also does not place upon him the social pressures students might face to assimilate into any one particular social group. Oscar's positioning and the role he assumes at Lincoln is observed in multiple social spaces whether it is where he sits at lunch, the way he works independently in class, or how he tends to float across groups during recess, playing with any group where he gains entrance. While it is difficult, it does afford him the opportunity to create definitions and ideas of himself that run counter to ideas shared by his peers. One of these ideas is his belief that he is an American, a characteristic that he believes he shares with his English-dominant peers, and one that is not only determined by home language or parent's birth place.

### **Roselyn's distance from a Latino identity**

Chapter 6 describes how Roselyn, over time, constructs a distant language identity due to her limited opportunities to access ideational and relational resources. With her academic struggles to learn English, as well as the levels of isolation she endures in being separated from her Spanish-dominant girlfriends because she is placed in a different class support her to create a social and academic distance with English. At the end of fifth grade, Roselyn transitions to middle school with a distant identity and she is reclassified as a *long-term English language learner*. As discussed in this last section, Roselyn distances herself from not only English in her academics, but also distances herself from English to construct her ethnic identity. Roselyn is a case of how Lincoln's larger English-dominant culture that she struggles to penetrate structures how she takes up her Mexican ethnic identity as opposed to a Latina identity.

Oscar and Roselyn's unique experiences as students at Lincoln cause them to create distinct definitions of Latina/o, Latina/o-American, and American. Roselyn has a strong connection to her parent's home country of Mexico. She identifies as Mexican, and to her this is one of the most obvious characteristics she shares with her friends, explaining:

*Jen: What do you and Nora, Antonia, and Scarlet, what do you girls, umm, how are you girls similar?*

*Roselyn: We're Mexicans*

Race and language are the two characteristics she uses to mark differences across her Lincoln peers. In December 2012, Roselyn shares, "some talk more English than Spanish [ ] some are, not all, some of the kids have the same skin." In April 2013, Roselyn further continues to construct the ethnic categories she observes at Lincoln through language and race by explaining Latinas as people who "talk English, you're from here, and you have black hair, " while Mexicans "spoke more Spanish." For this reason, Roselyn said with certainty, "I'm Mexican," to describe her ethnicity. Americans are "White" and they "talk in English." Roselyn's ethnic categories are clearly constructed through language and race, but are also changing through her academic experiences at Lincoln.

Similar to how Roselyn distances herself from English in her academics, she uses a same marker to distance herself from her peers. Roselyn is extremely light-skinned; our skin tone is very similar. When we start to talk about race and language and what it means to be 'White', she put her arm against mine and amends her definition of what it means to be 'White', and what she also understands to be, "American", and shares well "white people speak funny Spanish." Here, she amends her definition to fit her social context as she continues to use language, race, and ethnicity to construct the social categories she sees at Lincoln. Roselyn notes differences between her and myself, and defers to language, specifically my non-native Spanish accent as opposed to race because of the similarities of our skin tone when constructing these social categories.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I argue how it is through language that students begin to construct ideas of their ethnic identities and the ethnic categories they observe across their peers.

Throughout all 4 analytical chapters Lincoln and Altamont are used as case studies to illustrate how schools become spaces where students are not only learning how to use language, but are also working through who they are in terms of their racial, ethnic, and linguistic selves through this language use. In other words, school is not only providing students opportunities to access resources to construct understandings of themselves as language learners, but they are also constructing understandings of their ethnic and racial self as they are positioned and re-positioned through language, which can have varied outcomes in terms of identity and engagement in school.

## **Chapter 8: Conclusion – Supporting language learners in today’s public schools**

### **Introduction**

In examining the language socialization processes of 21 focal students, all of whom are language learners, classified LEP, and enrolled in a dual language program in elementary school, findings reveal how students are positioned and position themselves through language in school. This positioning is the result of language socialization practices and supports students to take up one of three language identities – a dual, separation, distant – which impact not only students’ relationship with learning languages in school, but also students’ overall engagement in school. I want to return to the research questions first introduced in Chapter 1 to summarize the findings discussed in the analytical chapters. The three research questions guiding this study are:

1. What is the range of identities language learners are able to take up while learning two languages in a dual language program in elementary school?
2. In what way are these identities related to important outcomes including:  
a) reclassification, b) academic achievement, and c) social relationships?
3. How do the programs and local school context support the ways in which students are constructing identities?

All 21 focal students participating in the study and those specific case studies highlighted throughout the analytical chapters of this dissertation indicate that the relationship between language learning and identity construction inform each other, meaning that learning language for students classified LEP in school informs their language identity and these identities in turn inform their learning experiences. This concluding chapter reviews the important findings discussed in the Chapters 4 - 7 and then discusses how these findings have implications on both language policy and classroom instruction. Specifically, findings indicate that schools must be more explicit in supporting and validating a students’ language and ethnic identity. While instructional language might be one way to validate a students’ linguistic and cultural background, it cannot be reserved as the only means to do so. In addition, policy must address how young language learners are positioned through language by the linguistic labels that are placed upon them when they enter the school district. Tracking and isolation may not be as explicit in elementary when compared to middle and high school, but how these students participate in school-based activities with peers from varied linguistic and ethnic backgrounds position them through language, causing several of them to distance themselves from their home language and ethnic background in hopes of assimilating into the English-dominant culture of their public school.

## Review of Findings

### Language-learning identities

In returning to the two first research question:

1. What is the range of identities language learners are able to take up while learning two languages in a dual language program in elementary school?
2. In what way are these identities related to important outcomes including:
  - a) reclassification, b) academic achievement, and c) social relationships?

By documenting the experiences of the 21 language learners enrolled in dual language programs learning Spanish and English at Lincoln and Altamont elementary school findings reveal how students construct one of three language identities – dual, separation, distant – from the community resources they are able to access by participating in school-based activities. School structures, for example enrollment in specific classes, provides students with opportunities to engage in school-based activities where they are able to access ideational and relational resources to take up either a dual or a separation identity. Ideational resources are the beliefs and ideas students held of themselves as academic students, language learners and users. Relational resources are the relationships students constructed with peers, friends, family, and teachers.

Across Lincoln and Altamont, all students constructing the first type of language identity, a dual identity, are able to access a similar set of ideational and relational resources. A common characteristic among students with a dual language identity is that they are reclassified, and therefore no longer labeled *limited English proficient* before exiting their respective elementary school. Students with a dual identity are engaged with school, active participants in classroom activities, and have typically excelled academically in school. For some students with a dual identity academic achievement does not come easy as we see in the case of Nora discussed in Chapter 6. For a student like Nora, she is determined to develop both Spanish and English despite the challenges presented before her, and her belief that her bilingualism supports academic achievement is consistent throughout the tenure of the study despite the academic and social challenges she confronts.

Students with a separation identity are socialized through language in their learning where they are positioned in distinct ways to separate the language function and language use of Spanish and English in life. For students with a separation identity, English takes precedence in school and becomes more aligned to academic achievement, while Spanish serves an equally important, but distinct, role as it supports relationships with family and friends. As we see in the case of Jesly from Chapter 5, her academic struggles with school and in learning English cause her to separate the function of language in her life. While she begins the study with a dual identity over time the challenges she faces in school and how she is positioned through language supports her to take up the belief that English is the language that supports academic achievement. In doing so, Jesly separates the role and function of language where English is aligned to school and Spanish is aligned to her home.

Due to the differences in the social context of Lincoln and Altamont, Chapters 4, 5, 6 discuss how the context of school structures nuance differences between a separation and distant identity across the two schools. Despite the different social contexts Lincoln and Altamont create, all students with a distant identity across both schools are socialized in certain ways and positioned to take up an identity that does not allow them to draw upon their linguistic and academic resources. In the end, students with a distant identity exit elementary school and maintain the LEP classification or are reclassified as a *long-term English language learner*.

### **Altamont and Lincoln: Differing local school contexts**

The third research question speaks directly to how students are socialized in unique spaces across Lincoln and Altamont, and how these spaces support nuanced differences in a separation and distant identity for Lincoln students as opposed to Altamont students. Returning to the last research question:

3. How do the programs and local school context support the ways in which students are constructing identities?

The research design utilizes a case study approach of two school sites, Lincoln and Altamont, to investigate how the local context of school supports students' language identities. A case study design allows for a layered description of the research sites in order to identify how the larger school structures, the macro processes, create the school environment where students construct their language identities. At each school, the focal students also represent cases of how each school's micro processes including student interactions with peers, friends, and teachers play a role in students' language identity construction.

Altamont and Lincoln are selected as research sites because the two schools have an established dual language program. Dual language programs are selected because they are believed to support students in creating a greater range in language identities due to the fact that the programs use Spanish and English as instructional languages, and teach students from varied language backgrounds of Spanish-dominant, English-dominant, and bilingual homes. Lincoln and Altamont are selected as comparative research sites because of the demographic differences across the two schools. Lincoln is recognized as having one of the highest reclassification rates in the district, but also has a significant achievement gap between their Latino, language learners and their White, English-dominant peers. In the grade level of the focal students there is also a significant difference in the percentage of students who claim to speak a level of Spanish in the home. 27% of Lincoln students identify Spanish to be a language spoken in the home, as opposed to the 87% at Altamont. Findings discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 reveal how these differences create distinct local practices at Altamont and Lincoln that structure the different types of academic and non-academic activities where students are participants. Differences across these activities create a distinct set of ideational and relational resources that students are able to access to take up a separation language identity, which create slight differences in how separation identities function across Lincoln and



Altamont. All students with a distant identity are socialized into school and positioned in distinct ways causing them to distance themselves from a language, where the ideational and relational resources students once access to construct a dual and separation identity become limitations for these students. In the experiences of the three focal students discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, Maria, Joshua, and Roselyn, the data illustrates how both schools become spaces that marginalize students with a distant identity vis-à-vis an English-only discourse. The ways in which this identity is manifested through students' academic experiences is unique across Lincoln and Altamont. Altamont focal students create a social distance with English. However, Roselyn, the Lincoln focal student with a distant identity, creates a social distance with Spanish. Differences in a distant identity are structured by the differences in the learning communities of Lincoln and Altamont. The following section identifies the differences in the ideational and relational resources students are able to access across the two school sites and how these differences shape a separation and distant identity.

### **Discussion: School context shaping language-learning identities**

For each focal student, school creates a unique set of experiences in how students participate in school-based activities both in and outside the classroom. The ways in which the school context of Lincoln and Altamont shape the academic and non-academic activities students participate in either provide opportunities for them to access resources or limitations to construct a language identity. A dual language identity functions in similar ways at Lincoln and Altamont, but there are distinct differences in how a separation and distant identity. Therefore, it is important to identify the role the school context plays in shaping the resources and limitations students access to support a separation and a distant identity.

Lincoln has a greater percentage of English-dominant students in the grade of the focal students. Overall, there are simply fewer students who speak Spanish in the home, however the ratio of English-dominant to Spanish-dominant students is more pronounced among the boys. At Lincoln, there are three boys in the grade under investigation that are from Spanish-speaking homes. Oscar and Matthew are the only two boys who participate in the study because the third boy does not fit the criteria in that he is a recent immigrant from Mexico and does not have the necessary English language skills to participate in the study. Matthew is reclassified shortly into the study and all of his teachers consider him to be a strong academic student, leaving Oscar as the only male student in his grade born in the U.S. and classified as *limited English proficient*. Both boys construct a separation identity, however the boys' disparate academic experiences structure how each boy takes up this identity and how it functions in their academic lives. Among all boys at Lincoln, there is an English-dominant culture where English is favored among students in both academic and non-academic spaces. This is not surprising since there are simply more English-dominant students. As a result, both boys favor English in all aspects of school because this is the dominant language used to communicate. Although, Matthew is able to assimilate with greater ease into Lincoln's dominant English culture because he excels academically and develops his English proficiency in a short period of time, while Oscar is challenged to do so. The two boys varied English proficiency impacts the English language development (ELD) class where each boy is enrolled. Matthew transitions out of the ELD class and enrolled in a class with his English-dominant peers, while Oscar is

enrolled in the ELD class with other students who are labeled *limited English proficient*. Furthermore, while both boys are in the same 5<sup>th</sup> grade class, Oscar sits in the front with other students who struggle with English and often stays in during recess and lunch to finish assignments. These social arrangements impact how Oscar interacts with his peers, as well as the differing degree of confidence both boys held of themselves as English speakers. Oscar is marginalized in distinct ways through English, while Matthew is able to escape these systems of marginalization because of his developed academic and English skills. For both boys, while English dominates their school experience, Spanish plays an invaluable role in their life. Spanish is not used to support the relational resources of friends, but it is critical in supporting the relational resources of family. For this reason, unless they are required to do so, the boys rarely use Spanish in school, but they still had a desire to continue to develop Spanish to maintain the resource Spanish serves in their relationship with family.

In contrast, Altamont students with a separation identity frequently use both English and Spanish in school. For this reason, Spanish becomes a relational resource to support friendships in school and familial relationships in the home, while English becomes a resource to support achievement, and therefore becomes more aligned to the academic aspects of school. Through this process, Altamont students, regardless of gender, separate the function of the two languages, but the school environment provides more opportunities for students to voluntarily access Spanish to communicate with friends. Furthermore, the frequent opportunities students are given to use Spanish with their friends in school provides students with a set of interactions and experiences to construct a level of linguistic confidence in their Spanish skills. All Altamont students with separation identities are confident that their Spanish is strong and developed. As a result, this linguistic confidence fosters the belief that they will be able to sustain their Spanish and therefore they do not need further instruction in the language. In the end, Altamont students do not want to continue their instruction in Spanish because their linguistic confidence in the language becomes an ideational resource. In addition, the ways in which students use Spanish with family and friends determines the role Spanish came to serve as a relational resource. While students are confident Spanish speakers, Altamont students constructing a separation identity struggle to develop their academic English, which supports their belief that they need to focus their academic experiences on developing the language. Lincoln students constructing a separation identity do not always struggle with English, and use the language more frequently in non-academic and academic spaces because this is the language favored by the majority of students. Furthermore, Lincoln students separate the social spaces that they use Spanish and English, where Spanish is used primarily in the home and English is used primarily in the school. Since Spanish is a relational resource among family, students wanted to continue to develop the language so they could sustain their relationships with family outside of school.

Across Lincoln and Altamont all students with a distant identity struggle with school and language learning, and ultimately maintain the label *English language learner* or are re-labeled a *long-term English language learner*. Students across both schools are socialized in a space through language, where they are being positioned and position themselves

vis-à-vis the dominant discourse of a native, English-speaking student causing these students to become marginalized in certain ways through language in school where students ultimately create linguistic distances with school. At Altamont, a greater percentage of Spanish-dominant students create an environment where students will often code-switch between English and Spanish when speaking with peers in class or with friends at recess and lunch. For this reason, students with a distant identity want to distance themselves from Spanish in hopes of learning English. At Lincoln, the English-dominant culture and the ways in which Roselyn, the only student reclassified as a *long-term English language learner*, is isolated and marginalized through English supports her to create a distance herself from English.

Maria and Joshua both construct distant identities at Altamont. In the case of Maria, she emigrated to the U.S. and enrolled in Altamont in the third grade, her desire to linguistically assimilate into the bilingual culture of the school supports the distance she creates with Spanish. While her written and oral Spanish literacies are developed, she struggles with English. As a result she emotionally distances herself from Spanish identity in order to assimilate into Altamont's bilingual culture. In contrast, Joshua was born in the U.S. and entered Altamont in kindergarten, but his overall academic struggles with learning, and more specifically with English, as well as his motivation and engagement with school support him to distance himself from Spanish. Both students use Spanish regularly with friends and struggle with English, and in the case of Maria has strong Spanish literacy skills. Despite their actual linguistic skills and struggles, the ideas and beliefs the students hold of themselves as language users and speakers are not aligned to their actual experiences. In this way, their ideational resources become limitations because they are not working within their actual experiences. In many ways, Altamont students with a distant identity distance themselves from Spanish in order to support their belief that they are strong English speakers with developed English literacy skills.

At Lincoln, Roselyn becomes socialized in a space through language, where she is being positioned vis-à-vis the dominant discourse of a native, English-speaking, non-immigrant causing her to create distance with her English identity in order to distance herself from Lincoln's larger social community. For Roselyn, there is a small Spanish-speaking community at Lincoln, and this is the only community she identifies with. Over time and through her struggles to assimilate into the English-dominant community of Lincoln and develop her English, Roselyn begins to distance herself from this community and in doing so she distances herself from the language that defines this community, English. Relational resources that once support a separation and dual identity become limitations for students constructing a distant identity. For Roselyn, relationships with her English-dominant peers become barriers to her assimilation into school and marginalize and isolate her into specific spaces at Lincoln. Her relationships with her Spanish-dominant peers become a space that first protect her, but then isolate her where her other Spanish-dominant peers become too reliant on the small, insular community they have created. In the end, Roselyn begins to distance herself from not only English, but from all of her relationships in school. Similar to those Altamont students constructing a distant identity, Roselyn's ideas of herself, as a student and English-speaker, as well as her relationships with peers and friends become limitations in how she constructs her language identity.

These differences across a separation and distant identity at Lincoln and Altamont demonstrate the ways in which language identities are products of socialization. Students are socialized through their experiences of using and learning language in school. This process of socialization in turn shapes the types of resources students are able to access, impacting the kind of language identity they are able to construct.

### **Racial and ethnic socialization**

At each school, a process of socialization occurs in terms of language, but also race and ethnicity. In analyzing student interviews across both schools, Chapter 7 argues how it is through language where students develop understandings of their ethnic identity through peer interactions in their respective school community. Students create ethnic categories as a way to make meaning of their ethnic and racial identities, as well as the identities of their peers. Through this process of ethnic identity construction students are positioned and re-positioned by their teachers and peers in academic and non-academic school spaces through language.

### **Implications: Redefining policy and instruction for language learners**

Despite their young age, all focal students participating in this study are cognizant of the economic and political implications of what it means to be a proficient English speaker in the U.S., and the pivotal role English plays in providing them with opportunities to achieve success. While students can not identify the exact label of *limited English proficient* that is placed upon, all students speak about their experiences in school and indicate a level of awareness of how learning English as a second language sets them apart from those peers learning Spanish as a second language. For some of these students, they see their home language as a deficit and something they try to distance themselves from.

Prior research reveals how high school students are aware of the labels they carry about their English proficiency, and the ways in which school structures support or limit their ability to develop English (Bartlett & Garcia, 2011; Olsen, 2001, 2010; Valenzuela, 1999; Valdés, 2001). Studies of language learners in U.S. elementary schools illustrate how students' investment to learn language impacts engagement (Potowski, 2007), and while peer interactions help shape students' understandings of the role language plays in learning and how students use language (Toohey, 2000; Volk & Angelova, 2007), this use does not always align to students' linguistic capabilities, which can contribute to academic disengagement and failure (Rymes & Pash, 2001; Schaffer & Skinner, 2009, Willet 1995). This study validates such findings and illustrates how schools can either provide opportunities for students or marginalize students to develop identities that either align, or challenge school structures, which have important implications on their academic experiences. Findings from this study illustrate how language learners need resources to not only become proficient speakers of English, but these resources also need to support students in developing a positive and strong identity as an English speaker as they learn a new language, in a specific social and academic school context, and alongside more English proficient peers.

This study has implications on language policy and the ways schools and teachers must begin to redefine the process of language learning for language learners. Language policy

needs to change so students who enter the school district speaking a home language of something other than English are not affixed with labels that ultimately position them vis-à-vis the dominant discourse of a native, English-speaking, non-immigrant. Language learners are socialized in unique ways that reify that they have a linguistic deficit through these linguistic labels. First, language learners must take the yearly CELDT test and over time students understand that they are taking the test because their English is not developed when compared to their peers. Scores on the CELDT determine how students are socialized in school whether it is through the ELD classes they are placed in or how teachers use the test scores to create intervention groups in their classrooms. For students who are able to score *early advanced* on the CELDT are reclassified. However, for those students who are challenged to receive this score, they have to take the CELDT year after year with little change, reiterating their struggles to acquire a level of English proficiency. The CELDT is providing teachers little information or support in how to create constructive learning environments for students, instead it is simply labeling students as lacking English proficient skills. For language learners, the CELDT needs to change so it provides teachers with information on students' language development without labels. Monthly assessments administered by the teacher or a literacy specialist at the school can provide important information in lieu of the CELDT.

In addition, policy measures dictate that students classified LEP are legally required 30 minutes of targeted English language instruction that occurs through students' English language development (ELD) class. ELD is a term used by all 21 focal students. All students are cognizant that their ELD class is determined by their English proficiency, and in the end this space becomes a space of tracking, isolation, and marginalization. During ELD, students are placed in groups reiterating that they either have strong English skills or lack such skills. Policy needs to re-evaluate the purpose of the 30 minutes of targeted English instruction, which is disconnected from the students' larger curriculum, and reaffirms rather than supports students' linguistic struggles. In lieu of the 30 minutes of ELD, teachers need continual professional development in how to support language learners to access needed content and English skills in their mainstream classrooms. In these mainstream classes, teachers also need support in facilitating conversations with their students about the cultural and linguistic differences present in their classrooms. Over the 18 months of data collection, there are few instances where students are able to acknowledge, discuss, and make sense of the linguistic and ethnic differences across their classmates. At Lincoln, field notes indicate how the fifth grade teacher mentions several times how there are linguistic and ethnic differences among the students in the class when they are discussing a social studies lesson on geography. However, these discussions are not part of the culture of the classroom. Schools need to provide teachers with training in how to create culturally responsive learning environments where teachers are able to draw upon all of the cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) language learners bring to the classroom. Teaching in a students' home language does not necessarily mean you are drawing upon this cultural wealth.

Finally, findings from this study reveal how language policy is creating spaces in schools where students are not only constructing identities of themselves as speakers and learners of English, but also constructing racial and ethnic identities. Language policy must

extend the scope of its policy to acknowledge how this policy is creating places of racial and ethnic segregation in schools through programs such as ELD. It is necessary to acknowledge how these spaces in school that may have been intended to support linguistic development, are creating spaces of isolation and segregation for language learners.

The study's research design purposively selected specific school sites with dual language programs. Due to the goals and structures of these language programs, the programs bring together students from varied backgrounds of language, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomics. At first these programs may seem to create a diverse social space for students, where no language, ethnic, racial or economic group dominate, but this study has complicated the notion that dual language programs create diverse and equitable learning environments. Supporting a viewpoint offered by Valdés (1997), where she discusses the repercussions of dual language programs in the ways they can marginalize language learners, this study validates such concerns and illustrates the difficulty in creating a diverse academic environment to support language learners. Findings indicate that schools must be more explicit in supporting and validating a students' language and ethnic identity. While instructional language may be one way to validate a students' linguistic and cultural background, it cannot be reserved as the only means to do so. The focal students participating in this project are cognizant of the language and ethnic differences in their classroom. It is through these linguistic and ethnic differences that students create ethnic and linguistic categories and where students are able to identify how school becomes either a space of belonging or spaces of *othering* (Hall, 1991). In the end, the diversity that dual language programs seek to create through the linguistic, ethnic, and racial differences across the student population leads instead to a structure of marginalization, as some students are able to appropriate and assimilate into the culture of English, while others are challenged to do so, which forces them to disassociate with English or their home language of Spanish. For this reason, additional research is needed on how schools and teachers can create spaces of belongings for language learners. Schools must be supported in creating spaces where language learners are able to identify and draw upon the multiple resources and cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) they bring to the classroom. By simply instructing language learners in two languages, where one of these languages is their home language, does not guarantee this outcome.

Furthermore, additional research is needed in how to structure multi-lingual classrooms so that language learners who face academic and linguistic struggles are provided resources to build a level of confidence and an identity as a student. To complicate our understandings of how schools shape language learners' experiences, it is necessary to conduct research that investigates how language learners are able to construct language identities in different settings including English-only programs, as well as bilingual classrooms with Spanish-dominant peers. In the end, further research will reveal how schools can become spaces to support language learners' process of socialization and identity development so they can linguistically and academically participate in school without feeling as though they need to deny aspects of who they are as individuals.

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## Appendix

### Appendix A: Focal Students Across Schools

#### Altamont Elementary School, Focal Students

Student	Place of Birth	Reclassification Status	Interview Dates
Maria	Mexico	English language learner (upon exiting Altamont)	April 24, 2012 December 11, 2012 March 22, 2013 April 15, 2013
Diana	U.S.	Reclassified - January 2012	April 24, 2012 November 28, 2012 March 22, 2013
Isabella	U.S.	Long-term English language learner (upon exiting Altamont)	May 4, 2012 December 11, 2012 April 5, 2013
Yessica	U.S.	Reclassified - January 2013	May 4, 2012 December 4, 2012 March 22, 2013
Elizabeth	U.S.	Reclassified - January 2012	December 11, 2012 April 5, 2013
Giselle	U.S.	Reclassified - January 2013	December 11, 2012 April 5, 2013
Jesly	U.S.	Reclassified - January 2013	May 4, 2012 November 28, 2012 April 5, 2013
Pedro	U.S.	Long-term English language learner (upon exiting Altamont)	May 9, 2012 December 4, 2012 April 25, 2013
Daniel	U.S.	Reclassified – January 2013	May 4, 2012 December 7, 2012 March 22, 2013
Christopher	U.S.	Long-term English language learner (upon exiting Altamont)	May 9, 2012 December 7, 2012 March 22, 2013
Michael	U.S.	Reclassified - January 2013	December 7, 2012 April 25, 2013
Alex	U.S.	Reclassified - January 2012	December 13, 2012 May 3, 2013
Joshua	U.S.	Long-term English language learner (upon exiting Altamont)	December 13, 2012 May 3, 2013
Dylan	U.S.	Reclassified - May 2012	December 13, 2012 May 6, 2013
Diego	U.S.	Reclassified - May 2012	December 13, 2012 May 6, 2013

**Lincoln Elementary School, Focal Students**

<b>Student</b>	<b>Place of Birth</b>	<b>Reclassification Status</b>	<b>Interview Dates</b>
Matthew	U.S.	Reclassified - January 2012	May 8, 2012 December 12, 2012 April 2, 2013
Oscar	U.S.	Reclassified - January 2013	December 5, 2012 April 3, 2013
Esthela	Mexico	Reclassified - January 2013	May 8, 2012 December 5, 2012 January 17, 2013 April 9, 2013
Nora	U.S.	Reclassified - January 2013	April 26, 2012 December 12, 2012 April 1 & 2, 2013
Antonia	U.S.	Reclassified - January 2012	May 2, 2012 November 26, 2012 December 8, 2012 April 2, 2013
Roselyn	U.S.	Long-term English language learner (upon exiting Lincoln)	December 12, 2012 April 1 & 2, 2013 May 10, 2013

## Appendix B: Coding Manual

### **FIRST CYCLE: Attribute codes**

Table B-1 is a list of the 13 attribute codes used to code student's information retrieved from district documents.

**Table B-1: Attribute Codes**

Category	Codes	Description
Home Language	1. Spanish	Code identifies students' home language as specified on district documents.
California State Test	2. Math, ELA, or Spanish 3. Far Below Basic, Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, or Advanced	Code 2 identifies the Content Area Test (Math, English language arts (ELA), or Spanish). Code 3 identifies student's proficiency level as indicated on the test.
CELDT	4. Intermediate 5. Reclassified (DATE)	Code 4 identifies student's CELDT classification. Code 5 identifies student's reclassification status and data of reclassification.
English learner terminology	6. Developing 7. LTEL	Codes 6 identifies that student is labeled as a 'developing' language learner. Code 7 identifies student is labeled as a long-term English language learner (ETELL).
Country of Birth	8. United States 9. Mexico	Codes 8 & 9 identify students' place of birth. All students were born in the United States or Mexico.
Gender	10. Boy (B) 11. Girl (G)	Codes 10 & 11 identify student's gender.
School	12. Lincoln (L) 13. Altamont (A)	Codes 12 & 13 identify student's school.

### **FIRST CYCLE: Descriptive Codes**

The 24 descriptive codes describe the student's ideas, opinions, and reflections on learning languages in school. These codes are listed in Table B-2. The majority of the codes are generated from focal student statements from the interviews. Some codes are also used to code field notes about each focal student (i.e. Code 6: Language use/Spanish (LU - Spanish); Code 7: Language use/English (LU-English); Code 19: Best Friends).

**Table B-2: Descriptive codes**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Codes</b>	<b>Description</b>
Educational goals	1. Middle School	Code identifies student's statements about their language and academic goals in middle school.
Elementary School	2. Bilingualism, 3. Favorite Memories	Codes identify student's statements about their elementary school experience.
Family	4. Family 5. Home language	Codes identify statements about student's home life, family (i.e. parent's birth place, siblings, trips to their parent's home country).
Language Use	6. LU - Spanish 7. LU - English	Codes identify how the student used language in school.
Language preference	8. LP - Spanish 9. LP - English	Codes identify statements about student's language preference.
Linguistic Perceptions	10. LP - Feelings	Code identifies statements revealing student's feelings about how well they spoke English or Spanish.
Language Importance	11. LI - English 12. LI - Spanish	Codes identify statements revealing student's feelings about the importance of learning English and/or Spanish.
Language Programs	13. ELD	Code identifies statements about the English language development (ELD) program in the school.
Academic Strengths	14. Best Spanish speakers 15. Best English speakers 16. Smart 17. Vocal 18. Quiet	Codes identify statements revealing student's feelings about their academic strengths. Codes also identify statements about student's perceptions of their peers' academic strengths including: Code 14 & 15 - Strong Spanish and English speakers; Code 16 – Students who are smart; Code 17 – Students who are vocal in class; Code 18 – Students who are quiet, timid in class.
Friend Group	19. Best Friends 20. Similarities 21. Differences	Code 19 identifies statements about student's best friends and the student's understandings of the friend groups at school. Codes 20 and 21 identify statements where student discusses similarities and differences across these friend groups.
Ethnic Groups/ Ethnicity/	22. Latino 23. American	Codes 22 & 23 identify statements about student's understandings and definitions of Latino/a and American.
Race	24. Race	Code 24 identifies all statements about race.

### **FIRST CYCLE: Structural Codes**

During the second round of coding, 14 structural codes were created and used to reveal students' perspective of learning English and Spanish in school, as well as the roles these two languages serve in their lives. The 14 structural codes are highlighted in bold in Table B-3 and are used simultaneously with the 24 descriptive codes from Table B-2. These codes reveal four general themes about students' identity with English and Spanish. The four themes are the following:

1. **Function/Role:** How did the student perceive the role and function of Spanish and English in life?
2. **Attitude:** What are the student's attitudes and feelings about each language?
3. **Future Goals:** What are the student's language goals? How did the student position language use in the future?
4. **Relationships:** How is language used to support and structure student's relationships with family, friends, and peers?

**Table B-3: Structural codes**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Codes</b>	<b>Description</b>
Educational goals	1. Middle School 2. <b><u>MS – Spanish</u></b> 3. <b><u>MS - English</u></b>	Code 1 identifies student's statements about their language and academic goals in middle school.  <b>Codes 2 &amp; 3 identify student's statements about educational goals in regards to learning Spanish and English in middle school.</b>
Elementary School	4. Bilingualism, 5. Favorite Memories	Codes 4 & 5 identify student's statements about their elementary school experience.
Family	6. Family 7. Home language 8. <b><u>LU – Spanish</u></b> 9. <b><u>LU - English</u></b>	Codes 6 & 7 identify statements about student's home life, family (i.e. parent's birth place, siblings, trips to their parent's home country).  <b>Codes 8 &amp; 9 identify student's statements about how English and Spanish are used with family.</b>
Language Use	10. LU - Spanish 11. LU – English 12. <b><u>LU – Academic</u></b> 13. <b><u>LU - Social</u></b> 14. <b><u>LU – Difference/La Pe</u></b>	Codes 10 & 11 identify student's statements regarding how the student used language in school.  <b>Codes 12 &amp; 13 identify statements about how the student uses language in academic and social spaces in school.</b>  <b>Code 14 identifies statements illustrating a difference between student's language use and language preference.</b>

Language preference	15. La Pe - Spanish 16. La Pe – English <b>17. <u>La Pe – Difference/LU</u></b>	Codes 15 & 16 identify statements about student’s language preference.  <b>Code 17 identifies statements that illustrate a difference between student’s language preference and language use.</b>
Linguistic Perceptions	18. Li Ps – Feelings <b>19. <u>Li Ps – Spanish</u></b> <b>20. <u>Li Ps – English</u></b> <b>21. <u>Li Ps – Social</u></b> <b>22. <u>Li Ps - Academic</u></b>	Code 18 identifies statements revealing student’s feelings about how well they speak English or Spanish.  <b>Codes 19 – 22 identify student’s feelings about how Spanish and English are used in social and academic spaces in school.</b>
Language Importance	23. LI - English 24. LI - Spanish	Codes 23 & 24 identify statements revealing student’s feelings about the importance of learning English and/or Spanish.
Language Programs	25. ELD	Code 25 identifies statements about the ELD program in the school.
Academic Strengths	26. Best Spanish speakers 27. Best English speakers 28. Smart 29. Vocal 30. Quiet	Codes 26 - 30 identify statements revealing student’s feelings about their academic strengths. Codes also identify statements about student’s perceptions of peers’ academic strengths including: Codes 26 & 27 - Strong Spanish and English speakers Code 28 – Students who are smart Code 29 – Students who are vocal in class Code 30 – Students who are quiet, timid in class
Friend Group	31. Best Friends 32. Similarities 33. Differences <b>34. <u>Similarities –</u></b> <b>    a. Home language</b> <b>    b. Ethnicity</b> <b>    c. Perceived intelligence</b> <b>35. <u>Difference –</u></b> <b>    a. Home language</b> <b>    b. Ethnicity</b> <b>    c. Perceived intelligence</b>	Code 31 identifies statements about student’s best friends and the student’s understandings of the friend groups at school. Codes 32 and 33 identify statements where student discusses similarities and differences across friend groups.  <b>Codes 34 &amp; 35 identify statements describing the differences and similarities between friend groups (i.e home language differences, ethnic differences, perceived differences in intelligence).</b>
Ethnic Groups/ Ethnicity/	36. Latino 37. American	Codes 36 & 37 identify statements about student’s understandings and definitions of Latino/a and American.
Race	38. Race	Code 38 identifies all statements about race.

## SECOND CYCLE - Axial Coding

Axial coding created the language identities discussed in Chapters 4 - 6. Table B-4 outlines the axial codes that structure the theories and content of these analytical chapters. During this second cycle of coding, all statements are coded with both the code and the category – *separation*, *distant*, and *dual*.

**Table B-4: Axial codes – Language learning identities**

Category	Code	Description
<b>Separation</b>	Language preference/importance	Student prefers speaking either language or at times favors one, but the student sees a greater importance in developing one of the languages for his/her future.
	Language function	Student identifies a separate function for each language in life. (i.e. Spanish is to communicate with family, English is necessary in school and academics)
	Academic engagement	Student participates (to varying levels) in English and Spanish classes.
	Future Goals	Student wants to pursue English development.
	Linguistic Strength	Student speaks to the fact that s/he is stronger in one language.
<b>Distant</b>	Language preference/importance	Student prefers one language because the student sees one language holding greater importance in life.
	Language function	Student identifies a function for only one language in their life.
	Academic engagement	Student engages minimally with coursework across both languages and in all content areas.
	Future Goals	Student does not want to go to a middle school and continue to learn two languages.
	Linguistic Strength (Altamont)	Student identifies <i>English</i> as a linguistic strength. The student's self-perception of his/her linguistic strength does not match the student's actual language use in both academic and social spaces. This self-perceived linguistic strength is not aligned to their academic performance and engagement.
<b>Dual</b>	Language preference/importance	Student does not have a language preference. Student likes to use both languages.

	Language function	Student believes both languages are important for multiple reasons. These reasons extend outside of that fact that English is for academics, English is needed to succeed in school, while Spanish is needed to communicate and support relationships with the family.
	Academic engagement	Student is an active participant in both English and Spanish classes across all content areas.
	Future Goals	Student wants to continue learning Spanish and English in school.
	Linguistic Strength	Student believes one or both languages are linguistic strengths.



## SECOND CYCLE - Axial Coding

Axial coding led to the findings discussed in Chapter 7. Table B-5 outlines the axial codes used on data aligning to students' understandings of race and ethnicity. During this second cycle of coding, all statements are coded with both the code and the category – *Latino*, *Latino/a-American*, *American*, and *race*.

**Table B-5: Axial codes – Ethnic and racial categories**

Category	Code	Description
<b>Latino</b>	Home language	Code identifies student's statements about home language. This includes his/her home language, or the home language of peers.
	Language use	Code identifies student's statements about how language is used in school. This includes the student's perceptions of his/her language use, as well as peers' language use.
	Place of birth	Code identifies student's statements about an individual's birthplace and ethnicity.
	Family's place of birth	Code identifies student's statement about family's birthplace.
<b>Latino-American</b>	Home language	Code identifies student's statements about home language. This includes his/her home language, or the home language of peers.
	Language use	Code identifies student's statements about how language is used in school. This includes the student's perceptions of his or her language use, as well as peers' language use.
	Place of birth	Code identifies student's statements about an individual's birthplace and ethnicity.
	Family's place of birth	Code identifies student's statement about family's birthplace.
<b>American</b>	Home language	Code identifies student's statements about home language. This includes his/her home language, or the home language of peers.
	Language use	Code identifies student's statements about how language is used in school. This includes the

		student's perceptions of his/her language use, as well as peers' language use.
	Place of birth	Code identifies student's statements about an individual's birthplace and ethnicity.
	Family's place of birth	Code identifies student's statement about family's birthplace.
<b>Race</b>	Race	Structural Code 38 identifies all statements about race.