Discourses of Power: An Analysis of Homework Events

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The close relationship between students' school success and family involvement in students' learning has long been recognized by educators as important (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Epstein, 1996). Recently, an interesting convergence has occurred involving two areas of research on social and cultural dimensions of literacy: studies exploring the literacy practices of classrooms (school literacy) and studies exploring the literacy practices of homes (family literacy). This convergence relates to a focus in the literature on the development of partnerships between families and schools designed to benefit both students and schools. Research suggests, however, that schools tend to work within a definition of partnership that seeks to do nothing more than to conform parents and their children to the dominant culture literacy practices of schools (Auerbach, 1995, 1989; Cairney & Munsie, 1992/1995; Cairney & Ruge, 1998; Freebody, Ludwig, & Gunn, 1995; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Taylor, 1997). From the perspective of the school, other knowledge and literacies would appear to be illegitimate or not allowed to function within "official knowledge," resulting in an unequal relationship of power (Luke, 1993). We need to understand more about the power relationships between families and schools.

There are different literacies in the family, some of which are school-evaluated. The focus here is on interactions that occur when mothers help their children in school-evaluated homework activities and the consequences of school impinging on family roles and relationships. Homework is an example of a "contact point" (Kincheloe, 1997) where family and school manifestations of power connect. The aim of this article is to develop a theory of power for families.

This work is informed by the understanding that literacy is not a single skill. Rather, it is a set of practices used for social purposes. These purposes cannot

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be separated from the people who use literacy and the contexts within which
it is used. In the analysis presented here, I was particularly interested in ex-
ploring how members of two Australian families constructed a system of stan-
dards and purposes for perceiving, believing, evaluating, and acting (Goodenough,
1971) as they engaged in literacy practices. These "telling cases" reveal much
about the relationships constructed between families and schools. Framed within
the perspective that discourse translates into identity and action, the analysis
is concerned with how discourse constructed during homework may constitute
families' ideas and actions relative to school and literacy. Understanding these
ideas and actions is part of the theoretical task of developing a theory of power for
families.

I also examined the methodology, a sociolinguistic ethnography that permits
mapping of literacy discourse practices occurring in two families' homes during
"key events," and a microanalysis of the events identifying the social action rules for
participation. Constructions of intertextuality are analyzed in relation to possible
boundaries, links, and/or overlaps of school and family literacy discourse practices,
providing another layer of insight into the constructed relationships between the
families and the school.

I draw on the work of Bloome (1989a), Bloome and Egan-Robertson (1993),
Fairclough (1992), and Green and Wallat (1983) in my developing framework
for the analysis of literacy discourse practices. The term discourse is used as a
way of regarding language use "as a form of social practice, rather than as a
purely individual activity or a reflex of situational variables" (Fairclough, 1992,
p. 63). Discourse contributes to all dimensions of "social structure which directly
or indirectly shape and constrain it: its own norms and conventions, as well as the
relations, identities and institutions which lie between them" (Fairclough, 1992,
p. 64).

The analysis was guided by the following questions. These questions are unique
from those addressed in the larger study from which data for this article were
taken.

1. How do families construct common knowledge, literacy, and patterned ways
   of engaging and interacting with each other through literacy?
2. How does the study of language-in-use lead to understandings of what
   counts as literacy in the home setting?
3. How is a situated definition of what counts as family literacy shaped through
   interactions among family members during homework events?
4. How does the study of literacy discourse practice and the construction of
   intertextuality inform a theory of power of families?

This discussion is organized in three parts. In the first part, I discuss some theo-
retical issues relating to the nature of literacy discourse practices and constructions

of intertextuality, framed by theoretical issues relating to a microanalysis of key events and a developing theory of power for families. In the second part, the methodological procedures are outlined. Then, I focus on two key events during homework occurring in two family's homes.

THE NATURE OF LITERACY DISCOURSE PRACTICES AND CONSTRUCTIONS OF INTERTEXTUALITY

There are multiple literacies that people of all ages encounter in their daily lives. Explorations of the literacy practices young students experience require an understanding of the groups, actors, or agents (e.g., families) and institutions (e.g., schools) into which they are socialized.

A family, or a classroom, is a culture in which people construct common knowledge, language, and patterned ways of engaging with and interacting with each other (Edwards & Mercer, 1989; Green & Harker, 1988). From an ethnographic perspective, the focus is on understanding these patterns of family or classroom life, which are constructed over time by group members (actors). Group members construct a shared history that they draw on to interpret and participate in subsequent events, practices, and interactions (Bloome & Green, 1991; Fairclough, 1992). Rules for social interaction and sharing of knowledge through literacy are constructed within the group (Heath, 1982; Scollon & Scollon, 1981). Being part of a particular group leads to specific actions, forms of knowledge, and discourse practices. Sociolinguistic approaches to understanding the actions and discourses of the actors can illuminate what might otherwise be considered hidden dimensions and relationships constructed over time (Edwards & Furlong, 1978; Fernie, Kantor, & Klein, 1988; Gutierrez, 1993; Lemke, 1990).

In the context of the data analyzed here, it was imperative to define "situation" and the definition of the "situation" as what was formulated by the actors. The actions of each actor are aligned to and situated in the actions of others through the process of ascertaining the meaning of his/her acts (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993). What occurs, how actions unfold, how actors build on and make sense of these actions, and how actors construct meaning through these interactions all become visible through the identification and analysis of key events or practices (Gumperz, 1982).

The situation or context encompasses more than the immediate surroundings: in this case, the family members, objects, and relationships constructed within the groups. It also includes a variety of broader social fields of meaning and structure (Lave, 1988), such as the economic, political, and class systems; the social organization of the families and the school; the political arenas of opportunity and power, etc.

A focus of the analysis presented here was on the unequal power relationships between families and the school. To understand these relationships required

consideration that differences in the way that language and literacy are used in the home and classroom can result in students failing to gain access to appropriate educational opportunities (Au & Jordan, 1981; Bloome, 1989a; Michaels, 1981). Reading, writing, and talking about books at home in *mainstream* ways has been linked to academic success because such actions parallel school literacy practices of the dominant culture (Cochran-Smith, 1984; Heath, 1983). The "official" literate traditions and cultural practices of the institution become the preferred route to school literacy (Luke, 1993); non-mainstream literacy discourse practices such as oral traditions of ways of knowing, etc. become problematic. Such emphases are highly representative of dominant cultural and societal practices and values (Bourdieu, 1977, 1994; Gee, 1990/1996). While recognition is given to a continuum of discourse practices, ultimately, the continuum operates as a hierarchy and as opposing discourses of power and privilege (Gee, 1990/1996).

In response, greater emphasis is placed in the literature on the need to develop partnerships between homes and schools. However, much of this emphasis has been on the need to involve parents more closely in school types of literacy activities in order to help students make the shift to more preferred literacy practices. This is done by providing parents with opportunities to observe and understand the literacy practices that schools support. Such discussions are typically framed within the discourse of family literacy, community literacy, and intergenerational literacy *programs*, placing the "problem" and responsibility for change outside of the school (for a more in-depth review of such hegemonic practices, see Auerbach, 1995). Within the context of such discussions of partnerships (commonly referred to in the literature as deficit models of family literacy practices), families are viewed simply as receivers of knowledge for schools.

Others have begun to frame discussions of partnerships within the discourse of intersubjectivity (Bloome & Green, 1991; Taylor, 1997; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988). According to Durant and Goodwin (1992), we need to view intersubjectivity as the process of developing shared understandings, which involves a shared focus of attention and mutual understanding. A focus on the process provides a vehicle for making visible the social order of such actions through an examination of the discourses of the ongoing, moment-by-moment work of the actors.

In consideration of the social order of such actions, attention was paid here to the construction of an intertextual context for learning through analysis of the juxtaposition of texts, the delivery of the discourse, the content of the messages, the roles and relationships of the family members involved in the conversation, the history of the discourse, the relationships among the family members, and the cultural expectations within the setting and event (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993; Green, Kantor, & Rogers, 1991). Attention to intertextuality provides a

way of understanding these dimensions in relation to the roles and relationships constructed by the family members and the school within and across homework events.

Texts are defined here as spoken or written language. According to Bloome (1989b) ". . . whenever people engage in a language event, whether it is a conversation, the reading of a book, diary writing, etc. they are engaged in intertextuality" (p. 1). However, constructions of intertextuality involve more than simply the juxtaposition of different "texts." As Faircough (1989) pointed out, with respect to Bakhtin's (1986) discussion on genres and Kristeva's (1986) first use of the term:

> In addition to incorporating or otherwise responding to other texts, the intertextuality of a text can be seen as incorporating the potentially complex relationship it has with the conventions (genres, discourses, styles, activity types. . .) which are structured together to constitute an order of discourse. (p. 103)

While current definitions and approaches to intertextuality within the field of literacy education have been particularly concerned with reading and writing in educational settings (as argued previously by Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993), the analysis presented here builds on and is unique in the way that it looked at agency and location beyond the school setting, in the homes of family participants. It was also concerned with how families responses to school-imposed literacy practices created and reflected a cultural ideology of power that ultimately affected students' participation in literacy events.

This analysis provided a framework for exploring constructed relationships between the families and the school in the way that it brings together "linguistically oriented discourse analysis and social and political thought relevant to discourse and language" (Fairclough, 1992). Such views of intertextuality add to other theoretical frames, such as social semiotic views, an analysis of how power relationships (among people, between institutions, etc.) are instantiated, maintained, and changed. This work is situated within Foucault's (1970) conceptions of language, discourses of power, and discourse theory. Such conceptualizations are valuable, because as Mills (1997) points out, many "have tended to view language as simply a vehicle whereby people are forced to believe ideas which are not true or in their interests but, within discourse theory, language is the site where those struggles are acted out" (p. 43). In addition, this work provides a way of engaging in a dialectical examination of the constructed relationships rather than setting up and working from a binary model of family vs. school literacies. According to Fairclough (1992, p. 65), the "relationship between discourse and social structure should be seen dialectically if we are to avoid the pitfalls of overemphasizing on the one hand the social determination of discourse, and on the other hand, the construction of the social in discourse."

RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Ethnographic study is a recursive and cyclical process, a process that Green and Harker (1988) and others describe as an interactive reactive cycle. It is difficult to separate analyses and findings because the processes are so closely interwoven. Therefore, in this article, after providing an overview of the theoretical framework of the methods employed, the analysis and findings are presented together.

As Judith Green has pointed out often, we are born to the role of the child but we take up the role of the student when we enter school. The roles and relationships of child and student are socially and culturally defined by each cultural group and may be analogous but are not synonymous. In this article, child is used in reference to the family and student is used in reference to the school.

Mapping Conversations and Microanalysis of Social Action Rules

The analyses of two key events occurring in two different Australian family's homes are presented in this article. A focus of the broader study is on ways in which relationships between homes, schools, and communities can be changed in order to facilitate the development of a more community-centered perspective (Bloome & Green, 1991). Limited space in this article prohibits detailing the research methods and procedures of the ethnography from which data for this article were taken. Therefore, this discussion is limited to the methods employed in the analysis and interpretation of data presented.

Following a rigorous data collection and analysis protocol, multiple data collection methods were employed and a wide range of data were collected on the families, classrooms, school, and community. The school/community site where the ethnography was conducted is located in the western suburbs of Sydney, Australia, and draws on a population of "middle working class" families. The school receives special funding under the New South Wales Disadvantaged Schools Program.

From a data set of 259 hours of field-note observations occurring in the school/community site during the first year of the ethnography, 72 hours of face-to-face observations occurring in the homes were audio-recorded and transcribed and 9 hours of audio-recorded data collected by family participants were transcribed. Case study databases were constructed within the qualitative data analysis software Nudist and all field-note and transcript data were coded and analyzed. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), Nudist offers:

> Code-and-retrieve capabilities, but also (allows) you to make connections between codes (categories of information); to develop higher-order classifications and categories; to formulate propositions or assertions, implying a conceptual structure that fits the data; and/or to test such propositions to determine whether they apply. (p. 312)

At this level of the analysis, the focus was on how literacy was defined by participants, the forms literacy took, and the purposes literacy served. Building on the work of Spradley (1980), a domain analysis was conducted as a way of identifying the semantic relationships of these components of literacy. According to Coffey and Atkinson (1996), domain analysis "draws on the cultural significance of linguistic symbols to create and maintain shared meaning. The emphasis is on an understanding that social actors order their experiences through a series of symbolic references" (p. 89). Such analysis includes linguistic usage along with actions, movements, and facial expressions. I began the process with the broad questions: *when is* literacy? *where is* literacy? *what is* literacy like? and *what are* the products of literacy? After locating literacy within the observed practices of the respective groups (families, school staff, and community members), what counted as an event for the families became visible to me over time. Events were analyzed in relation to categories of semantic relationships. For example, the first row in Table 1 details the broader domains of semantic relationships along with the questions asked to guide the analysis. The second row highlights one domain: *where is homework*?

In my work in Australian homes, I was able to gain access to observing families as they engaged in homework events. However, I was constrained in my ability to gain access to many other examples of literacy practices, save an occasional audio recording of a parent reading aloud to a child. To secure these data, I had to rely on face-to-face debriefings and coresearcher data collection techniques, such as, "literacy logs" of anecdotal records kept by children and parents of weekly events and activities. While the families often made comments to me such as "you are family now, come anytime," anytime was defined as during homework events.

Table 1. Domain Analysis: Where is Homework?

Homework	Speech lessons	When is homework?
	School work	Where is homework?
	Reading school	Who participates in homework?
	Books	How is homework accomplished?
	Extra work	What are the purposes of homework?
		What are the expected outcomes of homework?
Where is homework	Dining table	Place where homework occurred
		Getting to go to the table was a result of "settling down after school"
		Use of the table was a way of bringing Nigel closer to Mum as she conducted lessons
		Not coming to the table was a way of getting attention from Mum
		Coming to the table and engaging in speech lessons was a way of getting "stickers"

Table 2. Overview of Discourse Analysis Procedures

	Focus and Procedures
Message-by-Message Analysis	
Making a transcript	Identifying message units and transcript lines
	Preparing transcript to show other layers of discourse:
	= indicates an absence of silence between speaker's messages
	(⟨⟩) contain researcher's descriptions rather than transcription
	| indicates an overlap of messages
	(.4) numbers in parentheses indicate elapsed time in silence in tenths of a second
	(·) indicates silence of no more than one-tenth of a second
	underlined messages indicate some form of stress via pitch or amplitude
	Capitals except at the beginning of the first word indicate loud sounds relative to surrounding talk
	( ) indicate messages that were inaudible to the researcher
Speaker	Identifying speaker and addressee of message unit: adult speaker—upper case, child/student speaker—lower case
Interaction	Identifying participants in interaction (X):
	Teacher–student X: teacher–student interaction
	Student—S X: student–student interaction
	Parent–child X: parent–child interaction
	Child—C X: child–child interaction
	Adult—A X: adult–adult interaction
Form	Identifying the form of each message unit: S = statement; Q = question; R = response (+, −)
Ties	Analysis and interpretation of ties and links of message unit to other message units including potentially divergent messages
Social-interactional strategies	Analysis and interpretation of what interactional function and strategic role the message unit plays within the conversation (e.g., allocate turn, bid for the floor, to clarify, to control) (strategies and definitions included in Site A—Browyn and Colin table)
Event type	Identification of event type as defined by participants
Intertextuality	Analysis of message units in relation to the following dimensions:
	Proposing of intertextuality
	Recognition of intertextuality, acknowledgement of intertextuality
	Social consequence(s) of intertextuality
	Analysis of constructions of intertextuality at the level of words/messages, the interactional unit, the level of genre, and other constructions of intertextuality
Literacy issues	Locating uses and references to text: reading, writing, school text reader, a home text, and/or school instruction conventions
	Analysis of whether the text was viewed as the authority of knowledge in interactions
	Identification of other literacies

Table 2.	(continued)
	Focus and Procedures
Discourse Analysis Map	
Mapping	Organizing the coded and analyzed data from the message-by-message analysis for mapping and second-level analysis
Message ties/instructional units	Second-level analysis and mapping of ties and links of message unit to other message units including potentially divergent messages, resolved/unresolved instructional units
Literacy issues	Analysis and mapping of relationship between messages and literacy: reading, talk/interaction relating to reading, writing, talk/interaction relating to writing, talk/interaction not relating to print

This raised questions about why parents were willing to offer up homework as a site for family literacy observations. Early on in the study, the data suggested that in allowing me access to homework the families were letting me into the "home" without allowing access to the "family" (White, 1998). However, this relationship shifted. While the families continued in their efforts to offer up homework as access to family literacy, over time, the stories shared during face-to-face observations and debriefings revealed much about the literacy practices of the family and the need to examine homework as a contact point of the power relationship between the families and the school.

The two key events presented were selected based on two criteria. First, they were representative of the discourse and interaction patterns observed in the respective family's homes throughout the first year of the study. Second, they help to make visible the roles of the mothers and young children as they engaged in "homework" events.

Analysis of Key Events

The next phase was the analysis of transcripts of selected key events. This analysis included two interrelated analysis procedures: a message-by-message analysis and the construction of discourse analysis maps of interactions. Each procedure involves the following layers of analysis. Necessarily brief explications of the procedures follow. (An overview of the sequence and procedures involved is provided in Table 2.)

Message-by-Message Analysis

The organization of transcripts reflects theoretical constructs about the nature of conversations (Bloome, 1989a; Ochs, 1979). Messages are context-bound and unfold on a message-by-message basis. Therefore, consideration of the message context and contextualization cues was important in identifying the boundaries of

each message unit and its relationship within the larger conversation (Green & Wallat, 1983).

A challenge faced here, in the case of the first family, was in only having access to audio-recorded and field-note data since the parent participant was reluctant to allow video recording of home literacy practices. Therefore, I was unable to capture (aside from field-note data records) and show in-depth the multiple layers of contextualization cues (Gumperz, 1982) such as non-verbal signals of intentions and interpretations.

Each line in the transcript represents a message unit, defined as the smallest unit of conversational meaning whose boundaries are signaled prosodically and non-verbally (Bloome, 1989a; Green & Wallat, 1981). After identifying and numbering each message unit line of transcript, other layers of discourse were shown using transcript symbols adapted from the work of Heritage (1984) (see Table 2).

After preparing the transcript for analysis, the next step was to identify the source of each message and the participants in the interaction analyzed. The speaker was also identified in the coding of the form of the message, using upper case to represent the form of the adult speaker's message and lower case to represent the form of the child's message. Message units were described in relation to form: question (Q), statement (S), responses positive or negative (R, R+, or R−), and other (O). Message units were also analyzed in relation to ties or interactional units between conversational responses. According to Green and Wallat (1981):

> The *saying* part of a message is related to the form and semantic content of the utterance and the co-verbal and non-verbal cues to message realization. The making aspect is concerned with the relationships that exist between some messages and not others, that is, with the conversational obligation placed on either speaker to continue or another person to respond. The doing aspect of this description is concerned with the pedagogical social and conversational intent of the message. (p. 164)

The analysis of what interactional function or strategic role each message played within the conversation provided another layer of understanding (one example of a message-by-message analysis is included in Table 3; definitions of interactional functions and strategies are included in Table 4). The type of event, as defined by the participants, was also identified.

The next step involved locating the proposal, recognition, and acknowledgment of intertextuality and analysis of the social consequence(s) of intertextuality. Analysis was also concerned with constructions of intertextuality at the level of words and messages, the interactional unit, and the level of genre. The analysis framework and procedures presented here draw heavily on the work of Bloome and Egan-Robertson (1993) in their development of microanalysis techniques, which are based in part on Fairclough's (1992) work. The conduct of this analysis

Table 3. Message-by-Message Analysis

Line Number	021.	022.	023.	024.	025.	026.	027.	028.	029.	030.	031.	032.	033.	034.
Participants														
Teacher-Student X														
Student-S X														
Parent-Child X														→
Child-C X														
Adult-A X														
Speaker	A	N	A	A	A	N	A	N	A	N	A	A	N	A
Addressee	N	A	N	N	N	A	N	A	N	A	N	N	A	N
Form														
Question			Q	Q	Q		Q							
Statement	S													
Response (+ / 0 / -)		r+				r-		r	R-	r	R-	R	r	R-
Other														
Ties														→
Social-Interactional Function/Strategy														
13. Allocate Turn														
14. Bid for Floor														
15. Clarifying														
16. Confirming		16												
17. Continuance														
18. Controlling			18											
19. Editing														
20. Express personal														
21. Extending					21		21	21	21					
22. Focusing														
23. Ignoring														
24. Initiate topic	24													
25. Initiate interaction	25													
26. Other														
27. Refocusing				27										
28. Rejecting				28		28					28			28
29. Requesting														
30. Restating										30		30	30	
Event Type														
						Speech Lesson								
Intertextuality dimensions/levels														
Propose	*		*	*	*									
Recognize							*	*	*		*	*		*
Acknowledge							*	*	*		*	*		*
Social Consequence	establishes/maintains teacher-student roles and relationship													
Words/Message	*		*	*	*									
Interactional Unit							*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Genre														
Other														
Literacy Issues														
X - Reading	Reading / Identifying / Pronouncing Words Depicted in Pictures and Print													
X - Writing														
School text/reader	*		*	*	*		*		*		*	*		*
Home text														
School Instruction Convention	*		*	*	*		*		*		*	*		*
Text authority	*		*	*	*		*		*		*	*		*
Other literacies														

Table 4. Definitions of Interactional Functions/Strategies (Adapted from Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993; Green & Wallat, 1983)

13. Allocate turn: this strategy is a deliberate act of giving another a turn at talk
14. Bid for the floor: a strategy used as a deliberate bid for a turn at talk
15. Clarifying: this strategy refers to messages meant to bring about explanation or redefinition of a preceding behavior. This strategy may take the form of a question or a response
16. Confirming: this feature refers to verbal and non-verbal acceptance of a preceding response
17. Continuance: a verbal or non-verbal message, which can provide a cue to the speaker that the listener is following the speaker's message and the listener may continue his/her turn. This is referred to as back channeling in the sociolinguistic literature
18. Controlling: this strategy refers to messages concerned with the control of the interaction and/or the behavior of the participants. This strategy may take the form of a question or a response
19. Editing: this strategy encompasses shifts or changes in content, form, or strategy after the original message began. This strategy encompasses false starts and words such as "um," "uh," that act to hold place within a message. This strategy indicates internal monitoring and/or mediating of the message
20. Express personal: expressing your own feelings
21. Extending: this strategy refers to messages aimed at providing additional or new information about a topic. This information can be spontaneously added, or it may be elicited, therefore extending may take the form of a question or a response

22. Focusing: a message is defined as focusing if used to initiate the discussion or an aspect of the discussion. Focusing is marked by a shift in content of what is being discussed. It can be a question or response strategy. Although focusing behavior may be coded as confirming, etc. it is also coded as focusing because of the overriding function it performs in relation to the shift of focus
23. Ignoring: this is solely a response strategy. If a participant asks a question or makes a response that requires a conversational action by the recipient and does not receive one, ignoring is occurring
24. Initiate interaction: this strategy is used to begin a conversation
25. Initiate topic: this strategy places a new topic of conversation on the floor
26. Other: this strategy includes messages used to hold the floor and to indicate transitions between events
27. Refocusing: this strategy re-establishes a previous question or response
28. Rejecting: this strategy refers to the rejection of the previous response or to "no" in response to a request for confirmation
29. Requesting: this strategy is used for requesting information or action
30. Restating: this strategy refers to repeating all or part of the previous message of the original speaker either by the original speaker or by another individual in the group. It also refers to paraphrases of previous questions or response

provided another layer of understanding of the power relationships between families and the school.

The next step in the analysis was to locate the uses and references to text such as reading, writing, the school text reader, a home text, or other school instruction conventions. Such uses and references to texts were analyzed in relation to whether

the text was viewed as the authority of knowledge in interactions. The identification of other literacies was also conducted. The discussion here on intertextuality is necessarily brief. For a fuller discussion of the theoretical framework, see Bloome and Egan-Robertson (1993). The first page of the message-by-message analysis of the first event is included in Table 3. Space prohibits the inclusion of the entire table.

Discourse Analysis Mapping

Coded and analyzed data from the message-by-message analysis were prepared for mapping and second-level analysis. Full transcripts were used to complete this level of the analysis. A second-level analysis and mapping of ties and links of message units to other message units was conducted. This included the identification and mapping of potentially divergent messages as well as resolved/unresolved instructional units. For an expanded discussion of the theoretical framework of these procedures, refer to Green and Wallat (1983).

A second-level analysis was conducted and mapped relating to the relationship between messages and literacy: reading, talk/interaction relating to reading, writing, talk/interaction relating to writing, and talk/interaction not relating to print. Selected portions of the discourse analysis maps are included in the presentation of events.

BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS OF FIRST EVENT/FIRST FAMILY

The first literacy event analyzed and presented here occurred in May 1998 in the home of one family who participated in the study. In the Australian context, the academic year begins in January. The event was recorded during the first year of a 3-year ethnographic study, the focus of which has been detailed previously. In order to explicate this event, it is necessary to begin by providing the background and overview of the patterns of literacy practices observed across time. Then, a brief overview of the event is presented, followed by the results of the microanalysis of the transcript. (To honor the privacy and trust of the participants, all names have been changed.)

Ann and Nigel: Speech Homework "Lessons"

Ann decided to become a participant in the study out of concern over her son Nigel's literacy development and interest in learning more about literacy. Nigel attended kindergarten in school Site A of the study in addition to receiving support in his "speech development" from a speech teacher. Ann described her own experiences in "learning to read and write" as difficult and without success. She was very concerned that Nigel received the "proper support" that she felt she had never

received. She commented often how upsetting it was to her that she had received a "year 10 certificate but can't read."

Every 2 weeks, Ann and Nigel attended a special session with a speech teacher. During those sessions, Nigel's "language skills" were tested, one lesson was conducted by the therapist, and the remainder of the session was spent providing instruction and materials for use at home. Ann viewed these lessons as essential to Nigel's language and literacy development and success in the regular kindergarten class. At around 4:00 p.m. most weekdays, after Nigel had an opportunity to "play and settle down after his school," Ann initiated what she referred to as speech homework lessons. On the particular day that this event was observed and audio-recorded, following her usual routine, Ann brought out a three-ring folder that contained a collection of the instructional materials provided to her for "teaching" Nigel. She kept all of the speech instructional materials carefully organized using clear protector sheets for each page. She maintained a similar notebook of Nigel's work done in his regular kindergarten class that was sent home for her review.

Most of the materials supplied to her by the speech teacher required preparation on her part such as cutting out "manipulatives" (cutting out paper objects, cutting along dotted lines to form a pocket for Nigel to place paper objects, etc.). She also practiced before presenting each lesson to Nigel. For example, she reread all of the instructions to refresh her memory of what had been modeled to her by the speech teacher. She practiced "proper pronunciation" of each picture, word, or phrase prompt provided on the "work pages," since she viewed the purpose of instruction to improve Nigel's ability to "pronounce properly" (i.e., not on improving his understanding of grammar, etc. or other elements of language development). The content and delivery of each speech lesson was seen by Ann as being prescribed by the speech teacher. Ann commented early on in the study that she tried not to change or add to the lesson in any way. Therefore, each lesson was based on her interpretation and observations of lessons taught by the speech teacher as she worked with Nigel.

Lessons were conducted at the dining table. On the particular day when this lesson occurred, the family was living in a new residence. In their previous home, the walls of the kitchen and "lounge room" held displays of Nigel's artwork, homework, and "sticker displays." In addition, large laminated alphabet and word list charts (purchased by Ann from a teacher supply shop) were carefully displayed. Ann frequently purchased published instructional workbooks and engaged Nigel in "extra work" by offering rewards of his much-coveted "stickers" and colored markers. The homework, artwork, and instructional materials were not displayed on the walls in the new residence since Ann wanted to keep everything "nice." She continued, however, to maintain her notebook collections of instructional materials and written artifacts of Nigel's work done in kindergarten.

Ann commented often that speech lessons were the only time that she ever "read" to Nigel. Even though it was obviously difficult for her to talk about, she shared that Nigel brought books home from the school library and asked her to read them to him, but she felt that she should not read the books aloud to him out of fear of mispronouncing "the words" and "teaching him the wrong thing." Ann also revealed that she "often hears" that "good parents read books to their kids." While she used a variety of texts with Nigel (music, children's video films, magazines, alphabet charts, Nigel's written artifacts, etc.), she defined books as "kid's books" like the "ones he brings home from the school."

Ann often voiced concerns that the books selected by Nigel at the school library for home reading were well beyond his reading abilities. She viewed this as evidence that he was not receiving adequate support from his teachers in making text selections.

On the particular day this event occurred, I arrived in time to observe Ann's preparation for instruction. Soon after, Ann and Nigel sat down together at their usual seats on adjoining corners at the dining table. Concurrently, Nigel's father was engaged in Internet searches on his computer, which is located on the opposite end of the dining room.

Our "visits" usually began with a brief chat about Ann's work at Nigel's school and her ongoing concerns over Nigel's progress. Ann volunteered her time to work in the school canteen, attended parent and citizens' meetings held at the school on a monthly basis, and served on several school-based committees.

On this particular day, she revealed that over the past week she had been so busy with her work in the school canteen and her continuing education courses in reading and writing at a nearby TAFE College,[1] she and Nigel had not been able to do "lessons." She mentioned also that Nigel had been tested by the school on his "language skills" and that she was waiting for the results. Her hope was that the school would take a more active part in providing support in Nigel's speech instruction in the regular classroom. Ann had made the request for the testing and was expected to follow-up with the school to learn the results.

Nigel rarely received homework from his regular classroom kindergarten teacher, and lessons introduced by the speech teacher were regarded as homework. Ann considered these lessons to be of extreme importance in providing Nigel with a successful kindergarten experience. This particular event was selected for discussion here because it contains many recurrent elements of the discourse and interactive patterns observed during "speech homework lessons" in this family's home throughout the first year of the study.

Analysis of the social-interaction function or strategy of each message unit indicates that Ann conducted the lesson by adopting and facilitating a question response statement sequence of interactions. Nigel responded by extending, rejecting, or restating, and Ann evaluated by extending, refocusing, rejecting, or restating his previous responses. Lessons tended to follow a sequence of phases of

instructional units where each activity was introduced and Ann lead Nigel in the proper pronunciation of words and phrases. If he was successful, they moved on to the next unit or activity. Reading and talk relating to reading occurred throughout the entire speech homework event. Consider lines (L) 021–050, as shown in Table 5.

While Nigel was interested in showing me his speech worksheet pages just before the lesson, when Ann initiated the lesson he was resistant. Initially, Ann asked him to identify a word in the sentence: He eats a banana, which was located under a picture of a banana. He replied (L022) "yeah, I done it." In response, Ann shifted to controlling the interaction. In L024, she rejected his response by re-establishing her previous prompt. He continued to resist and she persisted by extending the interaction to a focus on the picture of the banana (L027). He responded by identifying the picture as a "nana" (L028). Now Ann signaled that she wanted him to focus on the entire sentence by reading the first part (L029) "he eats." Nigel completed the sentence with "the nana" (L030). Now Ann rejected his use of nana for banana with (L031) "a no," Nigel read with her, substituting a "the" for "a," and repeating "nana" (L033). Ann began again, asking Nigel to say the words with her (L036–037).
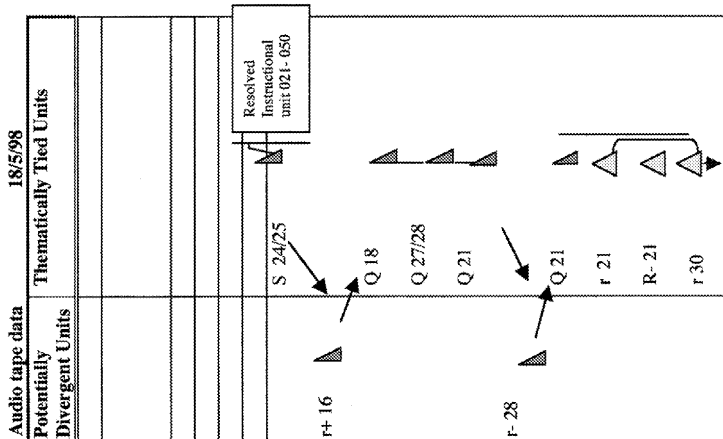
Ann viewed the purpose of the lesson as a way of responding to Nigel's inability to use speech (as defined by the school and speech teacher). She used strategies such as restating, rejecting, and refocusing to teach "proper pronunciation." However, until Ann provided Nigel with an explicit direction to "say it with me," he appeared to be focusing on the meaning of the phrase and misreading her intentions. For example, in L031, she signaled her rejection of Nigel's use of nana for banana. However, she never provided him explicit direction of what counted as proper pronunciation until L048. First, she tried to correct his substitution of "the" for "a" (L031). When Ann rejected again in L034, Nigel responded as though Ann has rejected that a banana was actually eaten and countered with a rejection of his own "yes he is" (L035). She shifted to providing explicit instructions (L037) "say it with me." As soon as she said specifically (L048) "a banana, not nana, banana," he was able to say banana effortlessly (L049). In fact, there is no evidence in any of the transcripts of speech lessons analyzed that Nigel struggled with the pronunciation of any words that he was asked to read or repeat. This raises questions about the purpose of the lessons. Why were they defined by the school as necessary? In addition, what was the value of Ann having to teach the lessons every school day?

Analysis of intertextuality and literacy uses revealed another layer of understanding of the event. The most obvious evidence of intertextuality was in the juxtaposition of speaking turns (text) in the ongoing conversation during the lesson, responses to turns which proceeded each interactional unit, and Ann and Nigel's ability to incorporate and anticipate those which follow. Within the immediate context of the lesson, the text of the homework worksheets was also related intertextually to earlier and subsequent homework worksheet assignments.

Table 5.

Site A — Ann & Nigel			Home Based Observation Week 25	Audio tape data	18/5/98
Transcript Line	LU	Speaker	Message Units / Transcript Text	Potentially Divergent Units	Thematically Tied Units
015.		Nora:	Through the school ((Nigel opens his speech book))		
016.		Ann:	through the school, yeah (.3) and if he's done anything (.2) 'cause I haven't heard and just see what they have got to say. (Nigel points to homework page.)		
017.		Nora:	what are those for?((referring to picture on page))		
018.		Nigel:	they go in there		
019.		Nora:	you just put them in that pocket?		
020.		Nigel:	yeah.		Resolved Instructional unit 021-050
021.		Ann:	you've got to say the read this word first		S 24/25
022.		Nigel:	yeah I done it	r+ 16	Q 18
023.		Ann:	don't ya?		Q 27/28
024.			what's that word?		Q 21
025.			can you say what that word says?		
026.		Nigel:	no.	r- 28	Q 21
027.		Ann:	yeah (.2) what's the picture?		r 21
028.		Nigel:	the nana.		R- 21
029.		Ann:	he eats		r 30
030.		Nigel:	the nana.		

Table 5. (continued)

Site A — Ann & Nigel		Home Based Observation Week 25		Audio tape data	18/5/98
Transcript Line	LU	Speaker	Message Units Transcript Text	Potentially Divergent Units	Thematically Tied Units
031.		Ann:	a (.3) no.		R- 28
032.			[he eats (.3) a		R 30
033.		Nigel:	[he eats the nana		r 30
034.		Ann:	a (.3) n[o		R- 28
035.		Nigel:	[Yes he is		r+ 28
036.		Ann:	Listen here		S 18
037.			say it with me		S 27
038.			he		S 27
039.		Nigel:	(.3) he		r 30
040.		Ann:	eats		R 27
041.		Nigel:	eats		r 30
042.		Ann:	e-e		S 27
043.			I can't hear the 's'		S 15
044.			Where's eats?		Q 27
045.		Nigel:	eats ((points to the word))		r 30
046.		Ann:	a		S 27
047.		Nigel:	a (.3) nana		r 21
048.		Ann:	banana not nana banana		R 28

Site A — Ann & Nigel			Home Based Observation Week 25	Audio tape data	18/5/98
Transcript Line	LU	Speaker	Message Units Transcript Text	Potentially Divergent Units	Thematically Tied Units
049.		Nigel:	banana		r 30
050.		Ann:	thank you		R 16
051.		Nigel:	other thing		r 27
052.		Ann:	okay (.) you got to say this too		R 16
053.		Nigel:	no I been ()		r 21
054.		Ann:	no he		R - 28
055.		Nigel:	he		r 30
056.		Ann:	eats		S 21
057.		Nigel:	eats		r 30
058.		Ann:	Nigel look at me		S 27
059.			I can't see your face (.2) eats		S 18
060.		Nigel:	eats then		r 30
061.		Ann:	a-a		S 21
062.		Nigel:	a		r 30
063.		Ann:	what is it?		Q29 / 23
064.		Nigel:	I don't know ()		r - 28

Resolved Instructional

Table 5. *(continued)*

Site A—Ann & Nigel			Home Based Observation Week 25	Audio tape data	18/5/98
Transcript Line	LU	Speaker	Message Units / Transcript Text	Potentially Divergent Units	Thematically Tied Units
065.		Ann:	it's cake		S 15
066.			you can (.2)		S 21
067.		Nigel:	()		()
068.		Ann:	come on you can can do better than that		R 18
069.			(.2) he eats a (.2)		S 21
070.			what is it?		Q 21
071.		Nigel:	lollie		r 21
072. v		Ann:	good boy		R 16
073.		Nigel:	he eats (.) a		R 21
074.		Nigel:	packet of chips		r 21
075.		Ann:	okay (.2) remember		S 15
076.			he. (.1) eats (.1) a (.) what was it?		Q 21
077.		Nigel:	apple		r 21
078.		Ann:	good work		R+ 16
079.		Nigel:	()		()
080.		Ann:	don't forget		S 27

Site A — Ann & Nigel			Home Based Observation Week 25	Audio tape data	18/5/98
Transcript Line	LU	Speaker	Message Units Transcript Text	Potentially Divergent Units	Thematically Tied Units
081.		Nigel:	eats a (.2) pizza		s 21
082.			he eats ()		s 21 Resolved Instructional Unit 082 - 085
083.			and eats iced tea		s 21
084.		Ann:	good boy		R+ 16
085.		Nigel:	Aren't I excellent?		r+ 16/20

S = Statement; Q = Question; R = Response (+,-), Adult Speaker–Upper Case, Child/Student Speaker–Lower Case .

Reading: Talk/Interaction relating to Reading:

Writing: Talk/Interaction relating to Writing:

Talk/Interaction Not relating to print

In L021, Ann proposed an intertextual link. At the level of words and messages, in an attempt to engage Nigel in the "speech lesson," she proposed an intertextual link between the homework lesson she was attempting to get underway, previous homework lessons accomplished, the homework worksheet, and the school-like discourse structures modeled by the speech teacher. She accomplished this by abandoning the conversational genre of mother–son and taking up the discourse structure of teacher–student (question response evaluation). In her attempt to follow the lesson as prescribed by the speech teacher, she juxtaposed the patterns of speech used by the speech teacher: (L024) "what's that word?" (L025) "can you say what that word says?" (L027) "yeah, what's the picture?" (L037) "say it with me."

Whenever Ann observed the speech teacher model lessons with Nigel, she was constructing a text of preferred discourse practices and strategies for teaching "proper pronunciation." There was a juxtaposition of the teaching script modeled by the therapist and the script constructed by Ann and Nigel as they engaged in lessons. During this juxtaposition, emphasis on a "preferred" discourse moved to the forefront of all interactions. This was evidenced in the analysis of whether the content of the lesson was based on, or referred to, a school text.

According to Bloome (1991), "such a reference can be direct or indirect, and it can be an engagement with such a text or merely a reference to it" (p. 21). In L021, Ann initiated an ongoing pattern of direct references to the school text in her use of the homework worksheet. The conversational genre taken up by Ann was that which was modeled by the speech teacher, recognized as a school instructional conversation. In adopting a school instructional conversational genre, Ann provided evidence as to whether authority for meaning of the text was located outside of and decontextualized from the lesson and the lesson participants.

The social consequence of intertextuality was to maintain the teacher–student relationship throughout the lesson. In response to Ann's initiation of the interaction, Nigel resisted, thereby evidencing the explicit boundary between the role and relationship between parent/teacher to child/student. In resisting responding to her prompt to read the word, he was also resisting taking up the role of student, as previously defined during sessions with the speech teacher. When Ann persisted, teacher–student roles were ultimately taken up and the parent–child relationship was broken. Therefore, the engagement in homework must be viewed as consequential for parents and children.

Analysis of this event makes visible the need to examine the values and purposes for assigning homework. This case indicates the need to question the interactions that occur between parents and children during homework events and to look at ways in which parent–child relationships are contested. These issues are taken up again in the analysis of the second event and second family in the following section.

BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS OF SECOND
EVENT/SECOND FAMILY

Bronwyn, Casey, and Colin: Homework

This event occurred in June 1998 in the home of Bronwyn and her three children, Casey (Grade 1), Colin (Grade 2), and Bryce (grown son visiting the family that day).

Bronwyn decided to participate in the study because "literacy is important and we need to learn more about how to help kids who can't read." She was proud of her children's literacy abilities and relayed often that their teachers considered both to be above-average in reading and writing. She attributed this to the attention she paid to "reading and teaching them to sound out their words properly" and to her love of reading. The children were assigned homework every Monday and were expected to return the completed work every Friday. Homework was in the form of one or more worksheets developed by the children's respective teachers.

Bronwyn was not averse to altering the homework assigned. For example, she was highly critical of teachers using "American English" spelling and considered these teachers to "not know how to spell if they don't know the difference." Therefore, if "spelling lists" included words spelled "incorrectly," she instructed the children not to complete that part of the assignment and followed up with a conversation with the respective teacher. While there were no reported repercussions from her complaints to the children's teachers, Bronwyn noted that there were no shifts in the teachers use of "American spelling."

Following policy implemented in this school site, homework was assigned by the teacher on a weekly basis in written form. Weekly homework sheets were distributed at the beginning of the week and were rarely discussed in class. Since there was little overlap between lessons done in class and homework assignments, families relied on the written instructions for doing homework since the children were not expected to own prior knowledge or experiences in the assignments.

Bronwyn described her organization of homework: "we sit down on Monday, we talk it all out, Mummy writes it down for them, and then they copy it." She copied the children's responses on small cards (3 × 5 index cards) and referred to the cards as she guided the children in their work. Casey and Colin were expected to work on their homework at the same time. Bronwyn organized a desk in the dining area for Colin to do his work, while Casey worked at the dining table, which was located a few feet away. Bronwyn explained that this strategy of having them work at different spaces "kept them apart so they wouldn't fight" but kept them close enough so that she could work with both children. She usually stood between the children, going back and forth as she monitored their progress.

The walls of the dining area were filled with displays of the children's artwork, awards, and a gold star poster chart indicating when the children had "been good." Bronwyn commented that she was often criticized by friends for displaying these

items in her dining area. She felt, however, that the children would not feel that their "hard work was important" if she "put it away in a folder or only hung it up in their bedrooms."

As mentioned previously, most home-based observations centered on home-work events. However, I was able to gain access to data relating to family interactions, before and after each event. In addition, I had many opportunities to observe the family during school-based activities and events. Casey and Colin were considered by their teachers and their mother to be quite "talkative" and "outgoing" children. During face-to-face observations in the home, the children often spoke to each other, their mother, and to me, in unison. For example, often when Bronwyn and I were engaged in a conversation, the children initiated conversations with their mother concurrently and simultaneously. However, as evidenced in the following analysis, patterns in interactions shifted dramatically during homework. In the event presented here, both children were engaged in homework. However, the focus of the interactions was on Casey's assignment:

> Make a list of important things which have happened to you in your life: your birth, birthdays, brothers or sisters, holidays, moving house, moving school, competitions, visits, pets, etc. On a piece of cardboard or in a book draw a long path. Along your path write about these things and when they happened—at 1-year-old, 2 years old, 3 years olds, etc. Illustrate your path with photos or drawings. Get all your family to help you to make a list and look for pictures. Be ready to show and tell the class about your Life Path in Week 9. (Site A, Stage 1, Grades 1 and 2, school-based document)

As shown in Table 3, Bronwyn signaled the beginning of homework on L001 by referring to the project listed in Casey's homework book. She continued by focusing Casey's attention with a request for a response, asking "okay?" (L002). In L003, Casey confirmed with "yeah." Bronwyn continued to organize for instruction. She extended and focused, then clarified and focused. In L008, at the level of words and messages, Bronwyn proposed an intertextual link by referring to their previous planning discussion of how to do the project: "now you said you want to do a piece of cardboard." Here, she referred Casey to a previous discussion when the decision was made to place the work on cardboard. When Casey does not recognize or acknowledge this reference, Bronwyn responded by proposing another intertextual link by extending and refocusing Casey's attention to the homework assignment text: (L009) "You've gotta make a list of important things which have happened to you in your life." Casey responded with silence, while Bronwyn attempted to use strategies to extend and refocus. When met with silence again, Bronwyn proposed another intertextual link in L012, making distinctions between the role of Mum and Casey's teacher: "your teacher's put things down" (in reference to questions detailed in Casey's homework book).

Table 6.

Site A—Bronwyn, Casey, and Colin   Home Based Observation Week

Transcript Line	IU	Speaker	Message Units Transcript Text	Potentially Divergent Units	Thematically Tied Units	Resolved instructional unit 001-088
01.		Bronwyn:	You've gotta do this project ((points to assignment detailed in *homework book*))		S 24	
02.			okay?		Q 29 / 22	
03.		Casey:	yeah		r 16 / 17	
04.		Bronwyn:	now (.)		S 22	
05.			what you've gotta do (.)		S 21 / 22	
06.			is on a piece of cardboard (.)		S 21 / 22	
07.			or in a book (.)		S 21 / 22	
08.			now you said you want to do a piece of cardboard		S 15 / 22	
09.			you've gotta make a list of important things which have happened to you in your life		S 21 / 22	
010.			now that means things like your		S 21 / 22	
011.			now look (.)		S 22	
012.			your teachers put things down ((refers to questions detailed in homework book))		S 21 / 22	
013.			Your birth (.) ((read section of assignment))		S 21 / 22	
014.			birthday (.)		S 21 / 22	
015.			any baby brothers or sisters that you've got (.)		S 21 / 22	
016.			well you haven't got any (.)		R 28	

Table 6. *(continued)*

Transcript Line	IU	Speaker	Message Units / Transcript Text	Potentially Divergent Units	Thematically Tied Units
019.			any times you moved schools (.)		S 21 / 22
020.			well you didn't do that (.)		R 28
021.			any competitions you've been in or won (.)		S 21 / 22
022.			well you haven't done that (.)		R 28
023.			any visits you've made (.)		S 21 / 22
024.			any pets you've got and things like that (.)		S 21 / 22
025.			now what you've gotta do with that (.)		S 21 / 22
026.			okay (.)		S 22
027.			now Mummy's been through the things (.)		S 22
028.			and so has Oma		S 22
029.			and we've found some photos and stuff (.)		S 22
030.			okay?		Q 29 / 22
031.			now what you've gotta do is		S 21 / 22
032.			on a piece of paper		S 21 / 22
033.			before we do your cardboard (.)		S 21 / 22
034.			is write down the things that go with that (.)		S 21 / 22

Site A—Bronwyn, Casey, and Colin   Home Based Observation Week   Audio tape data   17/6/98

Site A—Bronwyn, Casey, and Colin   Home Based Observation Week   Audio tape data   17/6/98

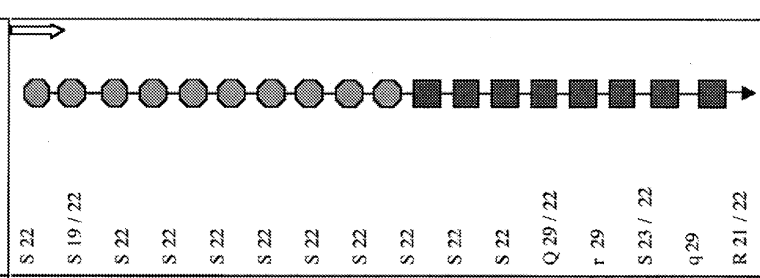| Transcript Line	IU	Speaker	Message Units Transcript Text	Potentially Divergent Units	Thematically Tied Units
037.			you've got to		S 21 / 22
038.			draw a big long path		S 21 / 22
039.			okay now on that path		S 21 / 22
040.			you've gotta stick your picture (.)		S 21 / 22
041.			and next to that picture		S 21 / 22
042.			you've got to write what was important about that thing		S 21 / 22
043.		Casey:	(.) I don't think I know how to do it.		r- 29
044.		Bronwyn:	No (.)		R- 16
045.			well Mummy'll be able to help you		S 22
046.			if you tell me what it is that was special about that thing		S 22
047.			and how old you were when it happened (.)		S 22
048.			Okay?		Q 29 / 22
049.			Now some of the things will be really hard (.)		S 22
050.			okay (.)		S 22
051.			and Mummy'll have to help you		S 22
052.			Okay?		Q 29 / 22

Table 6. (continued)

Site A—Bronwyn, Casey, and Colin   Home Based Observation Week   Audio tape data   17/6/98

Transcript Line	IU	Speaker	Message Units / Transcript Text	Potentially Divergent Units	Thematically Tied Units
055.			mummy will help you write it down (.)		S 22
056.			Okay?		Q 29 / 22
057.			and then you can write it on the cardboard (.)		S 22
058.			Okay?		Q 29 / 22
059.			and then when you're finished		S 22
060.			Mummy can help you decorate it with little tiny pictures of bunny rabbits and flowers or (.)		S 22
061.			I don't know		S 22
062.			something like that (.2)		S 22
063.			something anyway (.)		S 22
064.			Okay?		Q 29 / 22
065.		Casey:	uh huh		r- 29
066.		Bronwyn:	all right then (.)		S 23 / 22
067.			now I'll just go and get all the different things all the pictures		S 22
068.			and the pencils		S 22
069.			and the paper and all that type of stuff (.)		S 22
070.		Casey:	Okay		r+ 16

Site A—Bronwyn, Casey, and Colin   Home Based Observation Week   Audio tape data   17/6/98

Transcript Line	IU	Speaker	Message Units Transcript Text	Potentially Divergent Units	Thematically Tied Units
073.			okay (.) now you ready?		Q 22
074.		Casey:	Yeah		r+ 16
075.		Bronwyn:	I've got two bits of cardboard		S 22
076.		Casey:	Okay		r+ 16 22
077.		Bronwyn:	Okay		S 22
078.			But we'll start with one (.)		S 22
079.			If we need to do two (.)		S 22
080.			Alright		S 22
081.			if we need to do two		S 22
082.			then we'll do it		S 22
083.			Okay?		Q 29 / 22
084.		Casey:	Okay		r+ 16
085.		Bronwyn:	Now (.)		S 22
086.			I think (.4)		S 22
087.			we'll start up the top up here okay?		Q 29 / 22
088.		Casey:	Okay		r+ 16

Resolved Instructional Unit 088-130

Table 6. (*continued*)

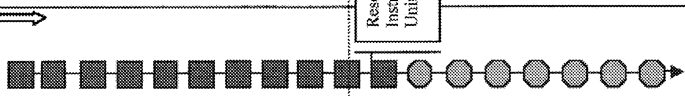| Transcript Line	IU	Speaker	Message Units Transcript Text	Potentially Divergent Units	Thematically Tied Units
			Site A—Bronwyn, Casey, and Colin — Home Based Observation Week	Audio tape data	17/6/98
091.			And that there in that corner to hold that down (.)		S 22
092.			actually we might put that there		S 19 / 22
093.			like that		S 22
094.			put that there (.)		S 22
095.			put that there		S 22
096.			Okay (.)		S 22
097.			now (.)		S 22
098.			you're gonna have to hold this for me down a bit I think ()		S 22
099.			Okay (.)		S 22
0100.			Now (.)		S 22
0101.			you gonna have to give it a heading		S 22
0102.			Okay?		Q 29 / 22
0103.		Casey:	uh huh		r 29
0104.		Bronwyn:	now (.3)		S 23 / 22
100.		Casey:	what's a heading?		q 29
101.		Bronwyn:	A heading is a title (.)		R 21 / 22

Site A—Bronwyn, Casey, and Colin   Home Based Observation Week   Audio tape data   17/6/98

Transcript Line	IU	Speaker	Message Units Transcript Text	Potentially Divergent Units	Thematically Tied Units
104.			we're gonna have to give your project a title		S 22
105.			now you could call it just Casey (.)		S 22
106.			or (.)		S 22
107.			my life past (.)		S 22
108.			or you could call it something smart like (.3)		S 22
109.			um (.)		S 19
110.			Hi (.)		S 22
111.			my name is Casey (.)		S 22
112.			you could do something like that (.)		S 22
113.			i my name is Casey		S 22
114.			and then (.)		S 22
115.			you can start by putting (.3)		S 22
116.		Casey:	A picture		r 17
117.		Bronwyn:	A picture of you when your were first born		S 16 / 22
118.			or when you were one hour old		S 22
119.			Right (.3) (Casey selects a picture and places it on the page)		S 22

Table 6. *(continued)*

Site A—Bronwyn, Casey, and Colin   Home Based Observation Week   Audio tape data   17/6/98

Resolved Instructional Unit 131–167

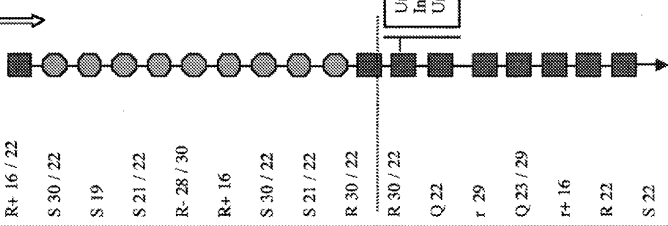| Transcript Line	IU	Speaker	Message Units — Transcript Text	Potentially Divergent Units	Thematically Tied Units
122.			right		S 22
123.			You could write (.3)		S 22
124.			or you could put it like that		S 22
125.			Now in here		S 21 / 22
126.			in here maybe		S 21 / 22
127.			very carefully		S 22
128.			you could write something like um (.3)		S 22
129.		Casey:	This is when I was a (.3)		r 14 / 21 / 22
130.			when I was just born (.1)		r 14 / 19 / 22
131.		Bronwyn:	Okay		R+ 16 / 22
132.			So you want to write this (.3)		R+ 30 / 22
133.			Is (.3)		S 30 / 22
134.			Me (.3)		S 30 / 22
135.			When (.4)		S 30 / 22
136.			I (.3)		S 30 / 22
137.			was (.3)		S 30 / 22

Site A — Bronwyn, Casey, and Colin   Home Based Observation Week   Audio tape data   17/6/98

Transcript Line	IU	Speaker	Message Units / Transcript Text	Potentially Divergent Units	Thematically Tied Units	
140.			Um (.1)		S 19	
141.			then you'd have to write something like		S 22	
142.			um (.1)		S 19	
143.			I (.3)		S 22	
144.			was born on the fourteenth of February (.1)		S 22	
145.			right (.1)		R 16	
146.			on the fourteenth (.3)		S 30	
147.			of February (.3)		S 30	
148.			1992 (.1)		S 21 / 22	
149.		Casey:	I thought it was 91		r- 28	
150.		Bronwyn:	Um (.1)		R 19	
151.			no 1992 (.1)		R- 28	
152.			I was very sick (.3)		S 21 / 22	
153.			because (.3)		S 21 / 22	
154.			because (.3)		S 30 / 18	
155.			I was (.3)		S 21 / 22	

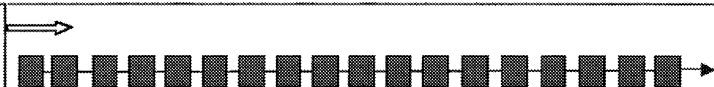(continued)

Table 6. (*continued*)

Site A—Bronwyn, Casey, and Colin   Home Based Observation Week   Audio tape data   17/6/98

Transcript Line	IU	Speaker	Message Units — Transcript Text	Potentially Divergent Units	Thematically Tied Units
158.			yeah		R+ 16 / 22
159.			I was (.3)		S 30 / 22
160.			um (.3)		S 19
161.			five weeks (.3)		S 21 / 22
162.			no I was (.3)		R- 28 / 30
163.			yeah (.1)		R+ 16
164.			five weeks (.3)		S 30 / 22
165.			because I came out (.3)		S 21 / 22
166.			because I came (.3)		R 30 / 22
167.			came five weeks too early		R 30 / 22
168.			How's that?		Q 22
169.		Casey:	uh huh		r 29
170.		Bronwyn:	Does that sound better?		Q 23 / 29
171.		Casey:	yes.		r+ 16
172.		Bronwyn:	Because look (.)		R 22
173.			they want to know why you had all those tubes and everything (.)		S 22

Unresolved Instructional Unit 168-226

Site A — Bronwyn, Casey, and Colin   Home Based Observation Week   Audio tape data   17/6/98

Transcript Line	IU	Speaker	Message Units Transcript Text	Potentially Divergent Units	Thematically Tied Units
176.			you show Mum		S 29
177.			you read that to Mummy first		S 29
178.			because if you can't read that		S 22
179.			then we've gotta change it again (.)		S 22
180.		Casey:	This is (.4)		r 30 / 31
181.			me when I was just born (.)		r 30 / 31
182.			I was born (.4)		s 30 / 31
183.			fourteenth of February (.)		s 30 / 31
184.			1992		s 30 / 31
185.			I was very sick because I came five weeks too early (.)		s 30 / 31
186.		Bronwyn:	Okay then (.)		R 16
187.			Now see(.)		S 22
188.			what you've gotta try and do is write all that in here (.)		S 21 / 22
189.			in the part here (.)		S 21 / 22
190.			Right?		Q 15 / 22
191.			Mummy'll draw a footpath		S 22

(continued)

Table 6. (*continued*)

Site A— Bronwyn, Casey, and Colin   Home Based Observation Week   Audio tape data   17/6/98

Transcript Line	IU	Speaker	Message Units / Transcript Text	Potentially Divergent Units	Thematically Tied Units
194.			okay (.)		R 22
195.			well we'll put those (.)		S 22
196.			we'll stick those on like that		S 22
197.			Okay?		Q 29 / 22
198.		Casey:	So have I still got more photos?		q 29
199.		Bronwyn:	Oh (.)		R 22
200.			yes (.)		R+ 16
201.			You still got more photos		R 30
202.		Casey:	Lots?		q 29
203.		Bronwyn:	That's right (.)		R+ 16 / 22
204.			Now (.)		S 22
205.			your next part will be a photo like this (.)		S 21 / 22
206.			which could mean (.3)		S 21 / 22
207.			like that (.)		S 21 / 22
208.			and that photo (.)		S 21 / 22
209.			You're four days old		S 21 / 22

Site A—Bronwyn, Casey, and Colin   Home Based Observation Week   Audio tape data   17/6/98

Transcript Line	IU	Speaker	Message Units Transcript Text	Potentially Divergent Units	Thematically Tied Units
212.			you're four days old in that photo		R 30
213.			and in that one		R 22
214.			so in those photos you're four days old		S 22
215.			Now (.)		S 22
216.			wait a minute (.)		S 22
217.			I've gotta sort of draw (.)		S 22
218.			we've drawn a bit of the footpath		S 22
219.			Okay?		Q 29 / 22
220.			So you're gonna have that (.3)		S 22
221.		Casey:	I know how to draw a footpath		r- 16 / 22
222.		Bronwyn:	Okay?		R+ 29 / 22
223.			okay (.)		R+ 16 / 30 / 22
224.			now you've got that there like that		S 22
225.			okay (.)		R+ 29 / 22
226.			I'm just gonna turn this off for a minute while we put some pictures down		S 22

S = Statement; Q = Question; R = Response (+,-), Adult Speaker–Upper Case, Child/Student Speaker–Lower Case

Reading: Talk/Interaction Relating to Reading: Writing: Talk/Interaction relating to Writing: Talk/Interaction relating to Writing: Talk/Interaction Not relating to Print:

Here, Bronwyn was affirming that the assignment was defined by the teacher and that they would follow the teacher's instructions as detailed in the homework text.

Consider L021–026 (see Table 6). Bronwyn read the list of information that Casey was to provide on the cardboard. Bronwyn read each item aloud and then answered each one. There was no indication of responsibility on Casey's part to respond or provide any of the information. This signaled a shift in the parent–child relationship as the lesson unfolded. Casey responded to Mum with silence; Mum continued to assume more and more responsibility in the conversation. In assuming responsibility, Bronwyn took up the role of teacher. Casey signaled her resistance to taking up the role of student with silence, but in doing so she shifted from the "talkative child" to the "silent student." Bronwyn continued to talk about the writing assignment and Casey did not respond until L043 when she made a request by stating, "I don't think I know how to do it." Bronwyn continued to use focusing strategies, providing more details about how to do the assignment.

Casey responded to her mother's questions and prompts with silence; she contributed 22 message units out of 226 identified in this event. In most cases, the silence was viewed as acceptable since the social relationship of teacher and student established during homework was maintained.

In the case of the second family, Bronwyn was willing to challenge the homework text whenever she felt that it broke with her own view of academically appropriate spellings. She may have viewed such challenges as another way of providing evidence to the school of the level of support provided at home and to her literacy abilities. The interactions during the event presented here suggest a concern on her part for providing what she viewed as a high level of support, a concern that she responded to by assuming almost total control of the written texts constructed during lessons.

CROSS-CASE COMPARISONS

Analysis of the moment-by-moment interactions of the two families reveals that in both cases, family literacy discourse practices shifted dramatically during homework events to more school-like discourse structures. Ann practiced the delivery of each lesson, the focus of which was on teaching the "proper pronunciation" of words. In turn, she was fearful of reading aloud to Nigel out of concern for mispronouncing the words of the text. Reading became a practiced form of discourse. She did not want to risk operating outside the practiced discourse modeled by the speech teacher.

In the second case, the literacy constructed by the family was defined as a time for sharing (e.g., engaging in various forms of reading and writing together), celebration, and honoring (e.g., carefully displayed wall charts of the children's

Table 7. Cross-Case Analysis of Interactional Strategies

Interactional Strategies	Ann	Nigel	Bronwyn	Casey
13. Allocate turn	–	–	–	–
14. Bid for the floor	–	–	–	2
15. Clarifying	3	–	2	–
16. Confirming	6	1	11	8
17. Continuance	–	–	–	2
18. Controlling	4	–	2	–
19. Editing	–	–	3	1
20. Express personal	–	1	–	–
21. Extending	10	9	43	1
22. Focusing	–	–	175	4
23. Ignoring	1	–	3	–
24. Initiate interaction	1	–	1	–
25. Initiate topic	1	–	–	–
26. Other	–	–	–	–
27. Refocusing	9	1	–	–
28. Rejecting	5	3	6	1
29. Requesting	1	–	22	8
30. Restating	1	10	21	6
Question	8	–	21	4
Response	3	15	15	10
Response +	3	3	10	6
Response −	4	2	4	3
Statement	16	4	153	4
Reading	11	16	9	6
Talk/interaction relating to reading	25	7	7	1
Writing	–	–	37	–
Talk/interaction relating to writing	–	–	154	19
Talk/interaction not relating to print	–	–	–	–

literacy development) where loud, overlapping conversations were at the center. During homework, however, the school frame was constructed and maintained and the parent–child relationship was contested. The focus of interactions centering on literacy shifted to the production of a homework product that would display competencies: Bronwyn's competencies as a parent and as a literacy user that ultimately reflected on the children.

Table 7 provides a cross-case comparison of the functions, strategies, forms, and relationships between messages and literacy. The interactions during the speech lesson engaged in by Ann and Nigel focused solely on reading (A = 11, N = 16) and talk relating to reading (A = 25, N = 7). Bronwyn and Casey engaged in reading (B = 9, C = 6), talk and interactions relating to reading (B = 7, C = 1), and writing (B = 37). Predominantly, however, interactions were focused on talk relating to writing (B = 154, C = 19). In both cases,

the content of the lessons was dictated by the school. Ann and Nigel conducted rehearsed and practiced discourse as modeled by the speech teacher. This was accomplished through a variety of interactional strategies. Bronwyn and Casey engaged in less practiced discourse, but held to the "preferred" discourse of school literacy. This was accomplished by Bronwyn assuming most of the responsibility for establishing and maintaining the school frame, using focusing statements (B = 175), while Casey responded with silence or by requesting (C = 8) or restating (C = 6).

In the case of the first family, Ann and Nigel, homework was clearly viewed as the discourse of power. Ann was very aware that she was being held accountable for the display of her literacy abilities as well as her son's. Her awareness that homework was a site where teachers assessed the level of support that children received at home was displayed in her unwillingness to venture beyond the privileged literacy practices of the school. In addition, Ann viewed her literacy abilities as limited and insufficient; her self-assessment was defined within the discourse of school literacy practices.

In comparison, Bronwyn was secure in her language and literacy abilities and had achieved a high level of success at home in supporting her children's literacy development. This level of success was confirmed by the school. However, homework was also a site where her competencies as a parent and as a literacy user were assessed by the school. By "presenting" their engagement in homework, evidenced to the school in the homework product, they were able to display the preferred literacy practices of the school.

In both cases, the mothers did not have input into the forms, functions, or purposes of homework as defined by the school. Communication between the home and the school regarding homework centered on the production (was homework completed within the allotted timeframe?) and the products (was homework completed properly?).

Ann viewed her language and literacy abilities as inferior to what "more literate people do at home." Therefore, she viewed her ability to offer the best start for her child to be limited. She took strategic action by attempting to replicate the literacy discourse practices modeled by the speech teacher. The construction of this relationship with the school was consequential. The event presented here provides evidence that the homework practices demanded by the school of teaching "proper" word pronunciation did not meet Nigel's needs.

While Bronwyn was more confident in her language and literacy abilities, the event analyzed here reveals her level of concern over the consequences of the quality of the schoolwork produced at home. In response, she took strategic action by assuming control over the production of the preferred literacy discourse practices of the school during homework events. Again, the construction of this relationship with the school was consequential in that Casey's involvement in homework was narrowly defined.

DISCUSSION

As detailed previously, a focus of the broader study, from which data for this article were taken, is on ways in which relationships between homes, schools, and communities can be changed in order to facilitate the development of a more community-centered perspective. It is argued here that such aims require an understanding of the unequal power relationship between families and schools.

The focus of this article is on interactions that occurred when children were assisted by their mothers in school-evaluated homework activities and the consequences of school impinging on family roles and relationships. The aim was to examine a theory of power for families. Homework is a site for such examinations since it is a "contact point" where family and school manifestations of power connect. Understanding these relationships informs a theory of power for families.

In order to examine a theory of power for families, it was necessary to discern ways in which power and its dominant ideologies were positioned in relation to the families' construction of homework. Such analysis must be conducted within a dialectical frame. According to Bloome (1991):

> The purpose of such an understanding is not generalization or the discovery of universal principles, but rather to develop perspective—a way of understanding and describing reading and writing events that lies close to what people actually do in such events and that maintains people as historical and as strategic actors. (p. 8)

Such notions of people as historical and as strategic actors were useful here in the interpretation of the interactions surrounding homework. Homework has been described in the literature as neither static nor stable in regard to definition and purposes (England & Flatley, 1985; Foyle & Bailey, 1988; Lee & Pruitt, 1979), attitudes towards homework (Wildman, 1968), effects (Hudson, 1965; Miller & Kelley, 1991; Paschal, Weinstein, & Walberg, 1984; Tupesis, 1972), and factors affecting the utility of homework (Epstein & Pinkew, 1988). Yet, according to Scharf and Stack (1995), homework "... moves through space from school to home and home to school. Homework also travels through time, reaching both backward and forward with its promises, evaluations, and consequences" (p. 1).

The content of homework, the ways in which it was assigned, the ways in which the assignments were interpreted by the mothers and children, and the ways in which families responded to the homework assignments were consequential and reflective of dominant ideologies and ways of seeing literacy and education at work in the larger society. The school was the privileged producer of the homework assignments, the privileged *assessor* of the homework produced, and the privileged *interpreter* of what counted as a correct homework product, and consequently, what counted as parental support. This required examination of the families' positionality in relation to the school.

An order of discourse was evidenced in the mother's and children's responses to homework. This order of discourse was consequential in the way in which the parent–child relationships were contested during homework. School-assigned homework impinged upon family relationships and literacy practices. In both cases, the roles and relationships shifted from that of parent–child to a teacher–student relationship; the home shifted to a school-like environment. The taking up of school-like discourse structures by the mothers and children during homework began and maintained a dichotomous hierarchy of family literacy vs. school literacy discourse practices. We need not view this as a happenstance response to the families' power relationship with the school. The literature is replete with evidence that homework represents a site for school evaluation of failure, which in turn is used to differentiate students (for a critical review of this body of literature, see McDermott, Goldman, & Varenne, 1984).

The mothers viewed homework as school-based literacy activity and as a site where their competencies were continuously being assessed in relation to the "official" practices of the school. In the production of homework, the mothers and their children constructed routines and rituals, within which individuals displayed knowledge differentially. In response to this "hidden curriculum," as agents of knowledge, both mothers took strategic action on their children's behalf to counter such practices. This was accomplished by family members holding each other accountable for enforcing and maintaining the school frame of the teacher–student relationships constructed during homework events (Varenne & McDermott, 1986, p. 208). Hence, the data presented here suggest the need to view families not simply as sources of knowledge for schools, but as agents of knowledge. According to Bloome (1991):

> When people are seen as historical and as taking strategic action in pursuit of family, community, and personal agendas, it no longer makes sense to ask about how reading and writing activities differ across home and school settings as if reading and writing practices were given/determined by home and school cultures. It seems more appropriate to view reading and writing as events in which people (adults and children) take strategic action in pursuit of various and often conflicting agendas. (p. 8)

Both families constructed routines and rituals for homework designed to counter failure, as students and as mothers. Homework constructed by the families was shaped by prior *texts* that they were responding to and by subsequent texts that they anticipated. Consequently, attention to intertextuality revealed that the families' power to counter failure was controlled in part by the school.

Similar findings in relation to the families' power to counter failure were reported by Varenne and McDermott (1986) in their study of familial literacy. They found that "families can differ in what they control while still being controlled by the school structure" (p. 192). They elaborated that:

All concerned know that failure has massive consequences both in social and personal terms . . . besides making failure interactionally coherent, homework also has the property of focusing this failure on the individual actions, the child first, and the supervising parent second. If something is going wrong, it is the child that is to be "blamed." If this does not seem reasonable, the parent will be blamed. (pp. 207–208)

Implications for Future Research

In the construction of greater understanding between home and school literacy discourse practices, it may be necessary on some level for parents to take up the discourse of the school in order to assist their children in gaining access to school literacy discourse practices. However, this analysis suggests the need to offer caution rather than support to such emphasis. The analysis presented here suggests the need to question how homework policies and practices are consequential for mothers and children. For example, previous literature suggests that in the US, academics and the popular press have begun to explore alternatives to traditional views of the "overall goodness" of homework. *Dateline*, a US television news show, ran a special on homework (James, 1997). This program raised questions about how homework is consequential for students and parents, an issue only recently addressed in the literature and an outcome rarely considered by those assigning the homework or by those shaping school homework policies. One consequence was argued by the principal of the school highlighted in the program. He drew direct links between the infamous 1980s US education policy document, *A Nation at Risk* (Gardner, 1983), and continued trends in assigning more homework in an attempt to raise students' test scores. While the literature does not suggest that it improves test scores, homework continues.

A recent article published in the popular press challenged the value of homework for elementary school students. Begley (1998) argues, based on recent research, that homework does not help elementary school students and that under some circumstances, it may have negative effects on children and their parents. Cooper (1989a, 1989b) makes a similar case in his comprehensive review of the literature on homework policies and practices. His work reveals that across years of school, early homework experiences shape a disposition for doing homework. Another consequence raised was that in the high-school years, homework done by students in advanced classes accounts for the equivalent of 1 year of additional schooling.

One agenda for future research, implied by the analysis presented here, relates to whether homework should actually be practiced in the home. Green and Dixon (University of California Santa Barbara) are currently engaged in a study of the values and purposes of homework centers as an alternative setting. There is also demonstrated need to consider: the values and purposes of assigning homework in the primary school, whether families and schools share a common understanding of these values and purposes, what types of homework should be assigned, and

the disposition for doing homework constructed by children over time. In the cases presented here, the mothers rather than the fathers took responsibility for homework. There is demonstrated need to consider the issues raised here in relation to varying gender roles and relationships between homes and schools.

Gee and Green (1998) argue, in a recent review of discourse analysis, learning, and social practice research, that the study of discourse practices has become an important theoretical perspective over the past two decades for those concerned with ways knowledge is socially constructed. They point out that such research has provided greater understandings of ways in which opportunities for learning are constructed across time, groups, and events. In this article, a focus on two families' responses to "homework" provided a vehicle for making visible and examining the social order and the discourses of the ongoing, moment-by-moment work of the mothers and children as they engaged in homework. This research suggests the need to continue exploring the role of homework in supporting or constraining constructions of shared meaning and understanding by families and schools. The cases presented here suggest that there are real consequences of school impinging on home and family roles and relationships. The taking up of school-like discourse structures by the mothers during homework instantiated and maintained a dichotomous hierarchy of family vs. school literacy discourse practices. Such a relationship maintains the status quo in the power relationship between families and schools. Yet, according to Perry and Fraser (as cited by Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997), the school as an institution must "ground itself around the vision of the society we want rather than simply reinforcing the social arrangements of the status quo." (p. 29)

The cases presented here serve as a vehicle for exposing the existing binaries constructed of home literacy vs. school literacy; minority vs. dominant literacy practices. This posits a foundation for undoing or at least complicating such notions. We need to move away from thinking of home and school literacy practices and partnerships in such oppositional ways and engage in more dialectical discussions of literacy discourse practices, thereby troubling any easy notions of how to engage in the construction of shared focus and meaning between families and schools.

NOTE

1. TAFE is a commonly used Australian acronym referring to Technical and Further Education Colleges.

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