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Making Room for Bilingual Education: A Mexican-American Study

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**Making Room for Bilingual Education:
A Mexican-American Study**

Integrated Masters Project

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MAKING ROOM FOR BILINGUAL EDUCATION

Making Room for Bilingual Education: A Mexican-American Study

by Julie Donnadieu

Abstract: This Independent Study aims to explain, through the author's new understandings, the political underpinnings and concrete effects of the English-only movement that practically eliminated bilingual education programs in the public school systems of California and Arizona in 1998 and 2000 respectively. Through a review of the pertinent literature, this review presents a broad history of bilingual education in the United States, and the negative effects English-only legislation has had on the linguistic, academic and social development of immigrant children in California and Arizona. As the United States' social and racial composition has changed in the last decades, the battle against language diversity can be understood as a surrogate fight for racial discrimination. This work hopes to demonstrate how although masked as concern for immigrant children learning English, the dismantling of bilingual education programs is a purposeful attempt at disenfranchising and disempowering immigrant groups.

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"Space is both a geographical place and an existential freedom to feel that one belongs fully amid difference"(Smith, 2006, p. 10).

Human language is social, a social act, a social creation. Starting with how babies acquire language by listening and being spoken to in their home and community languages, up to the group cohesion that a shared language creates. As a biological adaptation molded by the purpose of communicating information, language holds the possibility of expressing and shaping with tremendous sophistication, precision and creativity the nuances of reality and thought (Pinker, 1994). Among groups of people it is simultaneously a source of profound connection and understanding and a source of disconnection due to its diversity and changing nature. Its plurality ranges countless languages, dialects, registers and individual idiosyncrasies, the same way its plurality spans a variety of geographical demarcations that go from region, to country, locality, and even neighborhood. Language is an outspoken marker of identity as powerful and inescapable as our bodies and skin colors, and as such, it becomes the object of social power struggles, its diversity providing the opportunity for social hierarchies to be constructed, and for discrimination to have an object to act upon.

When people uproot and move, one of the most precious belongings they bring with them, in them, is their language. It is an essential fabric of who they are, of how they conceive and express reality and thought, and an essential means of connecting to where and who they come from; it is the line of communication and relation to their places and

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persons of origin, literally and metaphorically. In the long process of identity reconfiguration that immigration propels, one's language of origin becomes a central pivot that holds individuals, families and communities together, even across national boundaries, serving as the anchor by which the conversation of change can be enacted between who we are and who we are becoming in a different geographical location. For immigrants, the common ground of a shared language takes on a vital role within the individual, the family and the community. The severance from the mother tongue can have deeply detrimental consequences, causing "a disconnect between generations of language speakers and a loss of family ties, traditions, and cultural memory" (Christensen, 2017, p.99), not to mention the effects this severance brings about on self-esteem, particularly for adolescents.

The acquisition of a new language is one of the most crucial and long term demands exerted upon immigrants as they settle in a new place, and immigrants are well aware that education and linguistic competence are access points for full social participation, particularly for their children. The mother tongue not only provides continuity of identity and intergenerational communication, but it also supports the acquisition of a second language and culture. From birth, literacy presents itself as a progression that moves from listening, to speaking, to reading, to writing, these two latter skills learned most commonly through schooling. The language one has listened to and been spoken to since birth, becomes the language one speaks and then the language one learns to read and write in, and in the case of multilingual societies or households the languages involved follow this progression. At whatever chronological age and point of this continuum people are at when arriving in a new country, the linguistic resources and

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literacy skills they have will support the acquisition of a second language. Immigrants are not clean slates linguistically speaking.

Now, the paths of identity reconfiguration that immigrants undergo are shaped by complex social pressures and, as it pertains to language, the story of immigrants in the United States has been generally one of so called language shift: immigrant parents struggle with English, their children straddle both languages, and then their children usually grow up as monolingual English-speakers. The social pressure and expectation for immigrants in the United States is that they lose their language. The United States is the largest nation of immigrants in the world, and yet, it holds on to a reputation as a nation of English speakers (Bialystok and Hakuta, 1994). While in most countries of the world bilingualism is considered a resource, the United States does not promote the maintenance of the mother tongue for immigrant communities. The racial, cultural and linguistic diversity that immigrants bring with them generates anxiety in the white, power-wielding class, which then turns to monolingualism, to *English-only*, as a pillar of national identity, in part because there are few other elements on which the country can ground this sense (Zentella, 2009, p. 105). This anxiety projects onto bilingualism an unfounded threat to the country's identity and cohesion, and cycles through periods of heightened intensity that coincide with times of war, increased immigration, and economic downturns. Immigrants in the United States, as was the case of my grandfather's Italian family, are socially pressured into monolingualism as a mark of national integration and loyalty, and by doing so they are disempowered as individuals, families and communities from their language, their history, and their culture, not to

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mention stripped of a linguistic resource, bilingualism, that is proving more and more essential in our globalized world.

The disempowerment of groups of people through linguistic erasure has a long history in the United States and while this history is not at the center of this study some examples are worth mentioning: enslaved Africans being stripped of their freedom, as well as their names and languages, and banned from learning how to read and write; Native American children separated from their families and suffering the indignities of boarding school efforts to Americanize them in the early 20th century; immigrants pressured and shamed into giving up their mother tongue; African-Americans burdened by the linguistic racism towards African-American Vernacular English.

One recent manifestation of this disempowerment effort can be found in the English-only movement directed at dismantling bilingual education programs, both transitional and maintenance ones, which crucially support immigrant children as they acquire English as a second language and as they learn academic content in English. The question becomes why now? The United States is steadily becoming a more diverse society and as the Latino population has grown over the years and Spanish has become more ubiquitous in the streets and schools, Spanish has become the target point of resisting what is inevitable, the diversification of American society. As the fastest growing minority in the United States, Hispanics have extended their presence beyond the traditional receiving states, and have also built community networks that have empowered their efforts when confronted with inequities.

The rejection of bilingual education programs in the United States, as set in motion by the English-only movement that began in California with the passage of

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Proposition 227 in 1998, is primarily a sociopolitical concern. At its core, the dismantling of bilingual education programs, although masked as concern for immigrant children learning English, is a purposeful attempt at disenfranchising and disempowering immigrant groups by encumbering, at best, the overall learning process and the acquisition of a second language for immigrant children within schools. Because language is part and parcel of who we are, the rejection of the home language within the institution of school has profoundly detrimental social and educational consequences. California in 1998, Arizona in 2000 and Massachusetts in 2002 are the three states that have passed legislative propositions that ban bilingual education for immigrant children with limited English proficiency. In this paper I want to examine the educational effects within the schools as demanded by the propositions and some of the educational and social consequences resulting from their passage, particularly in California and Arizona. Mexicans constitute the largest immigrant group on these two border states, making them the largest affected group by these policies.

Rationale

At the end of the summer of 2014 I decided, at 46 years of age, to become a teacher, guided by the clear desire to work in public, urban, bilingual education in my adopted city of New York. As an immigrant myself, it was the prospect of working with immigrant children and their families, as they painstakingly carve out a place and reconfigure their identity in a new physical and social geography, that gave me purpose through this change.

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I myself immigrated to the United States, arriving in New York City in the year 2000. I was born in Mexico City, Mexico where I lived until my early 30's. My mother is American, her father an Italian immigrant from Naples whose family arrived in the United States through Ellis Island. My great-grandparents, and grandfather left Naples as poor peasants and ended up having an Italian products grocery store on Taylor street in the Italian district of Chicago. When my grandfather Anniello Giuliano was growing up in the 1920's and 1930's, the assimilation process he was pressured to follow made him reject his parents' Italian tongue as a brand of poverty, and ignorance, and while he went on to go to college and become a successful surgeon, family stories abound of painful disconnection with his family and heritage. On the other side of my family my father was born in France and raised in Mexico City, of a French mother and a Mexican/French father. By the time he finished high school he was fluent and literate in three languages: Spanish, French and English. I grew up with Spanish as my first language, while also learning English through my mother. As a white girl with a French name growing up with an American mother, in Mexico City, Spanish was always my most stable claim to national identity, perhaps not unlike English was to my grandfather Anniello. While I did not reject my mother's English and thanks to her had an advantage when studying it in school, as I became a teenager the political tensions between Mexico and the United States played out in the theatre of my individual life in the loyalties I held to both languages. The richness of literature always brought the English language back home to me. A third linguistic thread to my family identity is French. My sister and I used to see my grandfather on Saturdays and he would teach us words and phrases and talk to us about his travels to France. In my early twenties, and with the colloquial French charged

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with affection that my grandfather had given to me during these childhood Saturdays, I embarked in its study for a year at the university. I did this with great enthusiasm, as if I were giving myself a part of who I was. As I grew older, I was able to kindly hold these pieces together within me without needing one to exclude the other. The details of my personal story have given me some insight into the complex processes of identity reconfiguration that immigrants undergo, and of which language maintenance and acquisition are pivotal. I do not by any means wish to convey that my life as a middle class child brings me any closer to fully understanding the harsh realities of discrimination lived by documented and undocumented Mexican immigrants in the United States. Rather the experience of being signaled as a foreigner and “other” by my differences (my skin color, my name, my English) while growing up in Mexico City, and the social pressures and loyalties that different languages exacted of me, help me build a scaffold towards imagining another’s experience. Our sense of identity, of which language is such a commanding thread, is as much shaped by our individual agency as it is by the social context in which we develop. We are who we see ourselves to be as much as who others see us to be.

When I began my Masters at Bank Street in 2015 and started understanding the processes of first and second language acquisition, I remember feeling perplexed to discover that it was in states such as California and Arizona, where there are large numbers of Mexican immigrants, that bilingual education programs had been practically banned for over a decade. It seemed then, as it seems now, utterly absurd, if just from an educational perspective, that these programs were eliminated precisely where they are more needed because of the amount of children they serve. As I am now in my second

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year working as a 4th/5th grade teacher in a bilingual public school in the Washington Heights neighborhood of New York City, I wanted to explore the political dimensions of bilingual education in the United States in more depth and its concrete effects on people. The intense rejection of bilingual education programs, and Spanish specifically, particularly in the southern border states, makes it clear that the “language issue is a surrogate for racial, cultural, and economic sentiments of many monolingual, native-born [white] Americans” (Attinasi, 1999, p. 266). Particularly in the present day political climate, some sectors of the population in the United States are being pushed into an exclusionary and divisive idea of national identity. It felt important as a bilingual educator to take a closer look at the social background in which immigrant students are living and learning, in order to inform my work with equity and social justice practices.

Mexican Immigration and Perceptions of the Receiving Society of Mexican Immigration

The first Mexicans to live in what is now the United States did not migrate here but rather lived in territory that belonged to Mexico and was lost to the United States during the Mexican-American War of 1848, when half of the Mexican territory became, with its people, part of the then westward expanding United States. What this loss of territory amounts to comes across with particular force if one compares geographical maps prior to and after the war: the territory that was incorporated included what is today California, Arizona, Texas, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and parts of Colorado and Wyoming. The incorporation of this native population into the United States was hindered by the racial, cultural and linguistic differences they posed against the white

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English speaking Anglo-saxon majority, but also because the storyline that dominated about them was of a conquered group with a different language. With the Second World War and the fear of a labor shortage, the United States signed the Bracero Program which allowed Mexican nationals to take on temporary agricultural work in the United States. Through this program, which lasted from 1941 to 1964, more than 4.5 million Mexicans were legally contracted to work as farm hands at wages and working conditions scorned by most Americans. The program fed the circular migration patterns of Mexicans living in the United States, and while it provided an opportunity of work for impoverished Mexican rural workers it also established and reinforced patterns of exploitation and racist attitudes towards these workers.

Prior to 1986 the border was much more permeable and it allowed for Mexican migrants to engage in circular migration, that is come into the United States, work for a period of time, return to Mexico to be with their families and then repeat the process (Minian, 2017). This circular migration meant that Mexicans, mainly men, who crossed to work were not severing ties with their families in Mexico or looking to reside permanently in the United States.

In 1986 then president Ronald Reagan signed into law the Immigration Reform and Control Act which by increasing enforcement at the border ended this circular migration. Although crossing became more difficult and dangerous Mexicans continued to do so pressed on by economic necessity. Because the back and forth movement between the two countries was restricted, men decided to settle permanently. This shift also led to a change in the demographics of immigration since the men encouraged their wives and children to head north with them. In 1986 there were an estimated 3.2 million

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unauthorized immigrants living in the United States, a number that increased to 5 million by 1996 and reached 11 million in 2006. The Great Recession which spans from December of 2007 to June of 2009 stopped and even reversed the number of undocumented immigrants. To the present day more Mexicans are returning to Mexico than the ones who were entering the United States (Minian, 2017), a piece of information strategically omitted from the fear mongering discourse spewed against immigrants that dominated President Trump's presidential campaign. One overlooked fact about President Trump's push to fortify the existing border wall and border-control measures is that besides preventing Mexicans from entering into the United States these intensified measures are also preventing Mexicans who wish to return to Mexico from leaving the United States. The exacerbation of the border wall rhetoric by the then candidate and now President Trump does not acknowledge this fact but rather is meant to fuel animosity against Mexicans equating them with threat, violence and illegality.

Since the United States incorporated the Southwest territories belonging to Mexico in 1848, the Anglo-Saxon white majority in power has relentlessly worked at portraying Mexicans in a negative light, and on restricting the social spaces in which they develop, language and education being some key spaces. In 2017, this negative misrepresentation continues to be voiced from the presidential pulpit and magnified by whites across the country as they find in Mexican immigrants a scapegoat for their social grievances, particularly economic, and the anxiety they experience in the inevitably changing racial landscape of the country.

In her eloquent Ted talk "The Danger of The Single Story", Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, addresses the limitations that stereotypes, single stories about others, exert on us

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as they limit and dehumanize our perceptions of other people. When speaking about Fide, a boy who worked in her house when she was a child growing up in a middle class Nigerian family, she comments:

“It had not occurred to me that anybody in his family could actually make something. All I had heard about them was how poor they were, so that it had become impossible for me to see them as anything else but poor. Their poverty was my single story of them.” (Adichie, 2009).

The danger of a single story seems particularly pertinent when speaking about the collective identity that is portrayed and circulated about Mexican immigrants in the United States: poor, uneducated, unintelligent, lazy, criminals, drug dealers, and most recently “rapists”. I think it is difficult for white Americans to conceive Mexican immigrants as hardworking, creative, and intelligent. These stories are not visible: the stories of a rich and old history that include the accomplishments and contributions of pre-hispanic societies; the present day vibrant cultural contributions in art, literature, dance, music, architecture and food; the ingenuity of a people; the resilience Mexican immigrants display under the harshest conditions of integration. These stories are hidden. Because language is inseparable from its speakers, Spanish then has also become prey of this single story.

Attitudes about bilingual education in the United States became tied to attitudes toward Spanish, which may be seen outside the U.S. as an important global language, but has been constructed within the U.S. as a language of immigrants, poverty, and low educational attainment. (Katznelson & Bernstein, 2017, p. 17)

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Bilingual Education Programs in the United States

It is important to delineate what the main types of bilingual education programs are and the kind of support they provide for school aged children acquiring English. Immigrant children arrive in the United States at different ages and with different schooling experiences and require different kinds of support. As they enter school, they are faced with the task of learning *a* new language and learning content *in* a new language. Bilingual programs can be broadly framed within three categories: 1.) Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE); 2.) Native Language Literacy (NLL); and 3.) Two-way Bilingual Programs (TB). TBE programs aim to ease the transition of students into all English classes within a three year framework. Students receive content instruction in their native language so as not to fall behind in their academic knowledge while they are learning English. NLL programs are designed for students who have had limited or no schooling experience in their home countries. The focus is to develop native language literacy skills as well as English as a second language skills before entering the transitional bilingual education program. TB programs are designed to develop full bilingualism for all students regardless of their linguistic background. As such, this type of program seeks to maintain the native language of immigrants (Berriz, 2004).

It is worth highlighting their common features. They all use native language instruction so that students do not fall behind in their academic learning while acquiring English. Since native languages are spoken and validated at school, non-English speaking parents can have greater participation, engagement and ownership of their child's schooling. Teachers can tap into their students linguistic and cultural capital (Berriz, 2004). In the United States, the bilingual programs "that we have today emerged

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through the work of local activists and through sustained community struggle” (Barbian, Cornell González & Mejía, 2017, p. xvi). For over forty years they have enabled students to use their native language as a means to learn content (math, science, social studies, reading comprehension, writing skills) while learning English as a second language. The presence of bilingual education programs has also had an integrating and validating effect of immigrant communities, their language and culture at the center of this validation. This visibility and social recognition is paramount for immigrants, but it is also vital for white American children and their families, for it is they who also experience immigrant children and their families being legitimized. Bilingual education is a “way of providing *meaningful and equitable education*, as well as an education that builds tolerance towards other linguistic and cultural groups” (García, 2009, p. 6). What gets dismantled when bilingual programs are banned or restricted is not only the linguistic access to education for immigrant children who speak another language and are learning English, but the curriculum of inclusion that goes hand in hand with these programs. It is hard to envision English-only programs that while banning the use of Spanish will support a curriculum that reflects the lives of immigrant children, their culture, their reality, or their presence in the children’s books available in the classroom. Adrienne Rich’s words seem quite fitting:

When those who have power to name and to socially construct reality choose not to see you or hear you, whether you are dark-skinned, old, disabled, female, or speak with a different accent or dialect than theirs, when someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a

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moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing.

(Rich, 1986, p. 199)

The dissonance that occurs when immigrant children are not able to use their home language at school, and do not see themselves reflected in the content of what they are studying, has very concrete and damaging effects on their engagement to learn. They are being asked to fully participate in the learning process without the anchors of language and connection to self. They are being asked to care within a schooling structure that does not care about them.

Bilingual education in the United States represents the possibility for immigrant children of integrating a second language and culture into their sense of self under the most supported conditions for learning. It is this fact that makes bilingual education the fierce target of constraint for those who see in the empowerment of immigrants a threat to national identity. The ban on bilingual education in California, and Arizona converges with the growth of Spanish speakers in the United States via birth rate and immigration and their increasing political empowerment. Bilingual education also intersects with the need for school curricula to address issues of history, equity and social justice. It is at the crossroads of a point of intense tension as the United States resists embracing bilingualism or recognizing in the linguistically diverse fabric of its immigrant population an asset rather than a threat.

Yet our attitudes toward bilingualism are ambivalent. We consider it a worthwhile accomplishment for a college graduate from an English-speaking background to master a second language. But we insist that the children of immigrant families

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relinquish their first languages as part of their 'Americanization' (Lessow-Hurley, 2013, p.9).

The rejection of bilingual education programs in the United States is a political issue. These stances disguised as ambiguities are clear expressions of a racist, discriminatory and purposefully disempowering political process towards immigrants in general and Mexican Spanish speaking brown skinned immigrants in the Southwest in particular. In the influx of documented and undocumented migration and since the presence of brown skinned immigrants seems particularly difficult to contain, then what will be restrained will be their full social empowerment by obstructing their language development. Spanish will be demeaned and English development will be thwarted.

Now, this either/or social demand that the United States places on immigrants, meaning either you speak only English or you are not one of us, also disregards the complexities and creativity of bilingual/bicultural individuals, which is the norm in most parts of the world. When immigrants begin making choices around their linguistic resources:

This mixing of two languages, especially among second generation, reflects the speaker's engagement with two cultures. Sometimes one language expresses an idea better than other, or does so in a way that seems more relevant to the speaker and his or her audience. (Smith, 2006, p.17)

As immigrants are imbued in a new environment, their cultural and linguistic identities are transformed. As it pertains to language use, communities all over the world "language bilingually, that is, they *translanguage* when they communicate" (García,

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2009, pp. 43-44). *To language* as Ofelia García proposes, has to do with "the fluid ways languages are used in the twenty first century" (García, 2009, p. 23). People go back and forth using their linguistic resources creatively and intermixed in every day interactions, in different settings, with different people, for different reasons. In its rigid and misguided idea of national identity as a monolithic adoption of a single culture and a single language, the United States fails to acknowledge what actually happens within bicultural/bilingual communities. In a recent an eloquent article in *The New York Times*, Cecilia Ballí describes the two border cities of Nogales in Arizona (USA), and Nogales in Sonora (Mexico) as a place where life transpired bilingually and biculturally, where she "heard perfectly bilingual speakers mix Spanish and English more as an artful form of expression than a linguistic deficiency ('le pide a la señorita que nos traiga un sautéed spinach?)" (Ballí, 2017, p. 4). But spheres in power do not see in the diversity of its population a resource but a threat.

Literature Review

Grass Roots Activism, Court Rulings and Federal Laws on Bilingual Education

Introduction.

The United States is a country made of diverse immigrant groups and bilingualism, or multilingualism has been a reality since its inception. This linguistic plurality has cycled through periods of tolerance and rejection, attitudes that have been informed by matters of power, race, and class, and that have supported or worked against bilingual education. In this section I will trace a broad time framework of important historical moments and bilingual education policies that have affected the education of

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immigrant children, in particular Spanish speakers, who are the focus group of this project.

1848 Mexican American War and the Bracero Program.

As mentioned earlier, the first major integration of Mexicans into the United States happened after the territory they lived in became a part of the United States. There was a period of time where Spanish, which was the native tongue of the original inhabitants, was used in legislation, education and the press. The fact that this land and its people had been conquered made it difficult for Spanish to gain permanent acceptance, and as the Anglo-saxon population increased and these territories became states, Spanish was no longer used in legislation, education and the press, exerting pressure for the Mexican population to assimilate linguistically (García, 2009). The Bracero Program that from 1942 to 1964 allowed Mexican laborers to work in the United States, which basically provided the United States with cheap farm and railroad labor, also established segregated education conditions for the children of these workers, which set them up for academic failure. Spanish was tarnished as a language of a conquered or poor people. And as Spanish speakers, Mexicans immigrants were identified as academically unsuccessful.

Dissegregation and Civil Rights Movement.

The 1954 landmark U.S. Supreme Court ruling of *Brown vs. Board of Education* by establishing the precedent that when it came to education, same was not always equal, paved the way for legislation that would support the education of linguistic minority groups. Prior to any federal legislation being drafted to those effects, bilingual education went through a period of revival that began at the local level. In 1963, in Dade County,

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Miami, educated middle class and upper class Cuban exiles established the first bilingual education program, the Coral Way Elementary School which to this day remains an exemplar of bilingual education. Its formation led to the establishment of other bilingual schools in the Southwest: San Antonio, New Mexico, Texas, California and Arizona.

It is no coincidence that the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's paved the way for activism of immigrant minorities in the United States. Rights whether civil, labor, or linguistic, have always been arduously fought through long periods of activism. It is the day to day experience of people and the grass-roots organizing around these injustices that has made issues visible, and then subject to change. These grass-roots efforts have shaped and informed political and legislative frameworks of inclusion and tolerance, while at the same time impacting daily experiences of interaction amongst people that shift racist and intolerant views person by person. The work occurs at the policy and at the individual consciousness levels.

Bilingual Education Act.

In 1964, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act was passed by Congress prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin and it played a very important role in developing bilingual education. In 1968, addressing the dire educational situation of Spanish speaking immigrant children, Congress passed Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act; the so called Bilingual Education Act. The legislation did not require bilingual education but it did set aside federal funds for school districts with large number of language minorities who wanted to start bilingual education programs or develop instructional materials. It is important to note that the Bilingual Education Act does not consider the maintenance or development of the students' home languages,

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revealing in such decision a lack of interest in bilingualism (García, 2009). When it was reauthorized in 1974, the Bilingual Education Act did provide a definition of transitional bilingual education that defined it as using the native language of children with limited English to allow them to move successfully through the education system. It also expresses an appreciation of the cultural heritage of linguistic minority immigrant children (García, 2009). From where we stand today, amidst the negative portrayal of Mexicans and the English-only movement that affects the Southwest, this wording seems at an abyssal distance from the reality on the ground.

***Lau vs. Nichols* ruling.**

In the early 1970's a group of Chinese American parents brought and won a judicial case against the San Francisco School Board, known as *Lau vs. Nichols*, arguing that their children were not receiving an equitable education. The case was grounded in part on Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. The court's decision found an English-only education to be in violation of the equal educational opportunities provision of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In its initial decision the court did not establish specific guidelines for schools to follow, but the Office of Civil Rights set up a Task Force that in time did establish regulations that came to be known as Lau Remedies. The *Lau vs. Nichols* decision as well as the Bilingual Education Act became the grounding court case and legislation respectively that codified and set precedent of guidelines around bilingual education and the support required by English language learners as they navigated through the public education system. While the Lau decision is extremely important, by establishing the precedent of remedial programs for linguistic support and not language

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maintenance programs, it made it difficult for following judicial suits to gain traction if they sought to argue in favor of programs that aimed at language maintenance.

Reauthorizations of the Bilingual Education Act.

The Bilingual Education Act was reauthorized in 1978 , and then in 1984. This last reauthorization approved developmental bilingual education meaning students could maintain their home languages after learning English. Now while it did this, it also allowed for up to a 4% of English-only programs labeled as Special Alternative Instructional Programs (SAIPs) to be funded. With the 1988 reauthorization of the Bilingual Education Act this percentage of SAIPs funded was tipped to 25%, and it also imposed a three-year limit on the participation of English language learners in transitional education programs. In the 1994 reauthorization, increased attention was given to two-way bilingual programs (which aim at home language maintenance), but on the other hand the quota for the SAIPs was lifted completely. These two competing efforts in the spectrum of linguistic support given to immigrant children learning English as reflected in the legislation, on one end language maintenance programs and on the other English-only programs, have played out in the present state of affairs regarding bilingual education.

What numbers tell.

The same way maps have a particular way of conveying information, giving us the visual impact of what words can only express sequentially, so do numbers have a way of weighing in by the force and contrast of quantities, in this case the numeric reality of

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school aged children in the United States regarding their bilingualism.¹ Two considerations before we look at the numbers: one, the numbers represent an underestimation since undocumented immigrants are not accounted for; and two, bilingualism of U.S. children is seldom an object of study because it has no societal value in the U.S. and this is why exact figures are hard to come by. According to the 2000 U. S. Census of all school aged children between the ages of 5 and 17, 18.42% (9, 779,766) of them speak a language other than English at home (LOTE). Of this 18.42%, 12.86% speak Spanish (6,830,100) and they represent 69.84% of the total number of school aged children that speak a language other than English at home. In Arizona of the total number of children who speak a language other than English at home the ones who speak Spanish represent 81.81%, and in California they represent 76.00% of this total. Now, the number that I find appalling and that is hidden from the public discourse regarding language use of school aged children, is the fact that of the 9, 779, 776 school age children who speak a language other than English at home, 86.48% are bilingual (in English and this other language), and 13.52% are emergent bilinguals, meaning they are in the process of acquiring English in school. This is a staggering number. Contrary to the public discourse that wants us to believe that immigrant children are not learning English if they continue to speak their home language, the reality is quite the contrary: they are *adding* English to their linguistic abilities, that is, they are English proficient and bilingual. Numbers are a way of arguing quantitatively the necessity of shifting the United States linguistic identity from one of monolingualism to one of bilingualism or multilingualism. They are a way of

¹ All numbers and percentages have been taken from Ofelia García's book *Bilingual Education in the 21st Century* (2009).

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viewing more distinctly the discord between the country's reality and the official account it has of itself regarding language.

In public discourse bilingual education is blamed for the lack of academic progress of immigrant children and their acquisition of English. What is obscured from this story line is the role poverty plays, and the data support this. Most school aged children who are learning English come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. "Nearly 70 percent of emergent bilinguals are enrolled in 10 percent of the nation's schools, which are predominantly located in urban poor areas" (García, 2009, p. 182). Health problems, overcrowding of schools, segregation and teachers lacking adequate preparation are some of the conditions under which these children are expected to thrive. The push for establishing English-only programs as the only option for learning under these already stark conditions seems particularly injurious.

State Laws: California and Arizona

Introduction.

Why choose two border states? Because I have framed the study of bilingual education on Spanish and the experience of Mexican immigrants, border states afford me a more homogeneous immigrant population to consider, than if I had chosen New York City's public school system, for example. On the other hand, the political and social responses to immigrants and their language we see in the border region become blueprints for what gets reproduced in other states and cities far away from it, such as the case of Massachusetts, which was the third state in the nation to vote an English-only proposition after California and Arizona. The border region also presents a particular

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complexity because while it could hold the promise of energizing the contact and understanding between diverse people, initially by the sheer number of possible contacts, it is precisely the threat that the numbers suppose that partly feeds the prejudiced and racist storyline of Mexican immigrants. In a social and political climate where immigrants in general and undocumented Spanish speaking brown skinned immigrants in particular, are dehumanized and scapegoated, the border region becomes then the terrain where an exacerbated sense of threat is acted on: cries for the building of a wall (where a wall already exists!), the Minutemen Project in Arizona (the now defunct civilian border militia who from 2004-2009 took it upon themselves to enforce border control), or an elected official receiving presidential pardon even if found guilty of criminal actions against immigrants (sheriff Joe Arpaio, of Maricopa County in Arizona).

California as a liberal state and Arizona as a politically conservative one also set an interesting inquiry contrast into how bilingual education plays out at the local school district levels with different political leanings. How are families, students, schools and educators experiencing the effects of their respective state legislations regarding instruction to children who are not yet proficient in English in the face of large immigrant Spanish speaking student populations? How do community organizations leverage discrimination and racism with their empowerment work?

California.

After the *Lau vs. Nichols* federal ruling in the early 1970's, several states, including California, followed the Federal government's lead and made bilingual education programs mandatory to instruct children learning English. Over time, in California bilingual education programs, (mostly transitional), were adopted by

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administrators and educators, researched and accepted by a group of experts, and formalized in state legislation in 1977 with a 10 year life span. Over the course of those ten years, anti-immigrant sentiment grew and the law was not reissued in 1987 (Attinasi, 1999). In June 1998 California voters passed the ballot measure known as Proposition 227, marketed by its proponents as “English for the Children”. It required immigrant children who were learning English to do so by being taught in English only, thus targeting very specifically bilingual education programs, both maintenance and transitional ones, within the California public school system, programs which even at that time were researched and proven methods of second language acquisition. The proposed structure was for English language learners to be taught in Structured English Immersion (SEI) classrooms for a year, after which these children would be mainstreamed into general education classrooms. As John Attinasi clearly identifies in his thorough analysis of the context and content of the bill, the "intent to move as rapidly as possible toward English is prescribed by settings and techniques whose effectiveness are subject to great controversy" (Attinasi, 1999, p. 264). Proposition 227 was imposed from the top down with no consultation with bilingual educators or attention to facts from valid research on educational best practices. It "was written and promoted by individuals and groups that had previously participated in anti-bilingual and anti-immigrant movements" (Matas and Rodríguez, 2014, p. 2). It passed during a period of intensified nationalistic and anti-immigrant sentiment and opportunistically conflated bilingual programs with educational failure and with lack of adequate progress in English acquisition. The fact was that at that point in time less than one third of all English learners were enrolled in bilingual programs, making it impossible to correlate their lack of academic progress with

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bilingual programs themselves (Matas and Rodríguez, 2014). The label of the proposition, “English for the Children,” also contributed to a public perception that bilingual programs did not have English acquisition as a priority for students. Immigrant parents who choose bilingual education programs and bilingual educators of English language learners want their children and students respectively to learn English and they understand that bilingual programs provide the academic, linguistic and social support to do so.

The success of this campaign hinged on several points of misinformation. First it failed to inform the citizenry what research had determined repeatedly: that second language acquisition is a process that *requires time*, and is best achieved through the continuity of children’s native language. The transition into English acquisition is best achieved from a linguistic, educational, and human perspective by acknowledging the identity and linguistic resources of a given child and his family. The English-only mandate not only misrepresented bilingual education programs as failing to teach English to immigrant children, but it also misinformed voters by omitting to provide details on the proposed option of Sheltered English Instruction (SEI), which is a controversial pedagogical course of action. Conceived of as an English-only immersion setting, it prevents students and teachers from speaking or using materials in the students’ native languages with the expectation that after one year immigrant children will have enough command of English to be exited from these programs and mainstreamed into general education classes. One of the major tasks that all students are confronted with at school is to acquire academic English. Jim Cummings, a seminal theorist of bilingual education, firmly established that it takes around two years for English language learners to acquire

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conversational English, but that academic "English takes much longer to acquire, at least five years" (Freeman & Freeman, 2004, p. 207). SEI also segregates English language learners from their English proficient peers, hindering the English acquisition process that occurs from this contact and contributing to the stigmatization of a group. The classes itself are intended as language instruction classes with secondary attention to academic content, so children get behind in their learning. The time frames and methods delineated by Proposition 227 fly in the face of established research.

It is important to know that the restrictions imposed by the passage of Proposition 227 affected "1.4 million children and their families in a state which is host to half the nation's immigrants and operates half its bilingual programs, including many exemplary ones" (Attanasi, 1999, p. 266). Proposition 227 included the option of parents requesting a waiver if they wanted their child to remain in a bilingual program, but under three qualifying conditions: first, the child already had strong English language skills; second, the child was over 10 years of age and a bilingual program was deemed more appropriate; and third, the child had a learning disability that required a bilingual program as the best educational option. Proposition 227 also included a provision by which parents and others could hold a teacher, a school, or a district legally liable for not implementing the English language program as designated in the proposition. Placing the legal responsibility of this proposition on school personnel "had rarely, if ever, been implemented before in California's state educational policy (Matas & Rodríguez, 2014, p. 2). The prospect of legal action hardly contributes to a positive working environment and it pits people against each other.

Teacher perspectives on Proposition 227.

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Laura Alamillo and Celia Viramontes from the University of California at Berkeley conducted a research two years after the implementation of Proposition 227 to obtain perspectives from teachers in various educational settings: those that continued to teach in bilingual education through the waiver process; those who had to switch from bilingual to structured English immersion, and those who had been and remained in structured English immersion classrooms (Alamillo & Viramontes, 2000). First of all, teachers, who were the persons in charge of implementing Proposition 227 in the classrooms, saw in it a mandate imposed from the top down and one that was drafted without consultation or input from teachers' expertise, educators who had years of successful experience in the education of English language learners. Other factors that coincided with the implementation of Proposition 227 during its second year were the nationwide push for accountability of student progress through standardized testing.

When considering the effects of Proposition 227 on the teaching profession, bilingual teachers reported feeling devalued and demoralized and that their expertise on teaching second language learners was being questioned. For bilingual teachers who were forced to shift to a structured English immersion program, there was a pedagogical conflict with the requirements of the new law. Their pedagogical belief was at odds with the guidelines that Proposition 227 in SEI settings required them to do in the classroom. As one of these teachers put it: "It is hard to accept that someone outside the classroom decides what happens inside, and I can't do what's best for students." (Alamillo, 2000, p. 155). Many continued to use primary language to support their students, but the simultaneous concentration on standardized testing made these teachers feel constrained and excluded from shaping how the implementation of the proposition was taking place.

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Many teachers who had always taught in SEI expressed feeling more aware and conscious of the benefits of bilingual education, and they empathized with bilingual teachers' sense of vulnerability as to the continued institutional support for their type of pedagogy (Alamillo, 2000).

When it comes to instructional practices bilingual teachers reported increasing the students exposure to English, working on vocabulary development in both languages, and in phonemic awareness. With the standardized testing push they also had to teach students how to respond to test-like questions. They expressed concern on an increased difficulty in acquiring primary language materials and feeling pressured to mainstream students from bilingual instruction programs at an earlier age. Bilingual teachers that were now teaching in SEI lamented not being able to teach in Spanish or to use more Spanish or primary language materials to support their students. One teacher described how her instruction felt diluted now because so much of the day was focused on English language development at the expense of curricular content. They expressed difficulty in reaching their students. These teachers were also concerned that there were not enough peer English role models in the classroom. For teachers who were already SEI or English-only teachers the change was experienced by the standardized testing emphasis (Alamillo, 2000).

Proposition 227 mandates that all students spend 30 days in a SEI setting prior to being placed in their final classrooms. As far as the impact of Proposition 227 on students, bilingual teachers reported that this period was the most difficult and frustrating to witness. Children, recent immigrants who did not speak a word of English and had had very little prior schooling, were confused, scared and unable to communicate. As John

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Attinasi clearly expresses, one of the three goals of bilingual education is "to develop positive attitudes and socialization regarding schooling" (Attinasi, 1999, p. 270). These bilingual teachers perceived that even when students remained in bilingual classrooms the negative climate regarding their primary language generated by the proposition has made them internalize this negativity. Bilingual teachers who switched to SEI classrooms perceived that the proposition negatively impacted their students in their self-identity and in their academic achievement. One teacher described how children are losing their primary language and in doing so are losing their cultural identity. This teacher foresaw "students not being able to communicate with parents and losing ties with their community and family" (Alamillo, 2000, p. 163). They also expressed that due to the growing emphasis on English tests being administered students were feeling frustrated which contributed to their lack of self-confidence when it came to their academic achievement. Teachers were also concerned that parents were not able to help their children with homework as they once did when they were in a bilingual setting. The disruption in children's sense of self, of trust in their capabilities to learn, and in their ties with family and community generated by the implementation of Proposition 227, belie the stated intention of the proposition. The best interests of immigrant children are clearly not served academically, socially or emotionally.

Another negative effect that the proposition has had is on teacher relationships within a school. Many monolingual teachers misinterpreted the law as eradicating bilingual education and questioned their school's administration for continuing these programs. Upon implementation of the proposition, tensions and divisions erupted among teachers teaching in different settings, with perhaps the most detrimental sense being that

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the proposition "not only changed instructional programs for second language learners, but it also legitimized monolingual teacher's negative feelings toward primary language instruction" (Alamillo, 2000, p. 165).

Over the almost 20 years since the implementation of Proposition 227, the state of California has seen the decline of bilingual education programs. When English language learners enter the California public school system they are expected to perform socially and academically, learning *a* and *in* a new language without adequate support, and even despite their initial enthusiasm to learn they soon find themselves struggling on both counts (Matas, 2014). Over the course of these years the percentage of English learners receiving academic instruction in their primary language has declined, as has the percentage of teachers providing this primary language instruction. The increase of structured English immersion programs has meant that English language learners spend much of their instructional time learning English but are not supported in their access to grade-level content by primary language instruction. Consequently they fall behind in their academics feeding into a cycle of low self-esteem and disengagement in learning. Bilingual programs offered students "the opportunity to maintain and strengthen their academic skills in their primary language, while concurrently learning English vocabulary and literacy concepts" (Matas, 2014, p. 7). It is disingenuous to claim that Proposition 227 had or has the best interest of immigrant children's learning.

Proposition 58.

In a very recent shift, on November of 2016, and once more against a heightened anti-immigrant atmosphere, Californians voted in the opposite direction: 73.52% of California voters voted in favor of Proposition 58. This measure lifts the limits on

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language of instruction in California's public schools set by Proposition 227. As Noah Katznelson and Katie Bernstein (2017) so incisively ask and answer :

What would make a voter who was otherwise persuaded to 'make America great again' vote on the very same ballot for a bill that could mean the rebirth of bilingual education, which is historically linked to the fight for social justice and linguistic minority rights? (p. 11).

The authors assert that in both legislative texts mentioned before, language is the topic itself of the bills and the means by which these bills help build a reality that is voted on by the citizenry. Using methods of critical discourse analysis of both legislative texts the authors arrive at the conclusion that in Proposition 227 bilingualism is posed as a problem for which English is presented as the solution, while in Proposition 58 the term used is multilingualism in an effort to distance it from the negative connotations absorbed by the term bilingualism, and it is proposed as a resource linking it to economic gain. The complexity lies in the fact that Proposition 227 dismantled a bilingual education system whose expressed purpose was to support language minority students. On the other hand Proposition 58 opens up the possibility of multilinguistic (in reality two languages) instruction in the State of California but now the expressed beneficiaries of this multilingualism are all students and more importantly the economic interests of the state. The new focus has shifted bilingual education from an equity and heritage discourse where its main intent was to support the educational achievement of minority language students, to a discourse of human capital, where bilingualism is seen as increasing the marketability of people (immigrant or not) in the global economy (Katznelson, 2017).

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The shift that Proposition 58 poses is definitely welcome but it must not blur the social justice and equity struggles of immigrants of which bilingual education is a part of. Making room for immigrants, making room for the idea that all languages are linguistically equal and only socially placed in a hierarchy, making room for an idea of the United States as a country where English is the dominant language but does not exclude immigrants from maintaining their primary language, making room for an idea of power that does not exclude, replace reject or pit groups against each other, all these are long term purposes that sustain present day action. The space exists. The path is laborious.

In a brief online article published on February of 2016 Kristal Bivona celebrates the return of bilingual education to California through the passing of Proposition 58. She provides a profile of State Senator Tony Mendoza author of the bill and former educator and chair of the committee on Biliterate Dual-Immersion Programs, and outlines the efforts that are being undertaken in the state to provide accurate information about these. While it is to be welcomed that biliteracy has gained prestige, in its absence of mentioning the immigrant populations that bilingual education was initially set out to support, the immigrant population becomes invisible, diluted in the economic gain perspective. Bivona cites Karina Aguilera-Fort, president of the California Association for Bilingual Education (CABE) as saying “ Dual-language program and biliteracy programs are not programs to save anyone” (Bivona, p. 20). This remark strikes me as odd. The implied “anyone” appears to be poor immigrant children. It seems that in order to cater the benefits of multilingualism to a middle class Anglo-saxon population, the stark realities of poverty, inequity, racism and oppression experienced by immigrant

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families need to be concealed, cleansed from the picture. California's interest in dual language immersion programs does not begin with an economic interest, or on the explicit benefits of bilingualism. It begins with the social and educational need of educating non-English speaking children. It is one thing to be an English speaking white child who is acquiring another language, than the son or daughter of an immigrant for whom literacy in your mother tongue will not only maintain your relationship with your culture, the possibility of communicating with your family, and your sense of self, but be the bridge to the acquisition of literacy in the English language. Bilingualism for the rich should not supersede bilingualism for the poor.

Arizona.

Two years after Proposition 227 was voted in California in 1998, Arizona followed suit with the voting of Proposition 203 in 2000. This was an effort also conceptually and monetarily supported by Ron Unz, and it paved the way for the dismantling of bilingual education programs in the state, despite research consistently showing the effectiveness of bilingual education programs in the education of English language learners. Arizona is a state that struggles deeply with racism. In a brush stroke: in the early 90's Arizona's Governor Evan Mecham failed to decree that the state would recognize Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday as a federal holiday, a position he later recanted after growing protests. With the growing Hispanic population in the state, representing more than 30% by 2008, the racist focus has shifted on them.

Proposition 203, its implementation and other discriminatory legislation.

Proposition 203 was implemented in the 2001/2002 school year at which moment some 70% of Arizona's school districts had placed English language learners (ELL) in

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English-only programs. Some school districts, including the Tucson and Sunnyside ones, were able to maintain bilingual education programs through a waiver granted by the Arizona Department of Education. When in 2002 Tom Horne won the the race for Superintendent of Public Instruction he extended the ban of bilingual education to these districts. He rewrote the waiver process so that *only students who were fluent in English* (emphasis mine) could receive bilingual education. The absurdity of the premise is appalling. This move effectively denied bilingual education "to ELL students who are most in need of this approach to language development" (Cammarota, 2012, p. 488). Horne also required ELL to be placed in Structured English Immersion (SEI) programs. Through these programs students are separated from their mainstream peers and grouped together to study English for most of the time they are at school, which is equiparable to racial segregation since most of these students are minorities. These students fall behind academically because they are not receiving instruction in key content areas such as math, science, history, and social studies. And last but not least, the most grievous effect of this English-only policy is the single path to assimilation that is forced upon immigrant children, "similar to that experienced years ago by Native Americans and immigrants" (Cammarota, 2012, p. 488). What this reveals in 2018, is the continued exclusionary and rigid idea of what it means, for the white sectors in power in the United Sates, to be and become an American.

In 2008 Horne then took it upon himself to ban Ethnic Studies from Arizona public schools by supporting bill SB1069. The bill's "sweeping and ambiguous nature" (Cammarota, 2012, p. 489) failed to garnish support. In 2009, Horne attempted, using more succinct language to pass another bill that declared that 'public school pupils should

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be taught to treat and value each other as individuals and not based on ethnic background'. (p. 489) (let the irony not go unnoticed). Then Democratic Governor Janet Napolitano threatened to veto the bill and many legislators withdrew their support, but when in 2010 she assumed the position of Secretary of Homeland Security under President Barack Obama, the political balance in Arizona shifted allowing Republicans to pass two damaging pieces of legislation as far as the Hispanic community is concerned: the anti-immigration bill SB1070 and the anti-Ethnic Studies bill HB2281.

SB1070 "requires the police to profile individuals suspected of being undocumented" (Cammarota, 2012, p. 489), which in the case of Arizona would largely mean people who appeared to be Mexican. On the other hand, and as Horne admits, bill HB2281 is targeted at the Tucson Unified School District's Mexican American Studies program. The teaching of Mexican American history poses a threat to Horne and other Republicans in power. The ban on bilingual education, the targeting of Mexican immigrants and Mexican American history all together represent a concerted effort from the white ruling class to attack a group. "Latinos are the only 'minority' in Arizona large enough to present the possibility of shifting the cultural balance to diminish Anglo power in the state (Cammarota, 2012. p. 489).

The Social Justice Education Program with Arizona high school students.

Direct research by first and second generation Mexican American high school students demonstrates how political legislation and Proposition 203 in particular has shaped the relationships between students within schools and affected school climate (Cammarota, 2012). One of the authors of the article moved to Arizona right after Proposition 203 was passed and worked with a Tucson Unified School District teacher

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and administrator to set a specialized course for high schoolers as part of their social science requirements called the Social Justice Education Project. According to the authors youth participatory action research (YARP) projects are a way to engage youth in research and activism that could potentially improve conditions both in schools and communities (Cammarota, 2012, p. 486).

The most common form of mistreatment that the SJEP students observed was discrimination based on their language and culture. These students experience school as an attempt to remove their language and culture. The message that they often receive is that anything Mexican is not wanted or even illegitimate at their school. Many of the students that participate in the SJEP are bilingual "with Spanish serving as a critical source feeding the formation of their identities " (Cammarota, 2012, p. 487). Because of this the focus they chose for many of their projects revolved around language rights and discrimination in education, and in how culturally relevant curricula becomes a way to stop these cultural and linguistic removal attempts.

The SJEP project has been implemented in four high schools within the TUSD of Arizona. The students who tend to enroll in the programs are all working-class Latinas/os, but white, African-American and Native American students also enroll. To detail the sound pedagogical and educational state standards that the project meets is beyond the scope of this paper but let it be said that it provides robust research skills and then a practical application based on the findings with the aim of proposing change within communities. At the core of the project is the idea that in the case of English language learners they will be engaged to learn English by examining the conditions of their daily lives and learning school experiences. The first step for the participants in the

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project is to observe the context of their lives. From this initial conscious observation of their reality, the students then collectively identify 'generative themes,' an approach that derives from Paulo Freire's critical theory approach. "Students use these words to generate words that relate to their social, political, and cultural contexts (Cammarota, 2004, p. 492). Many of the themes the students generated through this process revolved around linguistic and cultural discrimination. Because the content of study is generated from their own lives, the students find personal and collective relevance in what they are doing and this engagement threads with the development of English literacy.

One finding stemming from the high school students research projects has to do with how the Arizona political climate has allowed for some people to misinterpret the content of the English-only law. Proposition 203 requires for instruction to be held in English, but it does not ban students from speaking languages other than English within schools. One of the students in the project recalls how in her freshman year of high school, still unable to communicate or write in English, she would rely on her Spanish to communicate with her peers to understand assignments and the content of what was being studied. One of her teachers punished her for speaking Spanish in class by making her write a paper *in English* 'Why We Shouldn't Talk Spanish in Class'. She tried but was unable to complete the assignment with her limited English, after which she was sent to afterschool detention. This girl shares how "many of her ELL classmates started to internalize the belief that because they spoke Spanish, they were a 'problem' or delinquent students" (Cammarota, 2004, p. 494). Being scolded for speaking Spanish is a common thing. A girl shared how a friend of hers was repeatedly humiliated in front of the class for speaking Spanish, which end up making students feel uncomfortable speaking in any

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language. Others were punished. Some teachers who favor and misinterpret this English-only instruction requirement, chastise students and other teachers for speaking Spanish in the hallways. This misinterpretation of the law is enabled by the anti-Mexican, anti-Spanish climate generated from the Arizona state government, the same way the discourse coming from our current President emboldens and enables hate speech.

What do these recurring experiences do to a person, to a young person at that, who is in the process of shaping his sense of self? What do these accounts have anything to do with a sound learning experience at any level linguistic, human, pedagogical? "English for the Children" was the benign selling point for the English-only movement. When proponents of the movement wish the general public to believe that they act with the best interest of immigrant children at heart, the gap between the stated intent and the actual daily experience of immigrant students builds evidence for the mendacity of such claims. To disregard the sense of hurt, disengagement and marginalization that these lived experiences build on young Hispanic students, and then hold them responsible for their lack of academic progress reveals the contempt in which their lives are held by those in power at the state, local and classroom level.

Another deeply troubling consequence of this English-only discourse is that it creates hierarchical relationships based on race, language and place of birth among students, with some believing they are superior and have more rights than others (Cammarota, 2004, p. 494). One of the high school students in the SJEP gives an account of how a verbal fight ensued after a school announcement was given over the PA system at school both in English and then in Spanish. Some of the white English speaking students disparaged the fact that the announcement had also been given in Spanish in this

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dominantly Hispanic high school with "speak English, we are in America" arguments.

Another project participant in the same school reports how Hispanic students born in the United States tell other Hispanic students to 'shut up and go back to your country mojado' or call them 'illegal aliens', generating hierarchy within the same Hispanic community. As Cammarota argues "Latinos adopt and internalize racist discourses because they permeate and saturate their socio-cultural context" (2004, p. 495). The most troubling aspect of this is that young people are imbued in a context that does not allow for contact, tolerance and understanding among peers, perpetuating the racist discourse and experience of previous generations.

In this social climate speaking Spanish also renders students suspicious to the eyes of those assuming the unofficial role of language police. A student shares the account of how the librarian would let English speaking students into the library without checking their school identification but if students arrived at the library speaking Spanish she would check them and run them through the system to make sure the students were visiting the library during lunch periods when they were allowed. Because they spoke Spanish they were assumed to be transgressing rules.

These rough experiences lived by Spanish speakers in school add to other structural difficulties imposed by the Structured English Immersion programs mandated by the English-only instruction requirement. Namely, students learning under these programs have conflicts with scheduling since they are primarily scheduled for English classes and miss out on content such as math, science and history. They fall behind on their academic requirements and since they are segregated from their English proficient

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peers they do not benefit from this contact to advance in their English. The hardships endured by these students lead them to drop out from school.

The Social Justice Education Project becomes an academic space where Hispanic students can learn and develop their English proficiency through an examination of their lived experiences and the language policies that affect them based on the generative approach to language development proposed by Paulo Freire. Once students are able to recognize the structural impediments to their learning "they attain a fair amount of self-confidence that moves them beyond feelings of inadequacy to those of competence (Cammarota, 2012, p. 497), not only in their grasp of the world but in their language development. This was the case of one of the Hispanic students participating in the program who gained the confidence and English competency needed to graduate from high school and apply to college. But her story is not the norm given the learning conditions that have been presented earlier.

The SJEP, as part of the Mexican American Studies, was suspended from the TUSD public schools in January of 2012, in accordance with the state law HB2281. This suspension applied restrictions to the texts that could be used in social studies classes. It resulted in what some students and teachers considered "an effective in-class deterrent to broaching the topics of racial discrimination and socioeconomic inequality from the a Mexican-American perspective" (Planas, 2012, p. 1). The one book in particular that became the focal point to claim that these studies were breeding dissent and class consciousness was Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Of the 5,000 books listed as approved for schoolroom use very few titles are by Latino authors that through fiction or non-fiction deal with issues of race and ethnicity from the perspective of Mexican

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Americans. Curtis Acosta was a Latino teacher of literature in Arizona who was constricted in his curriculum by the ban. The study of race, oppression and inequality had been prohibited.

But this ban and suspension had an unexpected turn of events. The student protest that ensued in Tucson as the TUSD was preparing to discuss removing Mexican American studies from the list of accepted courses that would fulfill graduation requirements gained attention in the national media, and mobilized teachers in Arizona, California and Texas. José Lara, a Los Angeles social-studies teacher, was sparked by these protests and began promoting the formation of Mexican American studies in California school districts. Texas author and professor Tony Díaz caravaned through some Southwest cities with a load of banned books to give. In Tucson, Acosta started Sunday gatherings to fill the void created by the ban on Mexican American studies classes. He is no longer a public school teacher but started an education consulting company that helps teachers develop their own Mexican American or ethnic studies programs (Phippen, 2015). Attempts to stifle critical thinking and action on matters of race, discrimination and unequal distribution of power in the United States social structure are staunch, but 2018 also carries with it a set of precedent in social activism, legislative battles and wins, and grass-roots organization.

Trump and Anti-Immigrant Rethoric

If language is a surrogate in which racism can be played out, language, particular words, have also become the depositories and conjurers of strong sentiments: terms such as bilingual education, immigrants, Mexicans, and more recently the president's surname,

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Trump. In a recent and fascinating front page newspaper article, Dan Barry and John Eligon, citing current research, describe how the surname of our current president, and out of his own doing, has become the code word for exclusion. His campaign and presidency have given “oxygen to hate” (Barry & Eligon, 2017). The anxiety felt by white Americans as they experience and vehemently reject the changing racial landscape of the country, has found in this president’s vilification of minorities a permission slip to utter disparaging, racist comments, and in the chant of his surname a word that summons the privilege of white America. After the election The Southern Poverty Law Center published a report “The Trump Effect; The Impact of the 2016 Election on Our Nation’s Schools”: white kids in Kansas telling Hispanic kids that now that Trump is president they will be going back to Mexico; seventh-grade white boys chanting Heil Trump in Tennessee. If a local radio broadcaster in Iowa feels entitled to air out his sentiment provoked by the Hispanic name of some basketball players during the coverage of a local game and say “As Trump would say, go back to where they came from” it is difficult to fathom the pervasive and insistent daily incidents of discrimination immigrant children and their families have to live through. This is the present day context and social climate in which children, minority and white, are living and learning. This is the harassing present day context in which immigrant children are expected to go about the delicate task of learning, and learning *a* new language and learning *in* a new language, without the linguistic and human support of their mother tongue. And they are irrationally expected to do this efficiently, and swiftly. The invisibility of these arduous conditions for living and learning makes it possible for public discourses about the educational needs of immigrant children to be constructed upon misleading premises such as the

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English-only movement. The opportunities of promoting, engaging in meaningful social contact particularly for children who are young, who can experience and shape a tolerant and more expansive social view of people that would diminish prejudice are stunted from the presidential pulpit.

Conclusions

According to its proponents, Proposition 227 was drafted out of concern for the low academic achievement and the English language acquisition of immigrant children within the California public school system. It placed the blame on bilingual education programs. It proposed Structured English Immersion (SEI) programs as the educational framework through which English language learners would acquire English within a year, after which they would be mainstreamed into the general education classrooms. An examination of the context, content and effects of the proposition provide another story. Proposition 227 was a bill that was written and promoted by individuals who had previously participated in the anti-bilingual and anti-immigrant movement in California, and which was voted on at a time of heightened anti-immigrant sentiment in the state. It falsely equated bilingual education programs with immigrant children's lack of academic progress and slow acquisition of English, since only one third of immigrant children at that time were enrolled in bilingual programs.

The settings and techniques prescribed by Structured English Immersion programs are controversial on many counts. They set second language acquisition time frames that are in direct contradiction with established research by bilingual education theorists. They disregard the existing linguistic, cultural and academic skills and resources immigrant children have. California bilingual teachers who had to switch to

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SEI settings report that these settings are culturally unresponsive and disrupt the sense of self of children as part of families and communities with a distinct language and culture. They segregate students leading to stigmatization and limit their exposure to English proficient peers. By concentrating on the learning of English at the expense of academic content students fall behind academically. All these conditions have lead children to internalize negativity about their language and culture, develop low-self esteem and a lack of trust in their ability to learn.

In 2016 Proposition 58 was voted into California law. It lifts the limits on language instruction established by Proposition 227, and opens up the possibility of multilinguistic instruction in California. The concern is that the discourse on multilingualism has shifted from the equity and heritage needs of immigrant children to one of human capital where the bilingualism of all increases the marketability of people. Close attention must be paid to how this bill plays out in particular that bilingual education does not become a commodity and prerogative of the rich.

Proposition 203 established these same changes in Arizona for the instruction of English language learners in the public school system. But in Arizona this proposition was magnified by two other pieces of legislation: the state Senate Bill 1070 which required police to profile persons suspected of being undocumented, and the House Bill 2281 which banned Ethnic Studies programs. Prior to the Ethnic Studies ban a very particular social studies course/project was implemented in several high schools in the Tucson Unified School District. Meant to provide a space for observation, reflection and action, tied with the development of English literacy, the Social Justice Education Project gave many Hispanic students the opportunity to do research on social conditions that they

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defined as relevant in their own lives. Many of the students chose to research the linguistic and cultural discrimination they had and were subjected to. By recognizing the social structures that have hindered their linguistic and academic development the students regained self-esteem and a sense of capability in their learning while developing their English literacy.

Reflection

The process of researching and writing this paper has been both enlightening and disconcerting. I have a more thorough and clear understanding of the politization of bilingual education, and I feel strongly disrupted by what I found out. Two of the most recurrent issues I reflected on in the process of writing this paper were: first, the disconnection between the content of the English only legislative propositions and the well researched and accepted pedagogical methods for second language acquisition; and second, the discrepancy between the stated intent of the English only policies and the actual day to day effects these policies have in the lives and learning of children, real life children. This dissonance came up over and over again in the articles and books I consulted, and it made me think of what and who was visible in public discourse, and how they were visible to allow for the disconnection to happen. Are policy makers aware of the real life, every day effects their policies have on the learning of children? Do they not see? Do they need this ignorance so they can draft such legislation? Or who do they see in these children? Do they know too well what the effects are? All possible answers are disquieting.

Language is part and parcel of who we are as individuals, within our family and in our immediate community. The constrictions in language use within the classroom

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instated by these policies affect children academically, socially, and emotionally in profound and detrimental ways. Berta Rosa Berriz wrote a detailed account of what the implementation of English only policies looked like in the Massachusetts school where she works, and she found that one of the "most thought-provoking finding of my dialogues with students involved their sense of being 'othered' " (Berriz, 2004. p. 14). Children, through their expressed experience, understand quite fully what these policies are about. You are either one of us or you are not.

Learning is an intricate, complex and delicate activity. When I think of my own 4th and 5th graders in the dual language public school I work at in New York City, the diversity they represent socioeconomically, culturally and in their bilingual abilities, makes it hard for me to conceive how I could be effective and connected to my students if I had to teach in an English only setting. It would seem utterly absurd to ask of my students, who come from immigrant families or who are immigrant themselves, to give up a part of themselves once they enter the school building. In the course of our day, structured as a half day in English and a half day in Spanish, there is always a flexibility and mobility of language use that caters to the needs of the students and the present moment. This access that all of us have, both students and teachers, to our linguistic repertoire as a way to bridge communication and learning, also allows us to speak about these languages with the children, contrast them, find their common ground, and find joy in them. It also allows children to gradually come into themselves as they are expanding their identity with another culture and language. A couple of weeks ago, during a Spanish morning, an 11 year old girl student of mine, with only a year and a half of English instruction under her belt was helping one of her peers, a 10 year old boy who struggles

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with Spanish. They were reading an article about the Maya civilization in Spanish. At the end of every paragraph she would give her classmate a summary of the main idea in English, and he in turn would ask questions about meaning and pronunciation in Spanish. Both of them had devised a way of engaging with the text and with each other that provided them with what they needed in terms of language and peer support.

While I continue to learn how to implement best practices of bilingual education to achieve the development of two languages for my students, the Social Justice Education Program in Tucson high schools struck a deep chord in how I wish to continue developing as a teacher. The immigrant students we serve as teachers live in a social context that pervasively demeans their identity, their language and their presence in this society. I feel strongly that my task is to help school be a space of consciousness and awareness of these social forces, even for children as young as elementary school. We as educators can provide a space of validation of their language, their culture, and their presence, and a purposeful and developmentally meaningful examination of how hierarchies are socially constructed.

The United States has a history of multilingualism that recurrently gets confined and restricted. These restrictions on language are part of a white empowerment system that separates and diminishes other cultural and racial groups. Making room for bilingual education implies making sociopolitical space for immigrants, their culture and language. This essentially requests the white dominant class in the United States to broaden its sense of self from a monoracial and monolingual identity into the plurality and diversity of people it already is. It also asks that power be understood differently, from power of a few over others to power for all. Gains have been and are worked for and achieved

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piecemeal. The United States of today is already a changed country by the work of generations. It is not the United States where my grandfather arrived in the early 1900's. Minorities have labored for their rights. They are organized and are politically conscious. For the United States to hold on to an idea of itself that does not acknowledge the racial, cultural and linguistic diversity is untenable. The everyday lives of people, children and families are affected by linguistic policies. Not only the lives of immigrant children but the lives of white children who are taught to remain trapped in the mental habits of other generations. Legislation frames the structures of inclusion or exclusion that then get implemented and enacted on a daily basis. My work as a teacher is in the everyday, in generating, collaboratively with my students, experiences that make us extend to each other through class, race, culture and language, in conjuring that moment of insight when the other is not another and there is space for difference.

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