

Bilingual Education and the English-only Movement:  
A Critical Race Theory Perspective

An honors thesis for the American Studies Program

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Tufts University, 2010

## **Abstract**

Debates surrounding bilingual education, race, and the English-only movement are once again taking center stage with the passage of California's Proposition 227, Arizona's Proposition 203 and Massachusetts Question 2 – all of which virtually outlaw the use of an English language learner's primary language in the classroom in favor of a structured English immersion (SEI) model. Collectively known as the Unz Initiatives, this movement towards English-only is changing the shape of bilingual education in the U.S. This study is both a critique of the history of bilingual education policy and an ethnography of the complex relationships among language, race, and knowledge in one SEI classroom. I utilize a Critical Race Theory (CRT) framework, specifically applying the concepts of Whiteness as property (Harris), critiquing Colorblindness (Gotanda), and interest convergence (Bell). Based on ethnographic data gathered through classroom observations and interviews with students and teachers, I argue that language is tied to race and thus policy regarding language is in fact race-conscious. The case study determines that the implementation of English-only policy perpetuates and privileges dominant White ideas of language.

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## **Acknowledgements**

First, I would like to thank my advisors, Professor Jean Wu and Professor Sabina Vaught. This work would not have been possible without their expert guidance and help. I would also like to thank the teachers, students and administrators of Hillside Elementary School for welcoming me into their school. I want to express my deep appreciation to Ms. Cheng and the students I interviewed for sharing their stories and letting me into their lives. I also want to thank Carmen Lowe and my fellow American Studies Honors Thesis writers for their support. I am especially grateful to Shuo for listening to me work out my ideas, reading all of my work, and generally keeping me afloat with his generous patience and encouragement. Finally, I wish to thank my parents, who taught me the value of education and supported me through all of my endeavors, and my little brother, Henry, for always letting me play my most cherished role of “姐姐.”

## 1 Introduction

The students from Ms. Cheng's<sup>1</sup> class marched in an orderly fashion into the hallway to sit with their fellow third graders. Three of the students were asked to sit on the left side of the hallway and the other seventeen were told to sit on the right where the majority of the other third graders sat. While most of the third graders looked absolutely ecstatic to see their teachers dressed in paper crowns and ribbon sashes, the classroom I had been observing for my research did not seem as enthusiastic. The social studies lesson I was witnessing was about King James and the voyage of English settlers to America. The teachers were all playing King James. The majority of the third graders were playing English citizens and a few students from each class were chosen to play the new settlers of America. I watched the lesson progress, amused with the teachers' tactics. After awhile I looked over the seated third graders and searched for Ms. Cheng's class. They had not moved far – just a little farther down the crowded hall so more students could be seated, but for the longest time I could not see them. Where had the students gone? Did they blend in with the other third graders because like most of the other classes, they were just as restless, playful and easily distracted? When I finally found the suddenly invisible children, I noticed that their usually mirth and general loudness had gone, replaced by an eerie space where the students I had become so familiar with sat, but did not truly occupy.

It is important to note that according to state policies, Ms. Cheng's class was not "normal". Ms. Cheng taught a Structured English Immersion (SEI) classroom for English

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<sup>1</sup> Names of teachers and students have been changed to protect their identities

language learners (ELLs) of whose primary language was Chinese (Cantonese, Mandarin and Taishanese<sup>2</sup>). Aside from this, the students have few differences from their fellow third graders and yet this seemed to be enough to prompt a significant change in behavior from them when they were mixed in with the “mainstream” classes.

Originally, I was interested in studying the formation of racial identity in these Asian American elementary school students. The process of racial identity formation is complex for Asian American youth who often have to deal with contradicting messages regarding identity that span from the idea of the “perpetual foreigner” to the myth of the “model minority.” In this thesis, I had hoped to argue that despite the pervasiveness of race in their lives and society, in school students are presented with a colorblind society that did not sufficiently address their needs. I also wanted to examine the link between race and language in this urban school, but as my classroom observations progressed, I frequently found myself confused with the inconsistencies in the children’s behavior. Within the safe haven of their SEI classroom, the students behaved predictably – each with their own personality – but once they were placed with students from the “mainstream” classes they became withdrawn, detached and silenced, as if they had disappeared. Of course, the students were physically present, but on a psychological or sensory level they had made themselves invisible – a highly uncharacteristic behavior for the usually energetic and attention-hungry class. What was causing them to behave this way? Where had they learned that this was appropriate? More importantly, how had they learned this behavior

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<sup>2</sup> These are Chinese dialects. The most common dialect among the students in my study was Cantonese.

and who taught it to them? After the incident during their social studies lesson, my thesis focus began to shift.

The Asian American students in this SEI class gather much of their information regarding race and power through their schooling (Lee 2005). Messages about race and power are central to what children of immigrants, and in fact all children, learn in U.S. schools (Lee 2005). Tacit lessons about race are abundant in school curricula, discipline policies, and interactions with teachers and other students. Racial disparities in school tracking and discipline policies are only some examples of how a student might gather knowledge about race through their school environment.

The more time I spent in the Structured English Immersion classroom I had been assigned, the more curious I became of the politics, purposes, and implications behind the implementation of such a program. A month into my classroom observations I shifted my thesis topic to focus more on bilingual education and its relationship to race. The central concern of this thesis is the way Asian American children are affected by Structured English Immersion and what implicit lessons they are learning about race, language and power through their experiences in SEI. Additionally, I examine the history of bilingual education, the move towards English-only policies, and how the argument for SEI is raced.

In the United States it is possible for children of immigrants to enter the school system without speaking English despite being born in the U.S. This is often forgotten by people who blame the large number of English language learners on the influx of immigrants. From these non-English speaking native-born Americans as well as immigrant children came the necessity for educational frameworks focusing on English language

learners. While there has been much debate and dialogue about the way English as a second language should be taught at the K-12 level, relatively little attention has been paid to the experience of the participants in these programs. Attention is typically centered on how “successful” programs are, where “success” is measured solely through positive results on standardized tests. This thesis will explore the way a group of Chinese American third grade elementary school students, some first and others second generation immigrants, are affected by the Structured English Immersion teaching model in an urban school in Waverley<sup>3</sup>.

I observed and interviewed students from a SEI classroom at the Hillside Elementary School in Waverley’s Chinatown. While I hope that my thesis will culminate in relevant research on and inform the ongoing debate about how to educate English language learners (ELL), it has also been a chance for me to learn about and come to terms with my own childhood experiences with race. Growing up in South Carolina, I, like many of the students I was observing, started school before I could speak English. Because of the messages I was receiving about language in the school my relationship with both English and my primary language of Cantonese was constantly shifting. At times I would be ashamed of speaking Cantonese – it made me feel different and foreign at school – but later at home, speaking Cantonese with my grandmother about my struggles in class, I felt protected. Cantonese was both my greatest flaw and my safe haven. English was completely different. I had only one understanding of English and it was that this language would help me get away from the “foreigner” I inherently was. Later, in high school, I had a bit of a love

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<sup>3</sup> Name of city changed to protect the identities of teachers and students in my study

affair with creative writing. Something about writing my experiences in English for my classmates made me feel powerful. Unwittingly, I had come to the understanding that English had some kind of power that Cantonese did not. Because of my personal experience with language, I found myself indentifying with the students in my case study. My relationship with language has shaped the way I view this thesis and informed the way I will pursue this topic.

After a month of observing Ms. Cheng's SEI class, I narrowed down what I was most interested in learning about bilingual education, the English-only movement, and how all of this affected the children. The main questions in my study will be as follows: (1) What drives change in educational policy related to bilingual education and who benefits? (2) What are the implicit lessons of an English-only policy for English language learners? Understanding my limited time and resources, my governing question is more tailored. Overall, I want to know what has been the underlying theme of changes in bilingual education policy and how is this related to what is implicitly being taught to SEI students about race and power. I argue that language is tied to race and thus policy regarding language is in fact race-conscious. The case study determines that the implementation of English-only policy perpetuates and privileges dominant White ideas of language.

I connect the case study into the larger debate of how to best educate English language learners. In this thesis, I examine how the current English education mandate has been developed and in what context it has been changed, and for what purpose, from a Critical Race Theory (CRT) perspective. I begin with a review of the history of bilingual education policy in the United States. As I chronicle this history, I also examine how CRT can be used to evaluate English education mandates such as *Lau v. Nichols*, California's

Proposition 227, and the shift from the Bilingual Education Act (BEA) of 1968 to its new incarnation in No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and why understanding these policies in a racial context is necessary. I conclude by examining the continuing educational inequities ELLs experience today through a small case study of Ms. Cheng's SEI classroom.

## 2 Critical Race Theory

The theoretical framework that I will use to analyze bilingual education policy as well as a case study in the Waverley elementary school Structured English Immersion classroom is Critical Race Theory (CRT). After first explaining the origins, tenets, and conceptual frames of CRT, I will discuss in the conclusion why this framework is most appropriate in the context of this thesis, and on a much larger scale, how it contributes to critical race-based discussions and analysis of language policy.

Critical Race Theory is a relatively new and growing body of scholarship that focuses on the function of race and racism in U.S. society. CRT comes from a long tradition of resistance to the unequal and unjust distribution of power and resources along racial lines in America, while also considering how race intersects with politics, class and gender. CRT posits that the support and legitimacy of the legal system helps perpetuate the established power relations in society across racial lines. Critical race scholars resist this preservation of the status quo and have worked to identify and eliminate oppression in the courts, in our classrooms, and throughout society.

Critical race theory was a response to the shortcomings and absences in Critical Legal Studies (CLS) scholarship regarding race and to an apparent stalling of traditional civil rights litigation in the United States in areas such as affirmative action, criminal sentencing, and campus speech codes (Lawrence, Matsuda, Delgado, & Crenshaw 1993). CLS was a legal movement that contested traditional legal studies in favor of a form of law and legal analysis that exposed the law as legitimating structural inequality (Ladson-

Billings 1999). Scholars in the CLS movement decode legal doctrine to expose both its internal and external contradictions and to reveal the ways that “legal ideology has helped create, support, and legitimate American’s present class structure (Crenshaw 1988, p.1334). However, while CLS scholars critiqued mainstream legal ideology for its false portrayal of U.S. society as a meritocracy, it failed to include racism into the critique.

After the significant advances of the 50s and 60s fighting discrimination in schooling, hiring, and housing, a backlash surfaced against progressive racial reforms. The courts began to form a general hostility toward policies (such as affirmative action) that took race into account in rectifying historic and contemporary racial discrimination. Disturbed by this backlash and the seeming failure of traditional civil rights theories and methods, a group of legal scholars, including Derrick A. Bell, Kimberle Crenshaw, Richard Delgado, Lani Guinier, and Charles Lawrence, began to openly criticize the role of law in the production and continuation of racially based social and economic oppression, forming a new movement called Critical Race Theory. They also began looking for an explanation of why this retraction occurred, and how to formulate new strategies to achieve transformation.

Like other forms of critical analysis, this scholarship began with recognition of the connections among knowledge construction, naming, and power (Ladson-Billings 2000; Lawrence, Matsuda, Delgado & Crenshaw 1993; Taylor 2009). CRT scholars also re-defined racism as not the acts of individuals, but the larger, systematic, structural conventions and customs that uphold and sustain oppressive group relationships, status, income, and educational attainment. Critical race theory cannot be understood as an abstract set of ideas or doctrines (Lawrence, Matsuda, Delgado, & Crenshaw 1933). Its scholarship is,

however, guided by a number of specific insights and observations, including society's acceptance of racism as ordinary, thus maintaining the interests and superiority of White people over people of Color (Bell 1980; Delgado & Stefancic 2001; Harris 1993) and the importance of understanding the historic contexts in which America was founded and the consequences of European colonialism. CRT generally reflects six common themes or tenets. According to Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, and Crenshaw:

1. Critical race theory recognizes that racism is endemic to American life.
2. Critical race theory expresses skepticism toward dominant legal claims of neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness, and meritocracy.
3. Critical race theory challenges ahistoricism and insists on a contextual/historical analysis of the law... Critical race theorists ... adopt a stance that presumes that racism has contributed to all contemporary manifestations of group advantage and disadvantage.
4. Critical race theory insists on recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color and our communities of origin in analyzing law and society.
5. Critical race theory is interdisciplinary.
6. Critical race theory works toward the end of eliminating racial oppression as part of the broader goal of ending all forms of oppression (Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, and Crenshaw 1993, p. 6).

CRT is composed of these six themes along with several conceptual frames and methodological tools. Some of the conceptual frames commonly discussed and shared within CRT are the phenomenon of Whites allowing Black progress when it also promotes White interests, known as interest convergence (Bell 1980; Crenshaw 1988; Delgado 1995; Matsuda et al 1993); the way race can be collapsed with property, otherwise known as Whiteness as property (Harris 1993; Ladson-Billings & Tate 1995); and the critique of colorblindness (Haney-Lopez 2006; Gotanda 1991; Matsuda et al 1993). In general,

colorblindness is defined as the refusal of White institutions to acknowledge uneven racial positions in society and the relationship between race and power structures (Gotanda 1991). CRT also supports the use of counterstorytelling as a methodological tool that legitimizes the voices and experiences of oppressed peoples over the “objective” opinions of whites. These concepts will be explained in further detail later.

A central point in CRT is that racism is endemic, structural and systematic. In other words, racism is understood as a normal fact of daily life in U.S. society that is not unusual or rare. The assumption of White supremacy is so ingrained in our political, legal, and educational systems that they are almost unrecognizable and very much normative (Delgado 1995). Mills (1997) asserts that White supremacy is the unnamed global political system in which Whites control ideology and resources that has profoundly shaped the modern world as well as systems and rights to control. “In this context White supremacy refers to the idea that the established, European or western way of doing things has both moral and intellectual superiority over those things non-western” (Brayboy 2005, p. 8). Despite its pervasiveness and impact, most standard textbooks about philosophy, political science, history, and education rarely mention this domination. This omission is far from unintentional. White supremacy is all encompassing, even if its recipients cannot easily recognize it. Racial inequality and discrimination in matters such as hiring, housing, criminal sentencing, education, and lending are so widespread as to be uninteresting and natural to most Whites and results in the masking of agency and support for such unequal systems and institutions. As a result, most oppression no longer seems like oppression to the perpetrating group (Lawrence 1987). Contradictory information or events are seen only as rare exceptions.

CRT insists on grounding itself in a specific historical context. Few U.S. students (or their teachers) know much about U.S. slavery, or the genocide carried out against Native Americans (Takaki 1993). A common occurrence in discussions about race is a tendency not only to render the complex simple, but also to ignore the historic conflict in which it was produced (Taylor 2009). All too often, we avoid discussing the historic reasons that Whites and people of Color have had separate and unequal educations. By disregarding historical contexts, Whites are released from the responsibility for the consequences of their historical and political actions so that problems such as the academic achievement gap between White children and children of Color, or of immigrants, or the poor, can be reinvented as new problems located in the non-dominant community or culture, rather than the expected outcomes of intentional policies and practices. David Gillborn (2005) writes,

Work on institutional racism has firmly established that even well-intentioned actions can have racist consequences.... Forms of institutional racism in educational policy are not accidental: does that mean that they are deliberate? One answer might be that institutional racism and race inequity are deliberate insofar as there appears to be a judgment that their eradication is simply not important enough to shape the main tenets of educational policy (p.499).

Educational policies that ignore historical racial discrimination cannot address the inequalities and achievement gaps produced by a racist past. This denial of history prevents the formulation of new strategies and casts the blame on the victims. Understanding the historical context connects current social, legal, and educational inequalities to earlier, more overt customs and practices of racial exclusion.

Although CRT has been largely used in the area of legal research, its influence has expanded into other disciplines including education. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) can

be credited with introducing CRT to education in 1995. Now, CRT is emerging as a powerful theoretical and analytical framework within educational research. In this paper I will utilize CRT for my analysis of bilingual education policy and also my analysis of my research in a Structured English Immersion classroom. I engage specifically with three prominent conceptual frames of CRT: interest convergence, Whiteness as property, and colorblindness. I also discuss the use of counterstorytelling as a methodological tool for my ethnographic study of an SEI classroom.

### *2.1 Interest Convergence*

An important conceptual frame of CRT is Bell's (1980) theory of interest convergence – the idea that gains in racial equality have been won only when they have converged with the interests of Whites. He suggests that civil rights gains within communities of color should not be interpreted with blind enthusiasm. These civil rights gains were in effect superficial because they were basic tenets of U.S. “democracy”. In other words, dominant discourses appropriated civil rights discourse – making a false match between competing ideologies and allowing small gains. Eventually, civil rights discourse is taken over and absorbed by hegemony. Citing the limited and precarious gains of the *Brown* decision, Bell argues that losses in terms of human capital by the dismissal of a huge number of Black teachers and administrators, school closings in Black neighborhoods, and the limited access to high-quality curricula in the form of tracking, and other factors, have made the so called “gains” from *Brown* questionable. It is important to note that *Brown* was not a failure. Gains and changes were indeed accomplished, but understanding the hegemonic nature of racism these changes were quickly incorporated into the existing structure of racial inequality.

Interest convergence is both a strategy and a dynamic in which oppressed people figure out how to align their interest by those of the dominant group. While this is many times productive, Bell acknowledges certain shortcomings, as previously described. Understanding that the needs of communities of Color will not be met with much eagerness from the dominant structures, community organizers must identify an interest that taps into crises and weaknesses in dominant structures. Merging the interests of communities of Color with crises in dominant structures in order to make civil rights gains is the mechanism that the concept of interest convergence describes.

## 2.2 *Whiteness as Property*

The notion of Whiteness as property is another prominent conceptual frame of CRT. Legal CRT scholar, Harris (1993) argues that due to the history of race and racism in the United States and the role that U.S. justice system has played in reifying conceptions of race, the notion of Whiteness can be considered a type of property. Harris conceptualizes 'Whiteness as property' as "the legal legitimation of expectations of power and control that enshrine the status quo as a neutral baseline, while masking the maintenance of white privilege and domination" (1993, p.1715) through the U.S. system of property rights. The history of race and property in the U.S. has been shaped by the removal of Native Americans from their land (and later Japanese Americans from theirs), the conquering of Mexicans, and the enslavement of Africans (Takaki 1993; Ladson-Billings & Tate 1995). Additionally, voting rights were only granted to property owners and only White men had the right to own property. "To own land was to own the right to vote, which was in turn to own the right to full humanity and citizenship" (Vaught 2008, p. 3) In other words, Whiteness is legitimized

as a form of property, protected by U.S. laws governing property. In this sense, owning property can be defined as owning humanity. From this history, having Whiteness can be construed as property and thus having certain rights associated with it. These property rights are: (1) the right to maintain rights of disposition, (2) the right to maintain use and enjoyment (3) the right to status and reputation conferred by property, and (4) the right to exclude others (Harris 1993). These rights do not always function alone and usually reinforce one another. She suggests that functions and attributes of property historically have been deployed in the service of establishing Whiteness as a form of property and that the origins stem back to the “systems of domination of Black and Native American peoples out of which were created racially contingent forms of property and property rights (p. 1714).” Harris explains that Whiteness as property holds true in both the classical understanding of property defined by value and rights to that value, and the modern understanding focused on function and expectations. In summary, Whiteness is considered a type of status property that legitimizes racial privilege in the law.

Whiteness as property functions in four ways that demonstrate White privilege and racial subordination within law and policy. The first is a “right of disposition” and can be understood as the right to make decisions to dispose of or confer property on others. This right stems from the alienability, or transferability, of property depending on context. Whiteness can only be transferred as a reward for conformity to White norms or practice, and even then, can only be considered alienable based on the judgment of these White norms.

The second property right of Whiteness is a “right to use and enjoyment,” which can be understood as the utilization of Whiteness as “a resource deployable at the social,

political, and institutional level to maintain control” (p.1734). This right posits that White privilege is protected, essentially defining other races as unprotected and therefore inferior. A third property function of Whiteness is its connection with reputation and status property. When only Whiteness is given supreme status, all other programs or initiatives that are considered of Color effectively defame their status. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) apply this property right to bilingual programs in schooling. Native language maintenance programs for English language learners are subject to scorn and criticism while foreign language programs by White institutions are praised and supported as ideal college preparatory classes.

The final property right of Whiteness that Harris outlines is the “absolute right to exclude.” The exclusivity of Whiteness is an essential principle of its functioning and maintenance. Whiteness is not determined by what it is, but rather by what it is not. By selecting the language most representative of White, upper-middle class experience and maintaining that the standard language for the U.S. is English, other languages that are native and flourishing in the U.S are effectively deemed as other, different, and not worth maintaining. The exclusion of other languages from standard U.S. curricula maintains access to educational opportunity for White students at others' expense.

### *2.3 Colorblindness*

CRT scholars are critical of three basic notions that have been embraced by liberal legal ideology: the notion of colorblindness, the neutrality of the law, and incremental change. Here I will discuss specifically about the notion of colorblindness. At face value, the concept of colorblindness in law might imply equal opportunity for all, but given the history of

racism in the U.S. where rights and opportunities were both bestowed and withheld based almost entirely on race, the idea that the law is now colorblind is insufficient to redress its deleterious effects. The notion of colorblindness also fails to take into consideration the persistence and permanence of racism and in fact perpetuates inequality. Legal colorblindness, then, is the refusal of White institutions to acknowledge the attachment of race to power structures and the denial of uneven racial positions in society. Colorblindness, as Williams (1997) suggests, has made it nearly impossible to question both the way that White privilege is utilized and the normalizing effects of Whiteness. In other words, “difference,” in the colorblind discourse almost always refers to people of color because being White is considered “normal.”

CRT scholars argue that colorblindness has been adopted as a way to justify ignoring and dismantling race-based policies that were designed to redress societal inequity (Gotanda 1991). In other words, arguing that society should be colorblind ignores the fact that inequity, inopportunity, and oppression are historical and contemporary injustices that will not easily be remedied by ignoring race in present-day society. Gotanda explains colorblindness as “a collection of legal themes functioning as a racial ideology [that] fosters white racial domination” (p. 2). The five themes that he discusses are: (1) the public-private distinction; (2) nonrecognition of race; (3) racial categories; (4) formal-race and unconnectedness; and (5) racial social change.

The public-private distinction is a recurring theme of colorblindness stating that all racial discrimination in the private sector is constitutionally sound. Race discrimination is only unconstitutional in the public sector when it is related to the government (Gotanda 1991). As Williams explains, “The law becomes a shield behind which to avoid

responsibility for the human repercussions of either governmental or publicly harmful private activity” (1991, p. 140). “Nonrecognition” as described by Gotanda (1991) is the “recognition of racial affiliation followed by the deliberate suppression of racial considerations” (p. 6). In other words, nonrecognition of race is the dismissal of the idea that race should ever be considered in a decision-making process. This assertion is entirely hypocritical and ignores the simple fact that in order to make the conscious decision to ignore race, one must first recognize it (Gotanda 1991).

Gotanda (1991) outlines four types of race that the Supreme Court has used: status-race, formal-race, historical-race, and culture-race. Status-race is the use of race to indicate social standing. Formal-race “refers to socially constructed formal categories. Black and white are seen as neutral, apolitical descriptions, reflecting merely “skin color” or country of origin” (Gotanda 1991, p.4). Gotanda notes that an important aspect of formal-race is its “unconnectedness” to social attributes like wealth, education, language or culture. Historical-race takes into consideration historical and present racial oppression. Lastly, culture-race incorporates “culture, community, and consciousness” in its definition of race (Gotanda 1991).

Colorblindness uses racial categories as indisputable and objective. A colorblind ideology does not take into account the “powerful and deeply embedded social and political meanings (Gotanda 1991)” of race in the United States. “Formal-race and unconnectedness” is the failure of colorblind ideology to recognize the lived experience of race for an individual as something that has a deep history and entrenched social implications. While it is frequently acknowledged that Hillside Elementary has a large number of students of

Color, specifically Chinese American, rarely is this addressed as anything other than a statistic.

The solution to racial conflict and all racial problems as prescribed by the colorblind ideology is lead by example of the government through nonrecognition of race (Gotanda 1991). Eventually, according to the colorblind theory for racial social change, this will seep into the private sector and race relations will improve because race will no longer be recognized as the problem.

A more recent look at colorblindness is Haney-Lopez's (2007) introduction to the idea of "reactionary colorblindness." He writes, "By reactionary colorblindness I mean an anticlassification understanding of the Equal Protection Clause that accords race-conscious remedies and racial subjugation the same level of constitutional hostility (p. 2). He contradicts the image ethnicity theory has attempted to portray - a meritocratic system where all groups essentially started out in the same place, as immigrants. This attempt to hide Whiteness behind ethnicity fails to explain historical racial oppression, neglects to elucidate the way the racial hierarchy came to be and ignores the relationship between race and power.

#### *2.4 Counter-Storytelling*

An essential methodological tool of CRT is counter-storytelling (Matsuda 1995). One purpose of narrative is to redirect dominant views of society, to present a new point of view that has been there all along. Critical race theory research is grounded in a reality that reflects the distinct experiences of people of color. It recognizes that "the simple matter of the color of one's skin so profoundly affects the way one is treated, so radically shapes what

one is allowed to think and feel about this society, that the decision to generalize from this division is valid” (Williams 1991). CRT challenges the experiences of Whites as the standard and refutes traditional racial paradigms by claiming a unique minority voice. Delgado and Stefancic (2001) define counter-storytelling as a method of telling a story that “aims to cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises or myths, especially ones held by the majority” (p. 144). By listening and legitimizing the narratives of oppressed peoples, counter-storytelling is a tool that exposes and critiques normalized dialogues that perpetuate racial stereotypes. The use of counterstories fits into the tenets of CRT because it allows for the challenging of privileged discourses, the discourses of the majority, therefore, serving as a means for giving voice to marginalized groups and privileging the narratives of non-dominant people.

CRT scholars often use story telling, narrative, autobiography, and parable as a way to expose and challenge social constructions of race. It makes use of the experience of people negatively affected by racism as important and validating data. CRT embraces this subjectivity of perspective and openly acknowledges that perceptions of truth, fairness, and justice reflect the experiences and belief systems of the knower. In defense of the use of narrative, Delgado (1995) points out an important distinction between the viewpoints of Whites and people of color: Whites do not see it only as their perspective, but as fact.

Gloria Ladson-Billings describes differences in Euro-American epistemologies and ethnic epistemologies. First off, epistemology is defined as “a system of knowing” that has “both internal logic and external validity (Ladson-Billings 2000, p. 257).” Ladson- Billings posits that much research is based in a Eurocentric paradigm and that the multiple consciousness of people of Color offer an alternative to these normative research methods.

“Life on the margins” allows for a different perspective of reality than the view from the center. In relation to CRT, Ladson-Billings asserts “along with the gender of the knower, the race, ethnicity, language, class, sexuality, and other forms of differences work to inform his or her relationship to knowledge and its production” (p. 266). By embracing the relationship between the researcher and the subject, CRT allows for an alternative paradigm that places the researchers experience in the study itself and “asks the critical qualitative researcher to operate in a self-revelatory mode, to acknowledge the double (or multiple) consciousness in which she or he is operating” (p. 272). The goal is to humanize the scholarship that has traditionally dehumanized and therefore delegitimized the experiences of people of Color.

CRT scholars believe that racial analysis can be used to deepen understanding of the educational barriers of people of Color, as well as explore how those barriers are resisted and overcome (Ladson-Billings 1995). CRT also focuses on the intersections of subordination, including gender, class, and other forms of oppression. Challenging Anglo-centric views and questioning dominant notions of meritocracy, objectivity and knowledge are particularly relevant to education. Counterstorytelling and narrative allows educators to better understand the experiences of their students of Color. Listening to these stories and figuring out how to make them matter in the educational system has the potential to revitalize a failing system and validate forgotten students of color.

## *2.5 CRT & Bilingual Education*

CRT is helpful in analyzing Bilingual Education policy as well as the lived experiences of Ms. Cheng’s students. For policy, CRT is useful in looking at how language policy is raced and

how race has shaped policy decisions. For example, Bell uses the CRT concept of interest convergence to examine the “gains” from *Brown*. The same technique can be applied when scrutinizing the landmark bilingual education decision in *Lau v. Nichols*. As for the case study, by only addressing formal-race in the school, Hillside Elementary is effectively trying to teach their students that race does not matter despite contradicting experiences in real life. In the larger bilingual education debate, how does the nonrecognition of race in policy decisions despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of ELLs are students of Color affect the debate and in implementation, the students?

Whiteness as property can be used in a CRT analysis of education for its insight into long-established institutional norms and practice in schooling (Ladson-Billings & Tate 1995). Harris’ argument of Whiteness as property can be extended to analyze the highly racialized bilingual education debate. I contend that White property interest is a factor that is often overlooked in contributing to this heated debate. I examine how unequal access to educational opportunity is perpetuated through the practice of limiting English language learners to mainstream English classrooms rather than also allowing and fostering native language maintenance.

The ways in which Whiteness is elevated through policy to negate the experiences, identities, languages and cultural richness of people of Color can be examined within the context of the English-only movement and the Unz initiatives. In these movements towards English-only policy, Whiteness is lauded while deficits are assumed amongst people of Color. Concerning status and reputation, how is language subject to reputation and status and how does this become racialized in the bilingual education debate? Within the context of bilingual education, how does the system of rewarding conformity to White norms play

out in bilingual education policy, the implementation of English immersion in the classroom and the students' understanding of language and power?

CRT shape the answers to the questions posed above by giving a new lens to view bilingual education policy and its possible effects in the classroom. Race and racism are examined within educational policies for ELLs that base its strategy on racialized assumptions about its students. This study will critically examine the history of bilingual education policy in the U.S. within this theoretical framework. The case study of Ms. Cheng's classroom will also use a CRT framework by privileging the voices of ELLs and using a critical race lens to understand their experiences.

### **3 Bilingual Education in the United States**

The United States, a country made up of people of different origins, races, languages, and nationalities, has had, contrary to the common perception of monolingualism, a long history of bilingualism and multilingualism. Consequently, what has become known as bilingual education has a complex and varied history in educational policy and practice. This chapter traces the historical issues of bilingual education in the United States while providing a current review of bilingual education. In this chapter I explore the ideologies, events, and actors that have shaped bilingual education policy and apply a Critical Race Theory (CRT) perspective to parts of the policy analysis. The United States, with its dominant group history of monolingualism despite a rich linguistic tradition, deeply racialized past (and present), and class-stratified society, provides an opportunity to explore how power, race, and class intersect with language ideologies and the effect on perceptions of bilingualism and bilingual education. The complex historical context and CRT analytical framework provided in this chapter also help to clarify how the sociopolitical context interacts with the possibilities of bilingual education in a country that, although plentiful in language diversity, privileges dominant White ideas of language by demanding monolingualism.

#### *3.1 History of Bilingual Schooling*

In the early republic, despite the fact that the U.S. Constitution did not mention language, English became the *de facto* language of the United States. Since German was the most common non-English language in the East and Midwest U.S. during the mid to late 1800s,

there were some German English bilingual schools in cities like Cincinnati and Baltimore. French was prominent in Louisiana, and Spanish in New Mexico, and there were pockets of ethnic European students whose primary languages were, for example, Italian or Polish. Still, languages other than English were rarely used as the language of instruction in schools (Anderson & Boyer 1976).

German immigrants were the largest non-Anglo group in the colonies, and they attempted to set up bilingual educational opportunities for their children in the mid to late 1800s (Moses 2002). Often they encountered xenophobia. With the common school movement of the mid-1800s came the opportunity to use public schooling for the purposes of assimilating non-Anglo immigrant children to the ways of the Anglo – mostly Protestant – mainstream. The generally accepted idea by this White, Protestant mainstream was that language diversity was detrimental to the unity of the young nation. This was the beginning of the conflict and struggle regarding bilingual education between the White mainstream and linguistic minorities.

Later, after the Mexican-American war ended in 1848, the United States appropriated northern Mexico as the New Mexico territory. Approximately 90,000 Mexican people – formerly citizens – were forced into the circumstance of living in the United States, as subjects of the U.S. state governments, and being part of a national language minority group. For a while, these new citizens, demanding that the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo be honored, were powerful enough to pass a school law in 1884 that stated schools could operate in English, Spanish or a combination of the two. Later, though, the number of White citizens increased along with racism and Mexican American power was soon decimated. By

1891, a New Mexico state law was passed specifying that all schools must teach in English (Castellanos 1985).

Eurocentrism and xenophobia had been inflicted against the Native Americans first and then against ethnic groups such as the German, Irish, Italian, Polish, Jewish and Mexican Americans. Asian Americans had to face racism as well. As the nineteenth century moved into the twentieth, the “melting pot” ideology was becoming the predominant national philosophy with an emphasis on the melting away of non-English languages rather than the sharing of cultures that is often used to define the “melting pot” now (Moses 2002). The assimilative foundation of the melting pot pushed the notion of immigrants shedding their native languages and culture in order to be accepted into the normative White American society.

As waves of immigration in the United States steadily grew in the early 1900s, public schools were increasingly seen as the avenue for immigrant assimilation into the mainstream of America (Tyack 1967). In his book, *Changing Conceptions of Education* (1909), educational historian Cubberly writes that the aim of education should be to “break up these [immigrant] groups or settlements, to assimilate and amalgamate these people as part of our American race, and to implant in their children, so far as can be done, the Anglo-Saxon conception of righteousness, law and order, and popular government, and to awaken in them a reverence for our democratic institutions (qtd. Castellanos 1985).” This assimilative agenda for first- and second-generation students has been a part of the U.S. educational system since the 1900s.

For the most part, in the 1920s, the few bilingual programs that existed took place in segregated schools for Mexican American children where the overriding aim was, as Cubberly said, to “assimilate and amalgamate these people.” Another aim often was to keep Mexican American people as a ready supply of labor for farmers. Too much (good) education was thus seen as counterproductive. “If every [Mexican] child has a high school education,” asked a white sugar beet farmer, “who will labor?” (qtd. Takaki 1993, p. 327). A Texas school trustee said, “We don’t need skilled or white-collared Mexicans. They know that then they can get better wages and conditions” (qtd. Takaki 1993).

Theodore Roosevelt captured the attitude of the time towards bilingual education and bilingualism when he said, “it would not be merely a misfortune but a crime to perpetuate differences of language in this country” (qtd. Castellanos 1983) and recommended that immigrants who had not learned English after five years should be deported back to their countries (Castellanos 1983). In 1906, the Nationality Act required English proficiency for naturalization as a U.S. citizen. Considering the colorblind ideology prevalent today that claims impartiality and meritocracy, this history contradicts the notion that all races or languages started on equal ground and clearly privileges dominant White norms, in this case English.

Despite great linguistic diversity in the early history of the United States, English has always been considered the language of assimilation. Speaking English has continuously been seen as a requirement for citizenship, but why English? Considering the political clout of German immigrants, the large number of Mexicans that inhabited the New Mexico territory, and the waves of immigration from other countries, why did English surface as the *de facto* language of the U.S? Traditionally, a requirement for citizenship was White

racial identity. Voting rights, however, were limited to White male property owners. The requirements to gain the full rights and power of a citizen with voting rights, or in other words, the right to civic representation and thus full citizenship and acknowledgment of humanity, were given only to those that fit privileged White norms and were property owners (Vaught 2008). This collapse of property and race positioned Whiteness as something Whites owned – an elite legal status allowing the “legitimation of expectations of power and control that enshrine the status quo as a neutral baseline, while masking the maintenance of white privilege and domination” (Harris 1993, p. 1715, qtd. Vaught 2008). In this context, English emerged as the language of White male property owners and thus, the false “neutral baseline” that hides White supremacy. Since these three categories, White (race), male (gender) and property owners, designated power, citizenship, and humanity in early (and current) U.S. society, English emerged as the language of power, citizenship, and humanity. Speaking English was and is necessary to gain full citizenship rights and the acknowledgement of humanity. This history provided the groundwork for current bilingual education policies and other debates regarding language in the U.S.

### *3.2 Native American Boarding Schools*

The history of Native American boarding schools provides a different perspective to the intentions of English-only policy in bilingual education. It is important to note, that the Native American boarding school experience is unique to Native Americans and only used here to add a different perspective and complicate the understanding of English-only policy. In an attempt to assimilate Native Americans into the Anglo-American beliefs of property and citizenship, Native American boarding schools were created with the

intention of deculturalizing them against their will. Deculturalization, as described by Joel Spring (2010), is “the educational process of destroying a people’s culture (cultural genocide) and replacing it with a new culture.” Language is an important part of culture and allows a culture to be passed on generation to generation. The teaching of English was considered a means of cultural genocide. It is clear, especially in this example, that teaching English included an express intent to erase Native American culture.

The all-White members of the Indian Peace Commission were not content with their attempts to educate Indians, particularly in terms of language. The 1868 Indian Peace Commission report states that differences in language were a major source of continuing hostility between Whites and Native Americans and prevented negotiation. Therefore, according to the report, an emphasis on the teaching of English would be a major step in reducing conflict and civilizing Native Americans. In the words of the report: “Through sameness of language is produced sameness of sentiment and thought; customs and habits are moulded [*sic*] and assimilated in the same way, and this in process of time the differences producing trouble would have been gradually obliterated (qtd. Moses 2002).”

The ruthless cultural genocide inflicted upon Native American has had profound effects on both the cultivation of Native American cultures and language, but also of feelings of self-respect and identity (Ferrin 1999). Native Americans suffered brutal deculturalization through the idea of “killing the Indian to save the man.” English was used as a means to “Americanize.” Native American students have experienced a loss of culture and language as they were forcibly “Americanized” and required to learn and speak English. This not only caused Native Americans’ loss of many of their tribal languages, but also damaged their sense of self-worth and identity (Ferrin 1999). While this

“Americanization” was specific to Native peoples and does not neatly map the processes imposed on other peoples, the forced use of English rather than native languages in school and its potential effects on students is worth noting in relation to bilingual education. This case of Native American students proves that English-only policy does not always create English proficiency or social success (Ferrin 1999).

After decades of cultural genocide, Congress passed the Native American Languages Act of 1990 in order to preserve the Native American tribal languages (Ferrin 1999). This act states, “there is convincing evidence that student achievement and performance, community and school pride, and educational opportunity [are] clearly and directly tied to respect for, and support of, the first language of the child or student” (U.S. Congress 1990, p. 25, qtd. Ferrin 1999). Why then does this logic not hold for other ELLs, who are often also racial minority students? Considering this statement, it needs to be questioned why the trend of bilingual education in the U.S. is moving towards English-only rather than focusing on maintaining an ELLs primary language. What power dynamics and structures are functioning to promote such an illogical response? Under the same guise of protecting American culture (read: White dominant culture), the continued elevation of White ideals of language, namely English, exists to maintain the racial power structure – with Whiteness dominating. Here, the U.S. government used Whiteness as property, specifically the right to use and enjoyment (Harris 1993). Whiteness was used as “a resource deployable at the social, political, and institutional level to maintain control” (Harris 1993, p. 1734). Only when Congress decided it was okay to preserve Native American tribal languages was this allowed. Before this permission was granted from a White institution, the preservation of Native American tribal languages was perceived as a threat to the unity of the nation. The

difference lies in who is in control of the situation. Native language maintenance is tolerable only when it is not an apparent threat to the control of White institutions.

### *3.3 Bilingual Education Policy & Court Cases*

The history of bilingual education policy in the U.S. has sometimes offered a glimpse of hope in regards to equal education for ELLs, but never has the privileging of English been questioned. On January 2, 1968, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Bilingual Education Act (BEA) also known as Title VII, an amendment to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), into law. The bilingual education that it endorsed was meant to benefit limited English-speaking students through the age of 18 who came from poor families. The BEA, passed during an era of growing immigration and an energized civil rights movement, was groundbreaking within a country where many states prohibited teaching in languages other than English. Upon signing the ESEA, Johnson pointed out that it contained “a special provision establishing bilingual education programs for children whose first language is not English. Thousands of children of Latin descent, young Indians, and others will get a better start – a better chance – in school (qtd. Moses 2002).” However, it is important to note that the Bilingual Education Act did *not* require bilingual education. Instead, Congress put aside money for school districts that had large language minority student enrollment and wanted to start up bilingual education programs on their own (Garcia 2009). Simultaneously, while it recognizing the need for special services to meet the needs of language-minority students, the BEA did not specifically stipulate whether the funds should be used for bilingual (i.e., native-language instruction) programs or more English-based programs.

Nonetheless, once the BEA kicked in, there was momentum for change among civil rights groups and families of English language learners regarding the importance of the approach to bilingual education that schools used. In 1974 the Supreme Court made a ruling on the *Lau v. Nichols* case stating that the *same* English-only instruction as provided to native English speakers for limited English proficient students was not necessarily *equal*. The decision was the culmination of a class action lawsuit brought by Chinese American students and their families in San Francisco in 1969. The plaintiffs argued that the students were not given equal education opportunity because they were placed in English-only school situations even though they could not understand English. When the plaintiffs won the case, the defendants appealed the decision to the U.S. District Court of Appeals. In 1973, the District Court overturned the lower court's ruling, opining that the students' rights to equal educational opportunity had not been violated because they were receiving the same education as other students. According to the judges, the school was not unconstitutionally discriminating against the students because their inability to speak English was not caused by past discrimination (Castellanos 1985). The plaintiff's appeal to the Supreme Court resulted in a landmark decision in the only Supreme Court case that deals directly with the educational opportunities of English language learners (Salomone 1986). In the Supreme court trial, the plaintiffs appealed to the Court's ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*, arguing that an English-only education for students with limited abilities in English was not *on equal terms* (as *Brown* instructs) with that of Anglo students. As a result, the Chinese American students did not have access to an education that was meaningful or worthwhile.

In a now well-known statement, Justice William O. Douglas noted that "there is no equality of treatment merely by providing student with the same facilities, textbooks,

teachers and curriculum; for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education” (qtd. Castellanos 1985, p. 117). His statement seems so obvious it is difficult to believe that anyone would claim that instruction in a language students cannot understand nonetheless provides them with meaningful educational opportunities. One important point about the *Lau* decision is that the Court did not stipulate exactly how districts were to go about establishing bilingual education (Garcia 2009). It merely called upon the Office of Civil Rights to guide school districts. Eventually, the Office of Civil Rights set up a Task Force to draft guidelines that became known as the Lau Remedies.

The *Lau v. Nichols* case is similar to *Brown v. Board of Education* in many ways. Mostly notably, *Lau* and *Brown* were both landmark Supreme Court cases that are now used as shining beacons of hope in the areas of bilingual education and school segregation, respectively. Unfortunately, also like *Brown* in the issue of school segregation, *Lau* addressed the issue of the lack of bilingual educational services for ELLs, but was never intended as a means for remedying general and more fundamental educational disparities and other legal racial and linguistic disparities. In both cases, groundbreaking decisions were made, but without taking into consideration the underlying narratives and historical agents left to enact such policies.

Since *Lau v. Nichols* did not mandate specifically how to go about educating ELL, also in 1972, another case that did result in a specific mandate as to what a good bilingual program would look like took place in New York. *Aspira of New York, Inc. v. Board of Education of the City of New York* involved Puerto Rican students in the New York City schools. Along with the students and their parents, *Aspira* sued the New York City Board of

Education, charging unequal treatment and denial of equal educational opportunity. The case resulted in a consent decree, which cited *Lau* and required the school district to help the students learn substantive content in Spanish and maintain their Spanish skills, as well as learn English (Castellanos 1985).

In 1979, the Lau Remedies were rewritten for release as regulations, mandating bilingual education in elementary schools where there were at least twenty-five children of the same language background in two consecutive grades (Crawford 2004). The Lau Remedies never made it past U.S. Department of Education's examination by Baker and de Kanter, who both argued that there was little evidence for the effectiveness of transitional bilingual education and that immersion models be given more attention. In 1981, Ronald Reagan's Secretary of Education, Terrel Bell, withdrew the Lau Remedies.

It is necessary to note that from the very beginning there was very little support for the maintenance and development of the students' native languages. Focus has been solely on the attainment of the English language. This demonstrates the lack of interest in bilingualism itself.

The Bilingual Education Act has been reauthorized four times so far. In 1978 it was expanded to include more students from more levels of English proficiency and in 1984, the reauthorization introduced developmental bilingual education programs that helped maintain students' native languages after learning English. But in 1984, following the general trend of transitional over maintenance, funding also became available for English-only programs (Crawford 2004). In 1988, these programs were expanded further and consisted of 25% of programs funded. Also, a new three-year limit was imposed on

transitional bilingual education programs. Finally in 1994, more attention was given to two-way maintenance bilingual education programs, but at the same time English-only programs were also increased. In sum, the BEA, Title VII of the ESEA, was expanded throughout the 1970s and 1980s and remained in place until 2002, when it was transformed into the English Language Acquisition Act, Title III of No Child Left Behind. As the title of the new act indicates, the focus of language policy has been shifted to enhance “skills in English only,” and native language instruction or developing native language skill is no longer encouraged (Crawford 2004). This change is essentially a complete reversal of language policy from the original BEA.

Yamamoto argues that race and culture are closely interconnected and cannot be easily separated. He states, “When we talk about race in the U.S., we are talking not just about skin color but also about the cultural shape and content of our polity” (1997, p. 848). Race and culture together control what language and customs are allowed in a society, who gets educational and employment opportunities, who gets imprisoned, and who is allowed in the political system (Yamamoto 1997, p. 848). The NCLB policy changed the focus of English education for ELLs from teaching both English and the native language to teaching English only. By making such changes, NCLB legally authorized the superior status of English in the United States and stated that language minority students, who are largely racial minority students as well, need to be Americanized by being immersed in English and by achieving English proficiency (Sekon 1999). It indirectly declared the superiority of White culture in the United States and demands people of Color to follow the dominant culture by speaking English only. Here, the “right to use and enjoyment,” which can be understood as the utilization of Whiteness as “a resource deployable at the social, political,

and institutional level to maintain control,” (Harris 1993, p. 1734) is being utilized to both privilege White norms and to maintain control. In English-only policy, Whiteness is once again protected in the law and set up as the norm for which difference must strive to become. English is once again exalted as the normative language of citizenship and humanity. By enacting English-only policies, students from linguistic minorities, largely students of Color, are not given the “right to use and enjoyment” of their native language, whereas White institutions are.

### *3.4 Defining Bilingual Education*

Behind the inability to reach a compromise in discussions on bilingual education are different perceptions of bilingual education. Bilingual education broadly defined is any “education program that involves the use of two languages of instruction at some point in a student’s school career” (Nieto 1992, p. 156). This simple definition is not what most people have in mind when they think of bilingual education. Many people in the United States, especially its critics, think that bilingual education is giving “instruction in the native language most of the school day for several years” (Porter 1994, p. 44). Some proponents define bilingual education as “dual language programs... [that] consists of instruction in two languages equally distributed across the school day” (Casanova & Arias 1992, p. 17).

Schooling generally defined as bilingual education actually comprises a variety of approaches. Some programs strive for bilingualism, whereas others seek development of proficiency in English only. Programs are designed to serve different types of students: English speakers, international students, or language minority students. Some models integrate these students. Models vary in how much and for how many years they use each

language for instruction. The initial language of literacy and content instruction varies across models. Some use mostly the native language initially, others deliver instruction in both, and still others only provide instruction in English.

There are special programs for language minority students in which all the teaching is done in English with a second language approach. This distinction between bilingual education and English-only instruction models is important. Bilingual education assumes use of English and another language for instruction. Submersion, structured immersion, and ESL models work with bilingual learners but are not bilingual because they rely on only one language – English – for instruction. Some educators would object to some of the models I have included in the bilingual education list. “Programs that do not provide significant amounts of instruction in the non-English language should not, in fact, be included under the rubric of bilingual education” (Milk 1993, 102). Some major program models for English language learners:

**Submersion:** Students are placed in regular English-only classrooms and are given no special instructional support. (This approach is illegal in the US as a result of Supreme Court decision in *Lau v. Nichols*. The Court did not prescribe a specific remedy but requires a program appropriate to the needs of English language learners.)

**English as a Second Language (ESL):** No instruction in a student’s primary language; ESL is taught either through pullout programs or is integrated with academic content throughout the day.

**Structured English Immersion (SEI):** Instruction conducted in English to a classroom of English language learners. An attempt is made to adjust the level of English so that subject matter is comprehensible.

**Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE):** Students receive some degree of instruction in their primary language for a period of time; however, the goal of the program is transition to English-only instruction as rapidly as possible, generally within 1 -3 years.

**Maintenance Bilingual Education (MBE):** Students receive instruction in their primary language and in English throughout the elementary school years (K-6) with the goal of developing academic proficiency in both languages.

**Two-Way Developmental Bilingual Programs:** Language majority and language minority students are instructed together in the same program with the goal of each group achieving bilingualism and biliteracy.

\* The six programs identified here are not an exhaustive list. Additionally, these programs do not exist in pure forms. Schools and districts use combinations and permutations of these programs to attempt to meet the needs of their students. (Stritikus 2002)

Bilingual education models are described broadly according to their goals, type of students served, languages in which literacy is developed, and languages of subject matter instruction. Bilingual education models are divided between those that have as a major goal fluency in two languages and those that strive for fluency in the second language, English. The first type has no limitations in the number of years a student can attend and it can include a program within a school or the whole school is bilingual. Dual language schools, two-way bilingual education, two-way immersion education, and maintenance bilingual education are included in this category. The second type, which includes transitional bilingual education, submersion with ESL support, and structured English immersion, shares the goal of preparing students to function in monolingual classes. Therefore students attend such programs for a limited number of years.

The problem with transitional bilingual education programs and English-only policies is the “conflation between white American and the English language” (Perea, 1995, p.569). This is enacted through policy mandates that seek to maintain the status quo of Standard English usage at the expense of the language development of immigrant and non-native English-speaking children.

### *3.5 Bilingual Education Debate*

Despite numerous studies researching and validating the efficacy of bilingual education (e.g. Hakuta 1986; Krashen 1996; Miramontes, Nadeau, & Commins 1997; Wong Fillmore 1991), it frequently attracts undue criticism from proponents of English-only language policy and education. Language in general, and bilingual education in particular, has been the center of debate regarding issues of culture, assimilation, and quality of life (Brisk 1998). Supporters of bilingual education posit that bilingual education plays a crucial part in both fostering English language learners (ELL) cultural identities and providing greater opportunities in life. Cultural identity is “characterized by one’s race and ethnicity, relationship to one’s cultural community, and a sense of the value and respect deserved by one’s race and culture” (Moses 2002, p. 39).

Even though the United States has a history of polylingualism beginning with Native Americans, its actual history is one of only tolerating monolingualism – erasing languages other than English. And even though bilingual education was not sanctioned as a national policy until 1968, debates regarding bilingual education and its many effects – some good, some bad – have been around since the first attempts at public schooling. Presently, attempts to reduce or abolish bilingual education, most notably the 2000 passage of Proposition 203 in Arizona, the 1998 passage of Proposition 227 in California and the 2002 passage of Question 2 in Massachusetts, all of which practically outlawed bilingual education in those states, are becoming more common. Debates center on the role that schooling should have in helping English language learners learn English and in turn gain broader access to “mainstream” educational opportunity structures. Now, few contest the idea that schools should play a role in helping English language learners learn English,

following the 1974 Supreme Court decision in *Lau v. Nichols*, which deemed that schools must teach students in a language that they can understand. Bilingual education, in its various incarnations, is seen primarily as a vehicle for acquisition of English. While bilingual education, specifically the use of native language in education, has significant implications for students' cultural identities English-only proponents rarely address this. In fact, English-only proponents cannot consider these implications without acknowledging the way English (dominant White ideas of language) are valorized and privileged, and the way native languages of ELLs are dismissed.

Supporters of the English-only movement, the critics of bilingual education, insist that learning English should be students' main focus in such a way that the native language is rarely used as a language of instruction or not at all. In addition, these critics reject the importance of preserving students' cultural identities (Chavez 1991; Ravitch 1983). To condense the arguments, "the controversy, then, concerns three main factors: (1) how learning (of English and other subjects) should occur; (2) what place a student's native (primary) language should have in the process; and (3) whether or not efforts should be made to preserve aspects of native culture" (Moses 2002). As explained earlier in discussing Native American boarding schools, there is a link between culture, language and identity, and for ELLs to maintain healthy cultural and personal identities, some effort must be made in the preservation of the native language.

Supporters of bilingual education usually uphold that public schools have the responsibility to aid English language learners in learning English while simultaneously helping students keep up in the academic subject areas and, what I believe to be the most different from English-only proponents, sustain their cultural identities as a part of their

personal identities. By using English language learners' native languages for instructional purposes, students receive the best start in their overall learning and academic achievement, because they do not stall the process of learning content. It is most important first to support students' learning in the content areas and second to teach them English (Anderson & Boyer 1976; Krashen 1996; Miramontes et al. 1997).

The prevailing goal that has guided language minority students' education is to teach English as quickly as possible. Because English is viewed as the only means for acquisition of knowledge, students' fluency in English is the essential condition to receiving an education. Bilingualism is considered a "problem" and "the source of linguistic and academic failure." This approach funnels scarce resources (teachers, classrooms, time and materials) into teaching English. Program outcomes are judged solely on their effectiveness to teach and learn English. The political agenda guiding such views of education of language minority students maintains that it is not the role of public schools to develop students' home language. Some supporters of this view even consider the promotion of languages other than English a threat to our national unity and identity. They see acquiring English as the precondition to assimilation into American culture as well as academic and socioeconomic success. The goal of quality bilingual education should be to educate students to their highest potential. In the case of language minority students, acquisition of English is only part of this goal. Bilingual learners gain access to knowledge not only through English but also through their native language. Quality bilingual education for language minority students should combine concerns for language development and cultural awareness in a constant quest for good education. Expected outcomes of such education include academic success, individuals who can function within their families,

communities, and the larger American society, and a good command of the English language. Native language proficiency will vary depending on the amount of instruction, support for the language use in the community, and students' individual characteristics. The key factor is the acceptance by schools, families, and students of bilingualism as a resource.

Moreover, the transitory nature of programs focusing only on acquiring English skills also negatively impact students' success in their second language learning, in this case English. A large body of literature exists that shows that second language learning is only successful after first language fluency has been reached through *formal schooling* (Krashen, 1981, 1996; Spener, 1988, Swain & Lapkin, 2000). What happens instead in English-only classrooms is that students learn to become English-speaking relatively quickly, but their English-language formal development is insufficient for academic success (Krashen, 1996; Olsen, 1997; Spener, 1988; Swain & Lapkin 2000). Thus, policies that mandate for English-only teaching in public schools are not only ineffective in the way they teach English as a second language, but also neglect to develop first language literacy, leaving ELLs in a limbo of a lack of mastery of either their home or second language. Because of the way that Spanish and Asian languages function as a racial identifier within the Latino/a and Asian American communities of the United States, English-only policies are a failed attempt at Latino/a and Asian American assimilation, setting up ELLs for severe academic challenges and low-wage service jobs in the future.

### 3.6 *The English-Only Movement & The Unz Initiatives*

The English-only movement gained prominence in the 1980s with a proposed constitutional amendment and various state initiatives to designate English as the official language of government. Although it has broad implication for issues of race and ethnicity in the United States, bilingual education policy in particular is one of its targets. Supporters contend that official English is necessary in order to preserve the unity of American culture, foster immigrant assimilation and encourage the full participation of immigrants in mainstream society (Chavez 1991). In contrast, opponents of the English-only movement maintain that legislating official English is unnecessary and unjust because English is the *de facto* public language of the U.S. In addition, the law promotes ethnocentrism and xenophobia, is unconstitutional, and harms rather than helps English language learners (Crawford 1999).

In June 1998, voters in California passed Proposition 227, an initiative called “English Language Education for Children in Public Schools.” Ron Unz, coauthor and sponsor of the “English for the Children” campaign for Proposition 227, is a single, childless, conservative, millionaire businessman in California’s computer industry. The campaign sought to end bilingual education programs in the state of California. In the campaign against bilingual education, Ron Unz leveraged a considerable amount of his personal fortune to attempt to persuade California voters to support his initiative. Much of his media efforts were directed at discrediting and demeaning the scholarly work regarding the effectiveness of bilingual education. Unz attempted to cast the restriction of native language instruction in terms of a benevolent pro-immigrant stance. Arguing that he represented the true will of immigrants across California, Unz maintained that he was

merely assisting Latinos and other recent immigrants free themselves from bilingual education (Stritikus 2002).

Although Unz purported to maintain a “pro-immigrant” stance, the campaign proved to be very divisive with xenophobic undertones. Inevitably, much of the public discourse supporting the passage of Proposition 227 took nativist and xenophobic positions (Kerper-Mora 2000; Orellana et al. 1999) California became the center of a national debate between “nativist” and “multiculturalist” visions of education. The nativist position assumed benevolent view of Americanization and the role that rapid learning of English plays in the process (Kerper-Mora 2000).

Despite being opposed by many major political figures in California, President Clinton, and nearly all state-wide teaching and educational associations, Proposition 227 passed by a majority of 61% of the vote. Once passed by the voting public the initiative immediately became law and districts were given 60 days to be in full compliance with its provisions. The law requires that “all children in California public schools be taught in English” (California Education Code, Chapter 3, Article I. Section 305). Under the law, English language learners (ELL) students who do not have sufficient English development to manage in a mainstream classroom are eligible to receive one year of structured English immersion (SEI) – a program of English instruction not described in detail in the law except to require that instruction be “nearly all” in English.

The law requires that after one year of SEI, children are expected to integrate into mainstream English classrooms, where instruction is required to be “overwhelmingly” in English. The only legal alternative to SEI is the parental waiver process. According to the

new law, children who have special language needs, or whose parents specifically request it, can be placed in “Alternative Programs” – usually a form of bilingual program that includes instruction in the child’s primary language. In order for a child to be enrolled in an Alternative Program, the parent or guardian must annually visit the school and sign a waiver requesting the placement. However, the first year a child enters the California public school system, regardless of a signed waiver, an ELL must go through 30 days of “observation” conducted in English language classrooms – only then may he or she enroll in an Alternative Program.

Proposition 203, Arizona’s more restrictive version of Proposition 227, passed in November 2000 with 63% of the vote (Crawford 2000). The Arizona initiative, also known as “English for the Children of Arizona,” was funded in large part by Unz. It restricts instruction to English only, and holds that English language learners must receive instruction in English immersion programs for a maximum of one year. Though it leaves the possibility for schools to provide bilingual education, a school would need to receive 20 parental requests for such a program. Perhaps the most difficult circumstance brought on by Proposition 203 is that the Arizona legislature is not allowed to repeal it. The only way it can be reversed is by the passage of another ballot initiative (Crawford 2000).

In July 2001, Unz announced his intention to bring his initiative to Massachusetts, and by December, English for the Children of Massachusetts had enough signatures to ensure a place on the ballot for their initiative. State politicians reacted immediately. In the state legislature, politicians had already been considering changes to Massachusetts’ bilingual education policy. One early proposal for reform came from State Representative Antonio Cabral and Senator Jarrett Barrios. The Cabral/Barrios bill broadened the

flexibility of the Massachusetts bilingual education law by giving official approval and support to other programs in addition to TBE, the standard bilingual education model used in MA. These programs included two-way bilingual education (maintenance bilingual education where monolingual English speakers learn with ELLs in two languages) and programs that tended toward immersion but used native language instruction at least 30% of the time. The bill also included accountability features, such as heightened testing requirements.

Supporters of Unz characterized TBE as a failing system and claimed that bilingual education programs "segregate" minority students (Woolard 1990). They accused bilingual education teachers and administrators of keeping ELLs in the special programs for too long, thus denying the students their right to be mainstreamed and their right to learn English (Glodis 2001). They also de-emphasized the harshness of the provision against use of the native language in the classroom; instead, focusing on how teachers could speak to a child in his or her native language when necessary (De Jong et al. 2005).

On November 5, 2002, Massachusetts' voters passed Question 2 with a resounding 61% to 29% margin (Galvin 2002). The initiative, like the ones in California and Arizona, rendered bilingual education programs, with few exceptions, illegal. Collectively, these initiatives are now called the Unz initiatives. Massachusetts is the third state in the U.S. to be successfully courted by the Unz initiatives, and is apart of a national movement. The law sponsored by English for the Children of Massachusetts (the official campaign behind Question 2) overrode the state law that mandated that schools with 20 or more ELLs of a single language background provide a TBE program. Instead, schools would now have to use an immersion program, described as follows:

...nearly all classroom instruction is in English but with the curriculum and presentation designed for children who are learning the language. Books and instructional materials are in English and all reading, writing, and subject matter are taught in English. Although teachers may use a minimal amount of the child's native language when necessary, no subject matter shall be taught in any language other than English, and children in this program learn to read and write solely in English ("Question 2" 2002).

The law also described a waiver process for parents to ask permission to have their child placed in a program that used native language instruction; however, issuance of a waiver would come only at the approval of the local superintendent. The law also mandated yearly standardized testing in English of ELLs ("Question 2" 2002).

By imposing the view that learning English as quickly as possible is essential for immigrant students, Proposition 227, Proposition 203 and Question 2 positions all other languages as having a marginal status. By attempting to dictate language use in the classroom, the law enacted an ideology of monolingualism (Schmidt 2000; Tollefson 1995).

The nativist position advanced by Unz Initiatives are critiqued by multiculturalist and multilingualist notions that English-only instruction is deeply problematic. Rather than viewing the home language and culture through the lens of deficit, multiculturalist and multilingualist perspectives urge schools to see these as valuable educational resources (Banks 1995; Garcia 1999; Gutierrez et al. 2000). Proposition 227, Proposition 203 and Question 2 present a direct challenge to the notion that languages other than English have a legitimate and valuable place in the education of all students and in particular, linguistically marginalized students that are predominantly students of Color. Hence, the normative assumptions underlying the Unz Initiatives position the language and culture of ELLs in a subordinate and inferior role to English (Cummins 2000; Kerper-Mora 2000).

Although English education mandates such as the Unz Initiatives and NCLB do not address race directly, it is necessary to evaluate them in a racial context because not only are the recipients of these mandates disproportionately racial minorities (Gullixson 1999), but policy itself is racialized and requires a race analysis. Nirej Sekhon (1999) points out that American identity or being American is often equated with White culture. The dominant culture or norm in the United States that is not questioned or named is White culture. Whiteness, in fact, is protected and can be construed as property, which is associated with certain rights (Harris 1993). History has tied Whiteness to power, citizenship and even humanity through the requirements for voting rights and civic representation. Likewise, speaking English is considered normal, and English fluency is the tool to achieve social mobility in the United States because English is a part of the cultural property of White Americans (Sekhon 1999). Understanding this, English becomes the language of power, citizenship and humanity. The Unz Initiatives mostly target Asian American and Latino populations who are perceived as deviating from this rule by bringing their own language into American society (Sekhon 1999). The language and culture of Asian American and Latino minority groups and other immigrants of Color are viewed as a threat to American or White culture and deemed an inferior status stripped of humanity. Through the Unz Initiatives, the existing social authority states that English is the most, even only, important language and teaching English needs to be through English-only programs. The elevation of English as the norm and the language of citizenship and humanity relegates linguistic minorities to an abnormal, inhuman status. This exemplifies the “right to status and reputation” by protecting White norms and casting people of Color as abnormal. Language is subject to reputation and status and becomes racialized,

particularly in the bilingual education debate, with English claiming a racialized right to status that linguistic minorities cannot.

The message and practice of English-only in the U.S. also creates other problems for ELLs. Aside from the negative impact on minority children's identity and self-esteem as shown in Native American boarding schools, it also creates a division among all Americans. According to English-only philosophy, the concepts of "us" and "them" are created based on people's English ability (Sekhon 1999). The Unz Initiatives use the phrase "English learners" for those who need immersion programs, and by classifying immigrant students as English learners, the Unz Initiatives create the division between people who need to learn English and people who do not need to learn English. The "we" created by the English-only movement are the people who speak and know English as their "birthright" (Sekhon 1999). They do not need to learn English because it is already their language as they were born in the U.S. The "others" on the other hand, are the people who do not know English well and who need to learn it in order to be considered as part of the "we" (Sekhon 1999). This assumption, however, disregards the fact that many ELLs are born in the U.S., and therefore are citizens and have every right to be a part of the "we" regardless of their English fluency (Sekhon 1999). This illustrates the "absolute right to exclude," in this case the exclusion from the right to speak native languages and the exclusion from right to gain fluency in native language or the dominant language. As previously explained, English-only policies often result in inadequate understandings of both the native language and the dominant language to succeed academically. These exclusions result in an even greater exclusion – the right to equal education.

## 4 Introduction to Case Study

My in-field research takes the form of a case study of one school's implementation of their state's relatively new (2002) English-only policy in elementary schools, Structured English Immersion (SEI)<sup>4</sup>. I seek to look at the consequences of this policy in a classroom through observations, an interview with the teacher and interviews with students. Through this ethnographic case study, I hope to gain a more in-depth and personal look of how an English-only classroom teaches both explicit and implicit lessons about language and race. As with the bilingual education policy chapter, I will use a Critical Race Theory (CRT) framework to analyze the nuances of the perception and execution of SEI in a classroom.

### 4.1 Methodology

This thesis is based upon approximately three months (November 2009– January 2010) of ethnographic research on a third grade Structured English Immersion (SEI) classroom at the Hillside Elementary School in Chinatown. The use of ethnography suits the purpose of this case study well because of its emphasis on qualitative investigation, not the testing of a specific hypothesis. The primary ethnographic tools for data collection were classroom observations, one-on-one data collection with students and intervals of informal interviews with the class teacher as well as one formal interview with the teacher. One-on-one data collection with students took the form of a recorded interview. Along with the use of

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<sup>4</sup> Structured English Immersion (SEI): Instruction conducted in English to a classroom of English language learners. An attempt is made to adjust the level of English so that subject matter is comprehensible (Stritikus 2002).

structured questions students were also asked to respond to stories or situations. One formal interview and several informal interviews were arranged with the class teacher to gain an educators perspective on the SEI experience.

During the months of November 2009 through January 2010 I did classroom observations twice a week. In January I did a two full weeks of observation. In order to gather consistent data I entered the field with a framework for my classroom observations. I look specifically at how things are raced and if the concept of race is engaged. At the same time, I look at how race is intersected with class and gender in the classroom. Since I am an active participant in the classroom and the periods of observation extend from three up to six hours I was unable to keep fully detailed field notes. Instead I carried around a small notebook and jotted down what I could.

The methodology for my research draws heavily from CRT and the concept of counter-storytelling. Duncan (2005) explains that “the stories of people of colour [are] necessary to disrupt the allochronic discourses that inform racial inequality in schools and society. In particular, they provide potent counter-points to challenge the existing narratives that shape how we understand the post-Civil Rights schooling experiences and outcomes of students of colour” (p. 101). The use of counterstories in this thesis allows for the challenging of privileged discourses, therefore giving voice to marginalized groups. Solorzano and Yosso (2002) define critical race methodology as a research approach that emphasizes race and racism in every step of the research process and therefore “challenges the traditional research paradigms, texts, and theories used to explain the experiences of students of color.” As I explained earlier in my discussion of CRT, counterstorytelling is a means of exposing and critiquing normalized dialogues that perpetuate racial stereotypes. CRT is

particularly suited for this study because it includes the researcher's experience in the study itself and allows me to use my own experiences to inform my research (Ladson-Billings 2000). As a student of Color, a child of immigrants, and an English language learner through elementary school, I am invested in my research. As Ladson-Billings (2000) writes, "My research is apart of my life and my life is apart of my research" (p. 268).

#### 4.2 *The Community: Waverley's Chinatown*

The first large group of Chinese workers, recruited as non-English speakers and noncitizens to break a factory strike, came to Waverley<sup>5</sup>, a large New England city, to work in a shoe factory. Arriving in at the central train station, they walked a few feet and settled down and pitched tents in an area they named "Ping On Alley" (*ping on* means "peace" in Cantonese). This area later became and is still known as the city's Chinatown. These early pioneers, all men, later worked on building telephone poles, as laundrymen, and in restaurants (Takaki 1998).

After the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882 and subsequent laws by Congress, strict limits were placed on the immigration of Chinese to the US. At the time Chinatowns, born out of exclusion of Chinese from other residential areas, were predominately inhabited by male bachelors and functioned as a "bachelor society." To prevent the continuation of Chinese communities in the US, Chinese women in particular were denied entry. Throughout the duration of the Chinese Exclusion Act, the Chinatown population was slowly aging and dying. Eventually, the War Brides Act in 1945 allowed

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<sup>5</sup> Name of city changed to protect the identities of teachers and students in my study

Chinese American servicemen to marry Chinese women from overseas and start families in Waverley. Bills, specifically the 1965 Immigration Act, later relaxed the stringent immigration quotas, and the community was able to persevere.

Changes in US policies in the 1950s regarding redevelopment of urban centers had a severe and detrimental impact on Chinatown. In the 1950s, Chinatown was deemed an area of “urban blight” and major sections of the community were torn down to make way for institutional expansion of a private university’s medical center and medical school. The construction of I-93 and I-90 also took away significant portions of the community. This land was taken by the city of Waverley through eminent domain and rationalized as for the greater good, despite having to displace many of Chinatown’s long time residents. Chinatown lost between one-third to half of its land and thus residential units during this period.

Inspired by the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, a new, younger generation of Chinese Americans, some of them second generation – born to immigrant parents and thus citizens by birth, advocated for equal rights for Chinatown and Chinese Americans. These young activists went on to form grassroots organizations to provide basic services that the community needed, worked to try to protect Chinatown from the relentless destructions of urban renewal, and demanded long overdue justice. Some current issues in Chinatown are the lack of a public library, which was lost when buildings were destroyed for the highway projects; the need for bilingual ballots in all elections; and continued loss of land and residential units to the rise in number of luxury condominiums spreading into Chinatown.

Chinatown began as and remains a low-income neighborhood, providing housing and some work for new immigrants and for other Asian Americans with little financial, linguistic or cultural capital to move outside of it. Racism and structural inequality in larger society does not allow for Chinatown residents to find housing and jobs outside of Chinatown, leaving residents with dead-end jobs, a lack of exposure to the English language, poor living environments etc. Despite this and because it continues to be the hub for Asian America in the Northeast, and especially for those most disenfranchised by linguistic and social capital, there continues to be a fierce fight to maintain Chinatown as a community.

#### *4.3 The School: Hillside Elementary School*

My observations take place at Hillside Elementary School. To gain access to this school, I scheduled a meeting with the principal through email correspondence. At the meeting I explained my background and where the concept of this thesis came from. Through the principal, after getting his approval to do observations at his school, I met the teacher of a third grade SEI classroom. She agreed to let me do observations of her class in exchange for helping out around the classroom. Duties included working one on one with students struggling with certain concepts and also grading a few homework assignments. The Hillside School was my first choice for student observations mainly because of the large Asian American population and my familiarity with the neighborhood, Waverley's Chinatown.

The Hillside School is one of Waverley's top elementary schools. Located in Chinatown it is no surprise that the student body is 62% ethnically Chinese and 68.6%

Asian. Of staff members, 45.8% are Asian or Asian American. According to the school website, 81.7% of students are low-income, 69.8% of students do not speak English as a first language and 50.5% are limited to proficient English speakers. The school has a history of excellent attendance rates by students. Hillside is a prominent feature of and plays an important role in Waverley's Chinatown. Their building not only houses the Hillside School, but also a community center and a community health center. Community meetings are often held at the elementary school.

The Hillside School is also a Chinese Language Center and has a well-known Structured English Immersion (SEI) program for Chinese speaking students. It is the only one in the state that has a program that lasts longer than one year with students transferring from one SEI classroom to another.

#### *4.4 The Classroom: Ms. Cheng's 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade SEI Class*

Ms. Cheng is an exceptionally capable teacher. Under her veteran leadership and guidance, her students were quick to learn and quick to speak up when they were not learning. Her classroom was one of organized chaos with nine girls, eleven boys, and three walls. Since the school was built in 1976, during a time where the notion of an "open-space" school was popular, Ms. Cheng's classroom only has three walls. For more privacy, another "wall" was created with bookshelves. Each subject she taught had a ritual and within a couple of weeks from the start of the academic year her students were able to transition from lesson to lesson flawlessly and without instruction. The chaos came from several overzealous students frantically waving their hands for the chance to answer a question and the general excitability of all the students.

Also within two weeks of the beginning of the year were her phone calls to her students' homes to establish a relationship with parents and guardians. She had an intimate knowledge of any issues in the home both from her ties to students' families and also through confessions from her students. Their trust in her ran deep. During my interviews with students, they frequently spoke of Ms. Cheng with affection and admiration. My classroom observations and private conversations with Ms. Cheng revealed that the feelings were very clearly mutual.

Most of this information could be gained with a very cursory understanding of her classroom, but with extended observations, I noticed the way race, class, and gender affected her classroom and teaching. Ms. Cheng was not hesitant to talk to her students about socioeconomic status and many of her students voiced their desire to be rich one day. For example, while discussing a reading assignment about a boy spending his allowance money, Ms. Cheng asked her students, "Who likes money?" and "Who is good with money?" Everyone eagerly raised their hands and started talking about the field trip they had recently had to an expensive hotel "where rich people stay." After quieting her students down she asked, "How do you become rich?" Students answered ranged from "Rich is when you spend a lot money and do whatever you want" to "Working hard and save the money." Ms. Cheng agreed that, "you must save money to be rich." All discussions of class either focused on the "meritocratic" system of gaining higher socioeconomic status or how lucky the students were compared to "poor kids in Africa that don't have school or books or teacher like Ms. Cheng" (quoted from student explaining to me what the class was fundraising for). This is clear confirmation of the colorblindness ideology operating in the classroom. Not once is the notion of a meritocratic U.S. society questioned on the basis of

class, gender, or race. To contextualize, all of the students in Ms. Cheng's class qualify for free and reduced lunch and in fact, a majority of the schools does – and yet critical discussions of class are nonexistent or at best, rare.

As for gender, Ms. Cheng explained to me that the reason she had to discipline boys more frequently than she needed to discipline girls was because of their innate gender differences. Her understanding was that boys were just naturally more rowdy and rambunctious. Girls, on the other hand, were quiet, responsible, and studious. From my observations, all of her students had varying degrees of rowdiness and studiousness and no clear pattern emerged from their behaviors other than the differences in the way boys were frequently separated from the class as a discipline measure. While never overt in discussing her understanding of gender differences with the students, her perceptions clearly affected the way she treated her students.

One thing that was never mentioned in the four months I did observations was race. During Thanksgiving, a story about a Russian immigrant girl was told. The theme of the lesson was “we’re all immigrants.” Despite issues with the colorblind ideology behind the curriculum, Ms. Cheng was not ignorant of the problems surrounding SEI and how the situation is raced. She voiced concern over how the one-year limit in SEI rushed ELLs so that “they can speak but cannot succeed academically” and the resulting high drop out rate for Latino and Asian American ELL students. Aside from the issue of funding bilingual education programs (three-year programs are more expensive than the one-year SEI program), she explained, “I think the higher ups don’t want our kids competing with White kids to get into the state schools. They want blue collar workers, not more competition for the good jobs.” Rather than using her astute observations to help her class learn about race

and power, she unfortunately wrote off her claims at the end of the conversation by telling me I didn't need to listen to her "conspiracy theories." This act of self-silencing in regards to race in the educational system illustrates how Ms. Cheng has learned that in discussions about schooling, race cannot be openly considered. However, Ms. Cheng clearly understands that aside from logistical or technical reasons for the implementation of SEI (budgeting, for example), there is a masking of more powerful social structures with a heavy unspoken affect on schooling that are a part of U.S. society.

## 5 Implicit Lessons of an English-only Classroom

From my interviews with students I was able to find two prevailing themes in their responses and understanding of English and several underlying ideas: (1) English is just another language, like Chinese or Spanish and (2) English is the only language in which knowledge can be acquired. Undergirding these two themes were ideas surrounding language, knowledge and status such as the trivializing of the students' native languages, issues surrounding race, and the notion that the consequences of not learning English are severe. In this chapter I look at the two main themes from the interviews and complicate them with other observations from the interviews, classroom observations, and conversations with Ms. Cheng and the principal of Hillside Elementary. I conclude the chapter with a look at the consequences of internalizing these two themes for a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade SEI student.

### 5.1 *English is Just Another Language*

Of the six students I interviewed, all consistently answered that their understanding of English was that it was simply a language, just like Chinese and Spanish. Attached to this understanding that all languages are equal is the notion that all races are equal – a decidedly colorblind understanding of race and language. Colorblindness, as previously defined, is the refusal of White institutions to acknowledge the attachment of race to power structures and the denial of uneven racial positions in society. Language, then, becomes a signifier for race. Here, Tina explains that a teacher was the one that presented her with this colorblind view.

*LZ:* How did you learn English is important? Who told you it was important?

*Tina:* Teachers that taught me.

*LZ:* So, while they were teaching you they said, 'Tina, you need to learn English because...' Because what?

*Tina:* Mmm... because you can speak different language like Chinese and English and Spanish...

*LZ:* So, it's just another language.

*Tina:* Yeah.

Tina's teachers have taught her that English is just another language. Considering the political, legal and social history of bilingual education, the English-only movement, and the still hotly debated controversy over the use of native language in a the education of ELLs, to say English is just another language is a clearly false. But this lie is necessary in order to support the idea of colorblindness and to ignore and erase the relationship between race and power. The notion that English is just another language is a mask for socializing colorblindness. Rather than acknowledging and contextualizing the reasons for teaching English to Tina, her teachers have chosen to ignore and depoliticize the battle for language dominance.

The underlying message of English-only is a fight to continue privileging dominant White ideas, in this case language. Understanding this makes analyzing the way English is presented to the students as colorblind relevant. Gotanda proposes that colorblind analyses of the law use "race" to mean formal-race. Because formal-race is disconnected from the social reality of the connection between race and power, a colorblind analysis "often fails to recognize connections between the race of an individual and the real social conditions underlying litigation or other constitutional dispute" (1991, p.7). He explains that this disconnection to social realities places great limitations on possible solutions for

injustice and therefore sustains a system of White privilege. As a result, the lack of historical or social context is one of the methods colorblindness can maintain inequity by ignoring the context in which the racial hierarchy has been created and maintained in U.S. society. Amy also has a colorblind understanding of English, but her response also illustrates the inherently contradictory nature of colorblindness.

*LZ:* Do you think it's important to learn English?

*Amy:* [nods]

*LZ:* Yeah, it is important? Why is it important?

*Amy:* So, if you had an American friend that speak English you might can talk to them and meet different other friends that is different, that has different language, too.

*LZ:* Oh, okay. So, what about Spanish? Is Spanish important?

*Amy:* I don't know.

*LZ:* Is one language more important that the other?

*Amy:* No, it's just different. Like you can learn some English and some Spanish.

Amy associates English with American. The importance of Spanish can't be justified, but rather than being inferior, Spanish is understood as just "different" from English. This exemplifies how colorblindness is intrinsically incongruous. Colorblindness attempts to disregard race, but to that it must first recognize it. Here, Amy attempts to maintain the idea that all languages are important, just different, but when asked how Spanish is important she is unable to answer.

Hillside Elementary School acknowledges their racially diverse student body in terms of formal-race (Gotanda 1991), with a particular nod to their Asian American student constituents, but insists on perpetuating a colorblind ideology that is both contradictory and harmful. Despite how the school does not address race outside of formal-race, students clearly have perceptions of race. Ms. Cheng was also quick to talk about her perception of

Hillside Elementary SEI students (read: Asian) as good students, while other schools with SEI programs might not be so lucky with the students they teach (read: Latino). Despite the insistence on portraying a colorblind society, students such as Sarah experience a different reality.

*LZ:* Do you like being in an SEI classroom?

*Sarah:* Mmhmm...

*LZ:* Why do you like it?

*Sarah:* If I'm not in the SEI, there's like... there's like the Black people and they're bullies. One time I went out to recess and they push me without saying "Excuse me."

*LZ:* Oh no...

*Sarah:* [Starts crying]

Despite the prevailing ideology of colorblindness in the school it is clearly not helping to create a "colorblind" society. In fact, the colorblindness is directly contradicting the reality Sarah is experiencing in school. Because students like Sarah are not given the opportunity to have a dialogue or to learn about race, young Sarah is left with uninformed views about race. "The rules may be colorblind, but people are not. The questions remains, therefore, whether the law can truly exist apart from the color-conscious society in which it exists" (Williams 1991, p. 120). Williams explains how regardless of how race is not acknowledged, it continues to be a part of the peoples' lives.

The greatest absurdity about this situation is how many opportunities the school has to address race. Aside from individual instances such as this one, there are also opportunities ingrained in their current curriculum. Here Sarah talks about a writing assignment she enjoyed that involved writing a biographical essay on Phillis Wheatley, a Black woman born into slavery that went on to become a published American poet.

*LZ:* What's your favorite subject?

*Sarah:* Swimming!

*LZ:* [laughs] Anything else?

*Sarah:* Mmm... writing.

*LZ:* I like writing, too. What do you like to write? Your own stories?

*Sarah:* I like to make up stories... And I like to write biographies about famous people. Okay, I'll ask you a question. Do you know Phillis Wheatley is not her real name?

*LZ:* Really? What was it then?

*Sarah:* She didn't have one because when she was born, she was a slave already and then the master gave the name to her so it's Phillis Wheatley. Wait, let me go get it.

[Fetches writing assignment on Phillis Wheatley]

*Sarah:* She was famous because she even sent George Washington a letter with a poem in it. She called him "great." [Reading worksheet] "Washington wrote back and said he would like to meet her some day."

This clear opportunity to talk about race is ignored and no connection to present day issues was brought up from this assignment. This distancing from history is necessary to maintain the basis of colorblindness – the intentional dismissal of a racialized past that has created the current relationship between race and power.

## 5.2 *The Right to Language Use*

The true value that Hillside places on language and language abilities is much more nuanced than the English-only policy carried out in the classrooms. Despite policies that effectively render invisible the linguistic diversity of the students, Hillside hypocritically acknowledges the existence and importance of communicating in more than one language through its institutional use and emphasis on bilingual translation. In other words,

bilingualism is acknowledged as a worthwhile skill for the school, but this does not extend to the students who are put in English-only classrooms, and in some cases, reprimanded for speaking their native languages.

Hillside outwardly presents itself as a bilingual school with a bilingual community base by covering the hallway walls with messages posted in English and Chinese. Forms going home to parents are consistently printed in English and Chinese. Many teachers and most of the administration are bilingual. In fact, my initial inquiry about doing research at the school with the principal of Hillside was conducted entirely in Chinese (Cantonese). For family events, Hillside provides a translator to make the English presentation accessible for parents whose dominant language is Chinese (Cantonese or Mandarin). The emphasis that Hillside places on the utility of bilingualism stands in stark contrast to the language policies for its students.

The message that comes across through a Whiteness as property (Harris, 1993) framework is a “right to exclusion” concerning the ability to communicate in more than one language. Hillside is privileged to use more than one language, to provide translation, demonstrating its usefulness, but racialized Hillside ELLs are prohibited from achieving literate fluency in either language through the school’s English-only policies. While the Hillside fails to recognize the value of the linguistic diversity of its students, it also demonstrates the power inherent in bilingualism, reserving the power of using two languages only for the school institution and not the students. Here, Sarah talks about how an after school program not only prohibits speaking any other language than English, but also punishes students for attempting to do so.

*LZ:* So, where do you usually speak English?

*Sarah:* In school... and sometimes after school, cause in the after school there is no Chinese people. Well, there is some Chinese people, but we're not allowed to say Chinese.

*LZ:* You're not allowed to speak Chinese?

*Sarah:* Yeah, I don't know why.

[...]

*LZ:* What happens if you do [speak Chinese]?

*Sarah:* You get a strike and if you get three strikes you have to see the director. Maybe the director will send you to somewhere.

*LZ:* What is this program for?

*Sarah:* Like, the college students will help you with homework and later we have project.

Sarah's experience epitomizes the dominant discourse at the school that uses the "right of use and enjoyment" (Harris, 1993) concerning native language use. The "right to use and enjoyment" is used at the institutional level to maintain absolute control. In this case, Hillside reserves the exclusive right of translation and bilingualism and discourages the academic development of this skill amongst its students. Students bringing their languages and cultures to the school is seen as a threat, whereas when the school offers language options this is portrayed as benevolent. The difference between these two similar situations centers on who is in control of language use. In order to maintain control, the school implements strict limitations on students' language use, while hypocritically seeing and making use of the benefits of being bilingual. Both the English language and White privilege of translation retain privilege and power at Hillside over other languages and the students' bilingualism skills.

Despite this contradictory behavior, it is also important to note that within the system presented to Hillside Elementary and the laws that it must abide by, Hillside is has

little option but to present conflicting ideals. The true contradiction lies with the policy of English-only, which supports such inconsistent measures as documented at Hillside.

### *5.3 Perceptions of Knowledge in Relation to Language*

The hierarchy of language is not lost on the students. Throughout the interviews, students consistently revisited the notion that learning can only be accomplished through English. English was the language used to transfer knowledge and without it “you can’t do anything.” As for their home language (Cantonese, Mandarin, or Taishanese), students noticeably, consistently, and perhaps unknowingly trivialized it. Tina clearly believes it is necessary to learn English before the ability to learn much else. She hesitates when I ask her if Chinese can transfer knowledge the way English does.

*LZ:* What do you think happens to students who can’t learn English?

*Tina:* They don’t know what people are talking about.

*LZ:* And what do you think happens to them when they grow up?

*Tina:* They won’t learn anything.

*LZ:* What if they were in a school that taught in both English and Chinese? Would they still not learn anything?

*Tina:* [hesitates]

*LZ:* Maybe a little bit?

*Tina:* Maybe...

Tina believes that she cannot learn without English and simultaneously trivializes her native language. She can very clearly state the use and importance of English, but as for her own native language she is uncertain. This is contrasted with the notion that all of the children held of English as just another language. No language was more important than another, and yet knowledge can only be passed on in English. This exemplifies “the right to

maintain rights of disposition” (Harris 1993). This means Whites are given the right to decide what is knowledge, what is important and what ideals and narratives to privilege.

Here, Ian shares Tina’s views about English.

*LZ:* What do you think happens to students that can’t learn English?

*Ian:* They would just be stuck with the same language and they can’t communicate with the teacher. You can’t communicate with the American teacher. And if you have a math problem on your paper, you can’t do it. You can’t do anything. You won’t understand it. You won’t even understand times. You will only understand addition or stuff like that.

*LZ:* So, they would just be stuck with a very low level of education.

*Ian:* Yeah.

Ian uses English to negotiate with people in positions of power. Simultaneously, he understands English as a language that dictates intelligence and the ability to learn. This reinforces the way English (read: Whiteness) maintains the rights of disposition by decreeing what knowledge is transferred.

Ian, originally a bit of a troublemaking in the class, is now one of the most attentive students in class and a top reader, likely the product of Ms. Cheng’s unwavering support. Last year, he tested into the “mainstream” classes. Soon afterward, Ian lost his father to cancer and began to disrupt class and bully other students. After a year of behavioral problems in a mainstream classroom, he was placed back into a SEI class. For Ian, being placed back into an SEI class had little to do with language ability and more to do with discipline. Somehow being an SEI student was meant to serve as a punishment for Ian. This can only be understood if SEI has a stigma attached to it. This is an example of “the right to status and reputation” in relation to race in school (Harris 1993). A White student that is unruly is not a reflection of his or her race. Conversely, when Ian began to be disruptive in class this was understood as a marker of all ELLs. As a result, he was placed back into an

SEI class and back to preparing for the White mainstream he apparently was not ready for. At Hillside, mainstream English classes have a normative status that SEI classes do not. Ian's nonconformity is punished by taking away the status he gained when he was moved into mainstream classes. English (Whiteness) is given supreme status while programs that are deemed of Color are defamed.

Looking back on my field notes, I noticed that I'd written down every single time Ms. Cheng translated for her students. My fastidious tracking of her usage of Chinese (usually Cantonese) in class had less to do with being thorough and more to do with my general excitement of hearing my home language used in a formal classroom setting. In the four months of my observations, she translated a total of nine times. As I explained before, Hillside does not have a typical SEI program. Instead of being limited for one year of SEI instruction, as a language institute, Hillside ELLs are allowed up to five years of SEI instruction. As a result, by the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Ms. Cheng's class was, from my perspective, quite good at speaking English. Nonetheless, in times of confusion, a translation was helpful in getting the whole class to understand what was being taught. For these SEI students, hearing Ms. Cheng speak their home language was almost punitive, a reminder of their status and difference.

English is elevated to the point of being the most important skill taught in school, eclipsing all other subjects in the minds of the students I interviewed. While interviewing Justin, I asked him how he would go about teaching ELLs. Essentially, his answer was that the students needed to be taught English before learning any other subject.

*LZ:* Why is English more important? English is more important than math?

*Justin:* Yes.

*LZ:* So, would they learn the other subjects after they learn English?

*Justin:* No, like Mandarin, no.

*LZ:* They should learn English before other subjects though?

*Justin:* Yeah, because like, everybody should know English.

Justin not only stresses that English is more important than learning other subjects, but he also acknowledges that students stripped of their native language may not be able to reacquire it. This incident may also be interpreted as Justin saying that students do not need to learn Chinese (Mandarin) because they already know it, but within the context of the interview, Justin had just explained that “it’s too hard now” to learn Chinese after exposure to English-only classrooms. Justin’s main point is that English needs to be learned first before other subjects can be taught. English masking for Whiteness uses the “right of disposition” – the right to make decisions to confer property on others – to decide what is legitimate knowledge. Moreover, only through English can this knowledge be passed on. Understanding knowledge as form of racialized property and property as right, knowledge becomes a racialized right. For Justin, attempting to fit into White norms by learning English has cost him the gradual loss of his native language. Accepting that English is the vessel for knowledge not only devalues Justin’s native language, but also excludes him from knowledge conferred on those that fit White linguistic norms thereby racially devaluing him. This loss and trivializing of the native language is also a constant theme throughout the interviews. Mia, on the other hand, is more comfortable speaking Chinese (Mandarin), but nonetheless prefers being taught in English.

*LZ:* What language are you more comfortable with?

*Mia:* Mandarin

*LZ:* So, if you’re more comfortable with Mandarin would you like it if Ms. Cheng taught this class in Mandarin? Or do you like it in English?

*Mia:* English

*LZ:* Do you think if Ms. Cheng used Mandarin in class everyday, would you learn faster?

*Mia:* No

*LZ:* Why not?

*Mia:* Because, I know Mandarin already.

Despite being more fluent in and comfortable with Chinese (Mandarin), Mia does not want Ms. Cheng to teach in English because she assumes that using Chinese (Mandarin) in class will only result in the learning of Chinese (Mandarin) and not other subjects. This logic of only learning the language used to teach rather than learning the content either does not apply to English or the idea of only learning English in school does not bother Mia. Either way Chinese does not have the value of English. Mia has absorbed the dominant narrative and views herself from the dominant perspective. Williams (1991) writes,

What complicates this structure of thought insofar as racism is concerned, however is that the distancing does not stop with the separation of the white self from the black other. In addition, the cultural domination of blacks by whites means that the black self is placed at a distance even from itself... So blacks in a white society are conditioned from infancy to see in themselves only what others, who despise them, see (p. 62).

To bring Williams quote back to Mia, Mia tries to distance herself from her own native language and has been taught to view her native language as an inferior language to English. Mia shows that she has internalized this idea by explaining that using Chinese in class only teaches Chinese, an undesirable skill to begin with, and no content. Most importantly, using Chinese prevents her from learning English – a skill that she believes connects her to all knowledge. Like Mia, Sarah also trivializes her native language.

*LZ:* Do you think learning English is important?

*Sarah:* Yeah

*LZ:* Why is it important?

*Sarah:* So, you can learn different language. So, you can know what to speak when they ask you a question.

*LZ:* Is learning Chinese important?

*Sarah:* Mhmm...

*LZ:* It is important? Why is it important?

*Sarah:* [pause]

*LZ:* Why do *you* think it's important?

*Sarah:* When people don't know English and they talk Chinese and you can talk Chinese to them

Sarah is quick to explain how English helps her respond to people in positions of power. Throughout Sarah's interview, she equated "English-speaker" with "American" or "White," so her use of the word "they" can be read as "White American." Once again, race and language are equated with citizenship and thus humanity as well. She is hesitant about what Chinese is good for and eventually settles with a definition that still keeps English in the center. Chinese is for "people who don't know English." She very clearly trivializes her own language by labeling it as the language spoken by non-English speakers or non-Americans. As language is attached to humanity, the trivialization of her native language is also an understanding that her language does not afford her humanity the way English does. Language, as Sarah shows, is deeply imbedded in U.S. conceptions of citizenship and humanity.

Like Chinese is abnormal compared to the norm of English, Williams suggests that race within the scheme of Whiteness, is seen as a problem. In other words, if we understand the notion of Whiteness as normal, then any person who is not White is abnormal. For example, considering polite, White social norms, it is ill-mannered to see when someone is different, abnormal, or not White. Therefore it is better to feign

colorblindness, than to notice that people of Color are different or not White (Dixon & Rousseau 2005). When students begin to internalize this shame or sense of abnormality, colorblindness can result in a dismissal of their own worth.

Despite the fact that languages other than English, especially Chinese (Cantonese, in particular), form an important strength of linguistic diversity and capital, Hillside Elementary is a school that inherently masks this facet of Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) in favor of normative English. By prohibiting non-English languages the “right to use and enjoyment,” (Harris, 1993) Hillside’s actions deny the community a positive public identity, leading community dis-identification to the extent of what Perea calls “death by English” (1995). It shows the racist refusal to embrace multiracial, multilingual, and multicultural members in a society ruled by dominant White ideals and English domination. By masking the hierarchical set-up of language by describing English as just another language, students like Mia (below) are left internalizing the colorblind ideology of merit.

*LZ:* Do you think learning English is important?

*Mia:* Yeah

*LZ:* Why is it important?

*Mia:* Because, if you don’t learn English, when you grow up you don’t understand what other people are talking about and... um... when you go to college, other people will talk to you in English and you don’t understand other people are talking about so, you can’t talk to other people.

[...]

*LZ:* How will learning English in school help you?

*Mia:* Get smarter.

Mia associates English with higher education and intelligence. By associating English with college and intelligence Mia acknowledges the innate inferiority of her native language and the “natural” superiority of English. At the same time, Mia believes that learning English evens the playing field and will allow her acceptance in and into college. Her understanding incorporates the colorblind idea of a neutral baseline that protects White privilege.

#### *5.4 Consequences*

In this section I look at the consequences of internalizing everything discussed so far in the chapter, from the notion that English is just another language to the trivializing of native languages and the understanding of English as the language of knowledge. To do this I use the example of Justin.

*LZ:* Do you like being in a class with other Chinese American students?

*Justin:* We speak English, too.

Justin automatically counters the perceived notion that all Chinese American students don't speak English. This response typifies how English has “the right to status and reputation” (Harris 1993) that Chinese does not as well as shows the relationship between race and language. Justin, aware of the consequences of not fitting into the White norm, attempts to protect himself from being deemed “other” while simultaneously becoming a victim of it.

By attempting to protect himself by internalized the dominant narrative, Justin has tried to separate himself from his home knowledge, culture and language. Earlier, I quoted Justin saying, “Everyone should know English.” In order to fit into this White norm, Justin is forced to distance himself from his own family.

*LZ:* Do you speak to your parents in Chinese? Do they speak English?

*Justin:* Mhmm... very little English. My mom speaks a little bit and my dad speaks a little bit more and my grandma speaks like this, "HELLO! GOODBYE! GOODNIGHT!"  
[laughter]

This distancing and mockery from his parents and grandmother can be understood as a way to protect himself from having to deal with the way the dominant narrative assaults his self-worth and humanity in relation to his native language. Realizing that his parents and grandmother do not fit into White norms that extol English, Justin sets himself apart from his own family in order to prevent being seen as an "other."

Aside from distancing himself from his own family, Justin also dismisses the importance of his native language. His devaluation of his native language can be understood as a product of dominant narratives omitting and thus dismissing the value of his home knowledge.

*LZ:* Would learning Chinese in school and using it everyday would help you?

*Justin:* I don't like Chinese.

*LZ:* Okay, but do you think it would help you?

*Justin:* Yeah.

*LZ:* What would it help you with?

*Justin:* Talking to your parents.

*LZ:* Is that the only thing?

*Justin:* That's it.

Justin very bluntly states his dislike for his native language. With the constant reminder of its inferiority his feelings are not difficult to comprehend, but the costs of these feelings to the relationship he has with his family and community are not so easily understood or quantified. This devaluation of home knowledge and native language risks psychic violence as Williams explains. "In such an environment, relinquishing the power of

individual ethnical judgment to a collective ideal risks psychic violence, an obliteration of the self through domination by an all-powerful other.... Since the self's power resides in another, little faith is placed in the true self, in one's own experiential knowledge" (1991, p. 63). His distancing of himself from his family as well as his internalization of the inferiority of his native language as nothing more than a connection to a family that he has deemed "other" has all been for his attempt to fit into the White norm. He goes as far as indirectly stating his family has no right to be in the U.S. because of their insufficient English skills.

*LZ:* What do you think happens to students who cannot learn English?

*Justin:* Just make them learn them. Just tell the teacher to tell them the Chinese. If they know Chinese, just tell them the Chinese and then just say it in English and then they'll learn it.

*LZ:* Mmhmm, but what if they can't? What if they just don't learn it?

*Justin:* Just do the same thing over and over again.

*LZ:* Okay, well what if they came to the United States when they were fifteen years old and they only spoke Chinese and they just could not learn English?

*Justin:* They would have to move back to the place where they lived.

*LZ:* You don't think someone could live in America without speaking English?

*Justin:* No... [long pause]... I don't know the answer.

*LZ:* There's no right or wrong answer. Just tell me what you think.

*Justin:* ...I don't know.

Justin explains that non-English speakers do not belong in America despite previously admitting that his parents and grandmother do not speak English well. He believes that it is not possible to live in the U.S. without upholding White norms. He simultaneously contradicts colorblindness and accepts it. During the interview, he, like his classmates, explained that all languages are equal in importance, but when pressed about what happens to an individual that cannot learn English he contradicts this. English is the language that dictates acceptance into the U.S. By accepting the contradictory nature of

colorblindness, Justin internalizes the dismissal of his language, culture and worth, and also struggles with how to interpret his own humanity. This internalization led him to indirectly admit his family's "otherness" and to go as far as saying they should "move back to where they lived." This statement sound remarkably similar to the overtly racist comment, "Go back to China." To say this of his own family shows the extent of the psychic violence inflicted upon Justin through policies of English-only.

## 6 Conclusion

The history of bilingual education in the United States tells us that the heart of the debate has not been about what works for the best of the students. In the case of bilingual education policy, instead of considering the educational needs of ELLs, many times the language policy was established for political reasons and, more importantly, based on dominant White American hostility against immigrants, and in particular, immigrants of Color. The idea of Americanizing new immigrants was evident throughout the history of the United States. With every flux of immigration into the U.S., there has always been antagonism against new languages and new cultures and attempts to keep the “American way” such as the English-only movement.

One of the main tenets of CRT is the need to evaluate law within a historical context. Therefore, the English education policy for ELLs must be understood in the context of race and the social climate against immigrants in our society. Under the heavy emphasis of preserving normative, unmarked and unnamed White American culture, including English, ELLs receive a message that says English is the only valuable language in the U.S. and in order to live as respected members of U.S. society, to have their citizenship acknowledged, and to own their humanity, they need to acquire English even at the cost of losing their native language. Here, the colorblind ideology once again protects, privileges and disguises White supremacy. English is positioned as a “neutral baseline” and taught to ELLs in their “best interest” when in reality White norms, like English, are being elevated as the ideal. This perspective is inherently contradictory, both recognizing the linguistic diversity in the U.S., while simultaneously allowing the domination of only the White norm of English. But,

as we witnessed in the case study, enforcing English-only programs without respecting minority students' native language and culture harm their sense of self-worth and could lead to an inadequate understanding of both languages. It is also important to remember that students will not learn English because they are required to do so but instead when they receive quality instruction under appropriate learning conditions. For example, without providing the necessary resources, such as proper instructional measures, requiring them to achieve English fluency will stay as an unattainable goal that will result in more sanctions and loss of school funding under NCLB. When the fundamental principles of inequity remain unrecognized and uncontested in everyday practices as well as in educational and reform policies, inequitable ideologies and practices become normalized and rationalized as appropriate and necessary actions in these everyday practices across educational settings. In order to contest these practices and their historical antecedents and present incarnations the inequity, often masked, must first be made visible. A CRT framework and analysis can help make such inequities perceptible by examining how Whiteness as property and colorblindness masks White supremacy and establishes it as the status quo.

Opposition against immigrants in the U.S. is manifested through the strong hostility against non-English languages (Massey 1995). For people of Color, becoming a part of the "we" in America then means crossing barriers of not only race but also language. The ideology of the Unz Initiatives and NCLB will not help lessen this struggle, and the English-only movement has only exacerbated the problems. Under such circumstances, educating ELLs becomes an even greater challenge because it is without institutional support, and ELL students are left with messages of their inferiority. These messages are not

insignificant. The simple valuing of English over their native languages has profound implications as discussed above. In this context valuing English results in a form of fear.

Patricia Williams writes about valuing White culture:

I know this valuing is a form of fear. I am afraid of being alien and suspect, of being thrown out at any moment; I am relieved when I am not. At the same time, I am enraged by the possibility of this subsurface drama-waiting-to-happen.... And also at the same time I am embarrassed by all these feelings, ashamed to reveal in them the truth of my insignificance.... I can't pretend it doesn't bother me; it eats me alive.... Frequently such emptiness is reiterated by a hole in language, a gap in the law, or a chasm of fear (1991, p. 129).

Williams' description of her fear is reminiscent of Ms. Cheng's students sitting in the hallway, trying to learn about English colonists, and disappearing into the crowd. Looking back at the incident that led me to write this thesis, I think back to my very first question: Why couldn't I *see* my students? My initial answer to my question was that in order for the students to be seen, they must first be fully recognized. Looking back at the history of bilingual education policy, a pervading theme has been one of deficiency. ELLs are considered "deficient" or "not whole" in the sense that they lack English skills. And, regarding or reifying English as the norm in educational settings constructs these students as "abnormal." Thus, the recognition of the wholeness of ELLs is the first step toward a solution.

I now know the history behind their education and I have analyzed the effects, but what about the solution? What changes must be made so that they are no longer invisible to even those that care for them? What action can be taken to remedy the long history of inadequate education? It is not within the purview of my work to recommend policy, but my thesis shows there are several changes that need to be made in the creation of bilingual

education policy in order to address current inequity and redress past inequity. The first step, as I've said before, is certainly the simple recognition of ELLs not in the lens of deficit, but rather in the lens of community cultural wealth (Yosso 2005). Community cultural wealth functions to transform the types of knowledges (in this case a particular emphasis on language) considered valuable within a society (Yosso 2005). In order to progress, policy must exceed the more conventional boundaries of recognition to the point of de-centering the dominant narrative, in this case the privileging of English over other languages. CRT is helpful in both addressing current and past injustices because it both contradicts dominant ideas of colorblindness by working within a framework that privileges narratives from people of Color and acknowledges the history that has led to the construction of Whiteness as property and the maintenance of White supremacy. In this vein, I believe the first step toward a more 'equal' education for ELLs is valuing their experience – acknowledging their needs, valuing their linguistic abilities and home knowledge, and connecting them to rather than othering them from the larger education structure.

To begin working toward this, it is imperative to use the CRT tool of counter-storytelling in decisions regarding the education of ELLs. The privileging of the voices of people of Color is necessary to de-center the status quo of Whiteness. This thesis makes a case for the importance of these methods as well as the importance of research regarding bilingual education policy and the implications of policy for students beyond standardized test results. This thesis, as an initial inquiry into the relationships among language, race, and power, is complete and has revealed many possible consequences for students whose native language is not English. One of the more devastating consequences is the destruction

of self-worth for ELLs in regards to their native languages, culture and family. Future research is needed to expand upon the case study with more student interviews for depth. For a comparative analysis future research should include ELLs from different linguistic backgrounds. The larger outcomes that emerge from this study are our understanding of how and in what ways are bilingual education policies raced, the implications for students, and recommendations for future research, policies and practices.

The pervasive nature of racism within U.S. society is well demonstrated in the theories and practices of bilingual education policy. Recognizing these structural forces that are so entrenched within schooling and communities should be considered a call to action for the reevaluation of bilingual education policy and other language reforms that have lacked the power and vision for thorough change that provides true equal educational opportunities to students from all linguistic backgrounds. Racism lies at the root of a long history of bilingual education and other language policies, particularly the English-only movement. Racism, as I have discussed previously, is not defined as an individually pathologized act of discrimination, but as a collective, structural, and institutionalized ideology that is pervasive and endemic to American life (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Matsuda et al, 1993). This role that racism plays must be given continued scrutiny and deconstruction. Racism in bilingual education policy needs to be deconstructed in order to de-center the norms and values it attempts to write upon these students and in order to make equal education possible.

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