

Ethnolinguistic Contact Zones: Identity and Language Use within Mixed Mexican-Nuevomexicano Families in northern New Mexico

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In early 2009, an immigrants' rights group based out of Santa Fe, New Mexico launched a public information campaign entitled "Somos Primos". The campaign sought to open dialogue between Hispanic New Mexicans (Nuevomexicanos) and Mexican immigrants in order to dispel the notion that the two communities do not interact, get along, or support each other. The role of language took center stage in the public dialogues. Although short-lived, the campaign highlighted the understudied cultural and linguistic interactions between these two groups. Previous ethnographic research (Pugach, 1998; Roberts, 2001) as well as research regarding language shift (e.g. Bills, Hernández-Chávez, and Hudson, 1995; Bills, Hudson, Hernández-Chávez, 2000) do not emphasize the differences within the Hispanic population of New Mexico.

The present study examines these inter-Latino interactions by exploring what I term *ethnolinguistic contact zones*. I use this phrase recalling both Silverstein's (2003) notion of ethnolinguistic identity and Mary Louise Pratt's (1992) concept of "contact zones". Together, these allow for exploration of the dynamic meeting places in which Nuevomexicanos and first and second-generation Mexicans negotiate their respective notions of linguistic and cultural sameness and difference. I propose that the mixed Mexican-Nuevomexicano family unit serves as a particularly intimate and useful ethnolinguistic contact zone from which to explore issues of language maintenance, recontact, and language ideologies from within the *same* family. More specifically, I ask, (1.) How do Mexicans and Nuevomexicanos in New Mexico define and view themselves and each other, and what roles do Spanish and English play in these conceptualizations? (2.) What factors, including linguistic, shape the cultural identities of the Mexican-Nuevomexicano mixed Latino subject?

Using qualitative research methods and taking as a point of departure the case study approach of Schecter and Bayley (1997) as well as the extensive studies of the Mexican-Puerto Rican mixed-Latino subjects in Potowski (2008) and Potowski and Matts (2008), my study documents a series of interviews with nine mixed Mexican-Nuevomexicano family units from seven towns in northern New Mexico. The families consist of two parents and at least one adult child. I conducted individual (n=32) and group (n=9) interviews. My analysis of the interviews focuses on four main areas: recontact and transculturation, language shift/maintenance, language ideologies, and theorizing the mixed identities of the Mexican-Nuevomexicano subjects.

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