PUBLIC EDUCATION’S ROLE IN DEVELOPING GLOBAL CITIZENS:
A COMPARISON BETWEEN CHARTER SCHOOL AND TRADITIONAL
SCHOOL PEDAGOGY

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A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
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In Partial Fulfillment
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Master of Arts
in
Anthropology

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by
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SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY

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For those who fight for the right to quality, bilingual education.
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Public Education’s Role in Developing Global Citizens: A Comparison Between Charter School and Traditional School Pedagogy
by
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Master of Arts in Anthropology
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Parental involvement in schools has been shown to positively impact a student’s attitude and academic performance. Children of recent migrants to the U.S. tend to experience the least amount of parental integration into their school life for a variety of reasons. Most research points to language barriers, cultural differences in adult participation in children’s school life, and conflicts with work schedules as the primary reasons. These issues indicate that an improved method of communicating, as well as mitigating the need to physically come to campus, should form the focus on outreach campaigns intended to integrate immigrant parents. Recent innovations in technology have allowed schools to use various forms of social media to bridge the communication gap, but little has been written about its successes and limitations. My study offers contrasting observations between a traditional elementary school in the San Diego Unified School District and a bilingual charter school in the greater San Diego area. I employed participant-observation at two schools, along with open-ended surveys, in-depth interviews, and an analysis of bilingual education literature. My research participants (N=25) consisted of teachers (N=7), parents (N=13), and students (N=5). The objectives of my research were: (1) to assess the effects of language barriers between immigrant parents and teachers at two elementary schools in the San Diego area; (2) to establish an initial discussion on the impact that school-based social networking sites may have in closing the gap on parental involvement among immigrant parents and their children’s schools; and (3) to investigate the influence of the role of language or cultural broker on the subjectivity of fourth grade students. In working with immigrant parents and bicultural students, I employed the paradigm of subjectivity to uncover the particular sentiments of parents, youth, and teachers as they navigate the technological, cultural and linguistic barriers and how these sentiments frame broader interactions. My thesis project contributes to research on the effects of bilingual education on a child’s elementary school life, children’s negotiation of an adult role (interpreter) at a young age, and evaluates the use of academic networking sites for bridging communication between immigrant parents and teachers.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

El que sabe dos idiomas vale por dos.
One that knows two languages is worth two. (Spanish Proverb)

In the United States, Spanish is by far the most spoken non-English language, with more than 37 million speakers (U.S. Census Bureau 2011). Many Spanish speakers are also bilingual, with estimates reporting that close to 10 percent of the U.S. population speaks both Spanish and English (Grosjean 2012). Bilingualism is defined as the ability to speak two different languages at a minimal level of competency (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2008). By using this definition, someone who is bilingual might be able to fluently speak and write in their native language but only converse on simple topics and have little to no writing skills in their second language. On the other side of the spectrum, a “dormant” bilingual person may be capable of advanced discussion in the second language, and while they may still understand their native language, be unable to express any sophisticated thoughts in it (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2008:151). Rarer is a balanced bilingual speaker, capable of speaking, reading, and writing in more than one language at a native-level. Language acquisition is a fluid and complex process that depends upon the opportunities and exposure to multiple languages and cultures. Places such as Brazil, Germany, Spain, Canada, and the United States are multicultural locations that provide opportunities for many citizens to become multilingual, but usually through household or neighborhood interactions.

Latinos are currently the largest immigrant group in the United States. In this thesis, I use the term “Latino/a” to refer to a geographically diverse group from Latin America. According to the 2013 American Community Survey, over 41 million immigrants live in the U.S., with 46 percent of immigrants reported having Latino or Hispanic origins (Zong and Batalova 2015). Of the 41.3 million immigrants, an estimated 11.1 million are undocumented immigrants (U.S. Department of Homeland Security [USDHS] 2011). Approximately 30% of
all U.S. immigrants were born in Mexico (Passel et al. 2012). As an ethnic group, Latinos make up 16.8 percent of the United States population, and they account for over 38.2 percent of the residents in California (U.S. Census Bureau 2012a). Moving beyond percentages in order to better appreciate the impact of the Latino/a population, more than 53 million of the nation’s citizens are Latinos, with roughly 1 in 6 people self-identifying as people of Latin American descent. This culturally heterogeneous community has influenced legislation, culture, and education in America; however, U.S. national policies have rarely supported bilingual education and second language learning for non-English speakers has been based on a sink-or-swim mentality.

Immigrant education, and subsequent bilingual education, has had a long history of controversy in this country. Educational policies such as the Bilingual Education Act, California Proposition 227, and the No Child Left Behind Act have had radical effects on the education of English Language Learners (ELLs) and bilingual children. Many public schools struggle with how to support students in their language acquisition due to laws that quite literally prohibit bilingualism, choosing instead full English immersion. According to reports by the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs in the U.S. Department of Education, less than one in five teachers who serve non-English speaking students are officially certified to teach them (Hirsh and Lays 1998). In response to a lack of political, federal, or state support for bilingual education, charter schools have emerged as a distinctive choice.

In recent years, the number of charter schools in the U.S. has reached record-breaking proportions. California currently has the highest number of charter schools in the country, with over 1,130 schools (California Charter School Association [CCSA] 2013g). For the 2011-12 school year, charter schools accounted for 10.11% of all public schools in California (California Department of Education [CDE] 2013). The national percentage of charter schools to public schools for that same year was 5.8%, which demonstrates California’s growth in the charter sector (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools 2014). San Diego County has 121 charter schools (CCSA 2013c). Charter schools represent a significant change in California education, as they are public, tuition-free, and have open enrollment. Charter schools are able to create innovative curriculum, hire specialty faculty, and encourage parental involvement. California charter schools are viewed as effective because
they have demonstrated higher academic success, based on the Academic Performance Index (API) (CCSA 2013d). They are schools that are often managed by non-profit public benefit corporations and community organizations (CCSA 2013d). Since charter schools are designed and operated by local communities, rather than a central bureaucracy, they are able to revamp the public school system in ways that suit the needs of the families they serve.

Bilingual charter schools are an alternative to traditional public schools for binational and/or bicultural families who want their children to attend schools that support their cultural identity, community, and heritage as well as for those families that wish their children to be bilingual and bicultural in a culture other than their own. The term “binational” refers to individuals who belong to, or relate to, two different countries or nations. “Bicultural” (n.d.) is defined by Merriam-Webster as “of, relating to, or including two distinct cultures”. Based on the work of Alejandro Portes and Rubén G Rumbaut (2001), I use “bicultural” to refer to not only immigrants, but also to the children of immigrants because they often gain proficiency in their heritage culture at home. The concept of biculturalism may also be significant for 3+ generation immigrants, when their heritage culture is maintained. Bicultural has traditionally been defined in terms of cultural behaviors; however, cultural experiences, values, and identifications should also be taken into consideration (Schwartz and Unger 2010).

Research on the development of bilingual charter schools is an emerging topic and one that carries useful insight into the future of heritage language instruction. My research adds to this conversation by investigating practices employed by elementary school staff to engage with Spanish-speaking parents and bilingual children. My study contributes to research on immigrant education by examining techniques used by teachers and administrators at two different elementary school sites to promote parental involvement among Spanish-speaking parents. I review known literature on the history of bilingual education in the United States of America and educational policies related to language and Latino/a immigrants. I employ the theoretical paradigm of subjectivity as outlined by João Biehl et al. (2007), as well as Tanya Marie Luhrmann (2006) in order to describe the everyday experiences of immigrant parents and bilingual children in the San Diego and El Cajon public school system.
My study investigates the effects of dual-language instruction on the attitudes of fourth graders at a bilingual charter school. I explore the effects of communication, or the lack thereof, between Spanish-speaking Latino/a parents and elementary school staff, and I discuss the implementation of significant changes that occurred because of shifts in bilingual education policy in California. My thesis project offers contrasting observations between a traditional elementary school in the San Diego Unified School District and a bilingual charter school in the greater San Diego area. I argue that it is important to elaborate on how divergent the public school practices are between traditional and charter schools and the way in which charter schools are able to create fresh curriculum, hire specialized staff, and utilize resources to address the needs of local communities. I will explore the potential reasons why a particular charter school in the San Diego area has been shown to be more successful than traditional public schools in regards to academic performance and standardized testing.

According to the CCSA (2013g), charter schools get results because they have more flexibility with resources such as budget and staffing. Charter schools hire teachers independently and are able to create curriculum that is tailored to a specific mission or motif. These schools are held to a higher level of accountability because they are reviewed and renewed every five years; these reviews also allow them to make immediate adjustments in order to better serve students’ needs. An important distinction between charter schools and the centralized governance of public schools is that charter schools are required to act immediately and respond to suggestions or be faced with the loss of their charter status. While this can be difficult at times, it also ensures that changes are made quickly whereas public schools are much slower to respond to negative reviews, as there is little threat to their existence or even funding. Charter schools empower teachers to make decisions regarding curriculum and pedagogy to directly benefit students. Additionally, parents tend to work as a team with teachers to boost their child’s academic success at charter schools because they are active members of the schools advisory body.

Research has shown that charter school students are more academically successful than students in traditional public schools, particularly among disadvantaged students. In regards to overall student achievement targets on state tests during the 2009-10 school year (the most current data), 67 percent of charter schools met the goals, while only 57 percent of non-charter schools did so (CCSA 2013f). Among disadvantaged students, 74 percent of
those enrolled in charter schools met student achievement targets, compared to only 59 percent of students in non-charter schools. Charter schools that serve low-income populations are more likely to be high performing and are able to better serve students of color who tend to be the majority within the category of ‘disadvantaged students’; for example, research has demonstrated that for the past five years African-American students have had higher academic performance in charter schools than traditional public schools (CCSA 2013a). Charter schools are able to close gaps regarding achievement in low-income neighborhoods because they have a clear mission statement, cater to students’ diverse needs, include parents as partners in students’ education and focus on critical thinking skills (CCSA 2013a). This has become most evident in two of the most diverse schools districts in California, the Los Angeles Unified School District and Oakland Unified School District, where charter schools are outperforming non-charter schools in student achievement (CCSA 2013a).

Unlike many private schools, charter schools are free and have open enrollment, which is the reason why they are considered public schools. When enrollment reaches capacity, charter schools are required by law to hold a public lottery. This means that the prospect of attending, if spaces are full, is random and by chance. These open enrollment policies allow charter schools to serve diverse student populations. According to demographic data from the 2012-13 school year, 47 percent of California charter students are Latino/a, 32 percent are White, 10 percent are African American, 4 percent are Asian, and the remaining 7 percent fall under other categories (Indigenous and Multi-racial) (CCSA 2013b). In San Diego, during the 2012-13 school year, there were 18,126 students enrolled in charter schools. Latinos were the most represented group at 53 percent of reported students. African Americans made up 14 percent, Asians represented 4 percent, Whites were 21 percent, and Other was 8 percent (CCSA 2013c). This data represents the diversity and yet predominately Latin American student population in San Diego schools.

Open enrollment also means that charter schools are held accountable to the families and to the local school district they serve. Families make the choice to enroll their children in charter schools, and if they are dissatisfied with the school, they are able to disenroll. Unlike a traditional public school, if a charter school neglects its academic responsibilities they run the risk of low enrollment and thus budget cuts. A charter school in that position would then
have to close its doors or make significant changes in order to remain open. In this way, charter schools are held responsible to the students, families, and community that they serve.

Charter schools often receive less federal and state funding than district-run public schools for a multitude of reasons. The Legislative Analyst’s Office published a report in January 2012 that showed that charter schools receive at least 7 percent less financing than traditional schools (CCSA 2013e). This is because charter schools do not have the same access to local parcel taxes and bonds (CCSA 2013e). Another reason for this gap is that charter schools often have to use resources from their operating funds in order to rent facilities. Lastly, charter schools have been negatively impacted by the California state budget crisis because they do not have access to low-cost financing as school districts do (CCSA 2013e). Charter school’s resources may also affect teacher compensation. On average, traditional public schools pay slightly higher salaries than charter or private schools (Kowal et al. 2007). The starting base salary at charter schools, however, is slightly higher than traditional schools (Kowal et al. 2007). While charter schools may have slightly less resources than traditional public schools, they have been successful in creating an environment that encourages parental involvement and academic performance in local communities.

My thesis project is geographically linked to the San Diego area in California. This is important because of California’s predominantly Latino/a population and exponential growth in the number of charter schools. San Diego’s proximity to the U.S./Mexico border also marks it as a dynamic place of migration. As the Latino/a population continues to grow in Southern California, public education policy continues to shift in order to reflect changes in political power. There is a significant need to address the concerns of bicultural and bilingual families, particularly Mexican-American, when exploring issues related to bilingual education.

I employed a highly qualitative methodology in order to address my primary research question: What challenges or opportunities arise from parent-teacher communication at a bilingual charter school when compared to a traditional elementary school? I employed participant-observation in both a charter and public primary school along with open-ended surveys, in-depth interviews, and an analysis of bilingual education literature. My interview population consisted of teachers (N=7), parents (N=13), and students (N=5). My research
allowed me to better understand the effects of shared language or language barriers on the subjectivity of Mexican-American elementary students, Spanish-speaking parents, and the teachers that serve them.

My research questions were developed in order to investigate issues related to parental involvement, bilingual education, and communication. The questions were designed to be broad enough to encompass differences and similarities between a bilingual charter school and a traditional public elementary school. The emotional responses of participants were emphasized to invoke the paradigm of subjectivity. The qualitative nature of the following additional research questions reflected the open-ended questions that were asked during surveys and interviews; Does a bilingual environment encourage parental involvement among Spanish-speaking parents? What effects do parent-teacher language barriers in the SDUSD have on parental involvement? In what ways are Mexican-American children’s subjectivities influenced by their role as a language or cultural broker? Are immigrant parents aware of school-based social networking sites in Spanish? How can advancements in technology and social networking sites facilitate communication between Mexican parents and teachers? How effective are they? Do school-based social networking sites encourage parental involvement in elementary schools among Mexican immigrant families?

A primary weakness of the research is the low number of participants, a result of numerous factors that are outlined in the Methodology chapter of this thesis. Longer-term research on this topic is necessary to fully grasp the differences in these two types of educational institution, especially as it relates to student achievement.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

I developed the research study around the theoretical framework of subjectivity because I wanted to focus on the qualitative responses and lived experience of participants, rather than quantitative measures such as students’ test scores or performance. Subjectivity is the lens through which I came to understand the attitudes and perceptions of educators, parents, and students in relation to their language attainment, involvement, and communication. I employ the paradigm of subjectivity based on the works of João Biehl, Byron Good, and Arthur Kleinman, in addition to Tanya Marie Luhrmann in order to ground my research within ethnographic data. According to Luhrmann (2006), “‘subjectivity’ is a term loosely used by anthropologists to refer to the shared inner life of the subject, to the way subjects feel, respond, experience” (345). Homi K. Bhabha’s (1994) concept of hybridity addresses issues related to the way in which bilingual children act as cultural and language brokers for their families. Bhabha’s work provides a more nuanced understanding of how language becomes a mode of domination by the dominant speakers and how second and subsequent generations become brokers between the dominant and the marginalized. This literature review also examines research related to parental involvement and technology trends in the U.S. Education system to connect these issues to the experience of Mexican and Mexican-American parents and children. I offset this theory with investigations on issues related to bilingual education, immigrant parental involvement, and technological advances in school-based social networking. Through the literature review I provide an overview of the history of bilingual education in the United States, with a specific emphasis on attitudes in the Southwest. I analyze the impact of important education legislation, such as California Proposition 227 and the No Child Left Behind Act to provide a foundation for conceptualizing how federal and state policies influence current bilingual programs and public schools. I summarize research on language status in Latino/a educational attainment.
and explore the potential impact of maintenance programs on students in border regions. This literature review also examines research related to parental involvement and technology trends in the U.S. Education system to connect these issues to the experience of Mexican and Mexican-American parents and children.

**Bilingual Education in the United States of America**

Bilingual education has gone through many transitions in the United States. It has been favored and disfavored throughout American history, being seen as a threat to the US at times and at other times a skill and a right in this country. The policies and subjects under focus have ranged and have included non-English speaking immigrants, the suppression of Native American languages, new waves of immigrants during the 1900s, the backlash on immigration during World Wars I and II, a progressive period during the 1960s, and the passage of California Proposition 227 among many other such policies across the US. Today bilingual education continues to be a controversial issue and is currently cloaked as a budgetary issue as well as a primary obstacle to US global dominance in education.

Bilingualism began in the United States with the influx of immigrants from countries outside of England. Colonial America was a sanctuary for many people who left their country due to discrimination or prejudice. An atmosphere of “general tolerance and acceptance existed towards multilingualism” during the late 16th century (Field 2011:164). Heritage languages were often encouraged as a way to maintain cultural affiliation and to bring immigrant communities together. During the 1800s, most immigrant groups set up bilingual schools after they settled into communities (Allen 2006).

Bilingual education was originally at the discretion of local neighborhoods because there was no official government involvement during the Colonial period. In places with large populations of minority groups, heritage languages were taught in both the classroom and at home. Communities that had less minority influence often times only offered monolingual English education. Many of the successful bilingual schools were parochial schools, operated by immigrants from Germany, France, and Scandinavia (Crawford 2000). Bilingual education was a parental prerogative, and “the right of the parental choice has been
revered as a political principal” (Crawford 2000:101). Often times these schools were taught in the heritage language with English instruction offered as a subject.

Although many of America’s colonists were relatively accepting of new immigrant groups, there has been was a historical fear of Germans in the United States. This began when large settlements were established in Pennsylvania. English neighbors were nervous that they were being outnumbered and that the Pennsylvania Dutch, who were German, would take over. Benjamin Franklin noted this rise in German demographics and believed that they may Germanize the English instead of the other way around (Crawford 1992b; Field 2011). At the time, it was perceived that the German settlers were unwilling to assimilate or to adapt to their new American culture and language. It is important to note that neither German nor any other foreign language has ever been a serious challenge to English (Field 2011). However, that fact has not been able to quell the fear or feelings of prejudice many have developed towards immigrants and their respective languages.

Cities such as St. Louis, Milwaukee, Indianapolis, Cincinnati, and Baltimore ran bilingual programs during the middle of the 1800s (Crawford 1995, 2000:100; Field 2011:164). Ohio permitted instruction in German in 1839, if parents requested it. By 1847, Louisiana passed legislation that approved bilingual education in French and English. In the 1870s, the St. Louis school superintendent, William T. Harris, advocated for bilingual education as a way to promote the development of public education over parochial schools. Harris, who became the United States Commissioner of Education, helped develop one of America’s first kindergarten classes in order to aid in the transition for German immigrant children (Kohlbrenner 1951). He was successful in his mission as demonstrated by the number of German American children in public schools, which rose from 20 percent to 80 percent during his tenure (Crawford 2000:101). Many circumstances allowed for bilingual education to be successful during this time period, particularly America’s generally positive feelings towards immigrants. Immigrant groups were seen as internally homogenous, rather than diverse.

Most of the schools that catered to bilingual education were located in the rural Midwest, rather than large urban centers, which meant that communities were often only dealing with one or two immigrant groups at most. These bilingual programs were seen as a way to help children transition into American society. Furthermore, bilingual education often
occurred out of necessity in places such as California, New Mexico, Louisiana, and northern New England because many of the newly available teachers were not fully fluent in English (Crawford 2000:100). For instance, after German immigrants settled in New Braunfels, Texas in the 1850s, they opened up schools that were taught mostly in German (Crawford 2000:100).

The education of Native Americans was a much more contentious part of American history. Beginning in 1617, Protestants established schools and colleges for Indians and English children throughout New England. Indian education was formally included as provision in a 1794 Treaty with Oneida, Tuscarora, and Stock-bridge (Juneau 2001). During 1794-1874, ninety-five treaties were signed between Indian tribes and the U.S. government regarding federal educational responsibilities (Juneau 2001). Native American tribes were encouraged to send their children to English schools; however, some tribes were able to continue instruction in their heritage language as an addition to English. For example, the Cherokee Nation began a bilingual program, including twenty-one Cherokee-English schools and two academies (Crawford 2000:100). Although the Cherokee bilingual system was successful, it was unfortunately short-lived as a growing anti-Indian movement began to pick up steam in the United States during the 19th century.

It was thought that repressing Native American languages and culture would encourage assimilation into American society. When those methods didn’t work, the mandatory removal of children from Native American households began. In 1819, Congress passed the Indian Civilization Act, which allocated up to $10,000 a year for religious groups to teach Native Americans and develop mission schools. In the late 19th century, the Indian Office decided to expand a system of day and boarding schools outside of the reservation. The first off-reservation boarding school was opened in 1879 in Pennsylvania, known as the Carlisle Indian Industrial School. Masses of Native American children were sent to similar boarding schools, as a way to forcibly assimilate them into U.S. culture.

At these boarding schools, Native children were punished for speaking in their native languages, coerced to dress in “appropriate” American clothing, and compelled to adhere to strict American cultural standards. Boarding schools taught manual labor skills and aided in the elimination of indigenous languages (Kroskrity and Field 2009). These methods were used to isolate Native children from their culture and community in an attempt to create a
generation of indigenous children that would more closely align with the dominant American ideology (Szasz 1998). Many children who were not sent to boarding schools were forced to assimilate through missionary schools, which were usually Protestant or Catholic (Kroskrity and Field 2009). The Bureau of Indian Affairs issued a mandate in 1880 that all schools, including government and missionary-run, could only instruct in English, or would risk losing funding (Kroskrity and Field 2009). The process of eradicating indigenous languages and culture continued for another fifty years until the 1930s, when John Collier was hired as the new Commissioner of Indian Affairs and he invested more resources in Indian schools and allowed the teaching of Native languages (Kroskrity and Field 2009).

The suppression of indigenous languages lasted over a hundred years, effectively aiding in forced assimilation and a loss of traditions. This assault on Native American language, culture, and identity has had long lasting effects on tribes nationwide and this time period in American history has created a legacy of extreme pain and loss. Not all tribes were affected the same way, as the federal government enforced their regulations differently across the United States (Kroskrity and Field 2009). Nonetheless, the federal government’s involvement in Indian education demonstrates some of the injustices that have impacted indigenous communities. The repression of Native American languages is representative of the way in which the political climate has affected bilingual education and bicultural identity. The national narrative of homogeneity and English-only was created during the 19th century and would continue to influence the treatment of immigrants for centuries to come.

As more waves of immigrants entered the United States in the late 19th century, there was even more pressure to conform to American values and ideals. The new influx of immigrants brought more diversity and change to the United States. This created tension and conflicts as immigrants moved in large numbers to urban centers searching for work. Shared language, specifically English, was seen as a way to mediate cultural differences (Field 2011:167). A strong belief in American core values was promoted and included: individualism, morality, and hard work (Field 2011:167). The English-only agenda was constructed when Native-born movements gained popularity.

German was the most spoken minority language during the 19th century and continued to be until 1970 when the federal census determined Spanish had replaced it (U.S. Census 1999). However, the late 1800s saw a backlash against bilingual education and many
cities, including St. Louis and San Francisco, stopped their German instruction. California was admitted into the Union in 1850, and five years later ruled all instruction in the state would be in English. In 1889, public and private schools in Wisconsin and Illinois became English-only (Crawford 1995; Field 2011). German Americans in Wisconsin and Illinois organized against the Republican Party during the next election and successfully repealed the law (Crawford 2000:101). Most bilingual programs received less community support, which was interpreted as the successful assimilation by second and third generations of immigrants. Despite the decline, it was reported in 1900 that over 4 percent of all American children received part or all of their education in German (Crawford 2000:100).

The turn of the century brought Eastern and Southern European immigrants and more than eight million of them immigrated to the U.S. during the first two decades of the 1900s (Field 2011:167). Italians, Jews, Poles, and Slavs were a part of this new influx and often settled in large city centers, such as New York City. These immigrants were seen as culturally and physically different from the immigrants of Northern European (Field 2011:167). The previous groups of immigrants, mostly German and Scandinavian, were phenotypically similar to the English, whereas the new wave brought immigrants who were shorter and darker in appearance (Field 2011). The racial and cultural diversities created tension between citizens and the newcomers, as well as led to structural violence. The new immigrants were segregated into poor areas of cities and came to be ghettos, where immigrant communities had to form their own networks of support as they were excluded from financial opportunities and other social structures and services. Within the ghettos, the newcomers spoke Italian, Russian, Yiddish, and Polish languages and “this may have given fuel to the idea that not every language could be taught” (Field 2011:168). Once again, immigrants were expected to assimilate and speaking English was seen as a main requirement of assimilation.

In 1906, Congress passed the Nationality Act that created the first English-speaking condition as a part of naturalization. Companies and organizations such as the YMCA began to offer English language classes. Henry Ford, among others, made immigrant employees take night classes in order to learn English (Crawford 1992b; Field 2011). Learning English was a significant part of the push for Americanization; however, true assimilation often meant the loss of heritage languages, cultures, and beliefs. Beginning in 1915 English-first
movements gained popularity and were promoted by groups such as the National Americanization Committee (Field 2011:169). English-first was portrayed by community organizations as a means for immigrants and their children to receive fair wages and housing. Liberal activists believed that if the immigrants spoke English, then they would be less likely to be taken advantage of by employers or landlords. Issues related to bilingual education were still debatable until the start of World War I.

World War I was fought mainly in Europe from 1914 to 1918. Germany, the Ottoman Empire, Austria-Hungary, and their allied nations comprised the Central Powers. The opposing side, known as the Entente powers, included France, Russia, Great Britain, and their allies. The United States entered the war in 1917 because of the threat of German submarines and at the urging of Great Britain. Anti-German sentiments rose astronomically and Germans became the target of discrimination and conspiracies (Field 2011:169). At that time, over eight million Americans spoke German (Crawford 1992b; Field 2011). Following America’s entrance into the War, the speaking of German, publicly or privately, was prohibited. As a result, German-English instruction ended in many schools as the usage of German was seen “as a subversive ploy of the German government to undermine national unity” (Field 2011:169).

The abandonment of the German language had long-lasting effects on bilingual education in the United States and many programs became monolingual following WWI. This disavowing of German bilingual education also demonstrates how multilingualism became unacceptable. This speaks to the larger issue of what education is and what type of citizen it produces. America no longer wanted to create citizens that were able to interact with Germans and knowledge of the German language was seen as potentially creating traitors.

Following WWI, English-only instruction became standard and foreign languages were prohibited in the primary grades (Field 2011:170). Teaching Spanish in the schools was outlawed in Texas in 1919 and bilingual children were often punished for speaking their heritage language in school. Punishments such as “Spanish detention” were standard until the late 1960s (Field 2011:192). Only isolated communities in the Midwest continued with bilingual education during the 1920s and 1930s. The fight over foreign languages continued in places such as Nebraska and Hawaii. A 1919 Nebraska law, commonly known as the
Siman Act, had restricted instruction in foreign languages. This act was appealed in 1923 when a teacher, Robert T. Meyer, was discovered teaching a student from a Bible in German. Meyer’s lawyers argued that the Siman Act violated the due process clause of the 14th Amendment. Unfortunately in the court case of Meyer v. Nebraska, the Siman Act was upheld and prejudice over the German language was allowed to continue.

In Hawaii, a similar case arose over the restriction of teaching foreign languages. The Territory of Hawaii had passed a law that made it illegal to teach foreign languages without a permit. A court case, Farrington v. Tokushige, was brought in 1927 and was also a battle over the due process clause of the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments. The outcome was very different than the one on the mainland. The Court unanimously affirmed the lower court and removed the ban on foreign language education. They even added a stipulation that stated, “the Japanese parent has the right to direct the education of his own child without unreasonable restrictions” (Farrington v. Tokushige 1927). Farrington v. Tokushige is an example of a court case that supported bilingual education and took into consideration the legal rights of immigrant parents for their children’s education.

Catastrophes such as the Great Depression and large-scale droughts heavily impacted the economy during 1930s. Immigration slowed and the U.S. was no longer seen as the land of limitless opportunity. Due to anti-Semitism in Europe, millions of Jews began to immigrate to places outside of Europe, including the United States. World War II began in 1939 and America joined in 1942 following the attack on Pearl Harbor. Shortly after, America turned on its foreign-born residents once again and created “War Relocation Camps” for over 110,000 people of Japanese descent. These camps were a way to segregate those of Japanese heritage and to subvert the use of the Japanese language. This is another example of how the US has constructed Otherness through language and culture and initiated a narrative of fear over being different. Similarly to how America treated Native Americans and German-Americans, Japanese-Americans were denied their culture and their language as a way to make them more governable and obedient. America ultimately defeated Japan, but persecuted over a hundred thousand US citizens in the process.

Following WWII was the Baby Boom and America enjoyed a period of economic growth and stability. During the 1940s, there was an expansion of English as a Second Language (ESL) programs. The 1950s was a decade of improved personal and economic
wealth. It was also during this decade that racial segregation in the schools was declared unconstitutional. The monumental case, Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas in 1954, put an end to the “separate but equal” ideology which had racially separated Whites from people of color (Field 2011). While this ruling specifically dealt with education issues related to African-Americans, it opened up barriers for people of color across the United States. Brown v. Board of Education ruled that all public schools must integrate their classrooms (Aguirre 2005). It declared inequality unconstitutional and changed the treatment of ethnic minorities in this country. The ruling was applied to housing, voting rights, employment, transportation and other public services (Aguirre 2005). Many view Brown v. Board of Education as “the most important civil rights case of the past century” (Aguirre 2005:321). This ruling was the beginning of a marked change in human rights in the United States of America.

The 1960s brought the Civil Rights movement, which impacted bilingual education. “This outward shift in attitude also led to more openness towards language minorities” (Field 2011:172). The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 opened up immigration from Latin America and other “Third World” countries (Field 2011). It was also during this time period that Congress decided to create global citizens as a way to compete with nations such as Russia. Congress was inclined to pass legislation that encouraged foreign language instruction (Field 2011). For example, a grant given by the Ford Foundation allowed for the first modern bilingual education program to be opened in Miami, Florida in 1963. It was designed specifically for Spanish-speaking Cubans at Coral Way Elementary School. The program began as “Spanish for Spanish” but with the help of the grant was able to open as the premier bilingual school in the United States. As of 2014 Coral Way is still operational as a bilingual school and has expanded to include a middle school.

The Bilingual Education Act (BEA) was passed in 1968 and it was landmark legislation at the time. Also known as Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), this legislation was the first to recognize the needs of Limited English Speaking Ability (LESA) students. The BEA was designed to help provide federal funding to improve educational programs for limited English speaking students (Field 2011). States such as California and Texas already had similar policies in place; however, this was the first time
that a nation-wide statute was passed. Spanish-speakers initiated the BEA but the legislation addressed all linguistic minorities.

The BEA has been heavily criticized and as a result has undergone many revisions to the legislation (Crawford 2000). One of the major problems of this act was its ambiguity, which allowed for many opposing groups to interpret it differently (Crawford 2000; Field 2011). Politicians viewed it as a means to move LESA students into English-only classrooms as fast as possible. Immigrant parents saw it as a way for their child to have a truly bilingual education. Educators interpreted it as a means to get more funding and support for their bilingual students. Title VII’s unclear intentions and obscure goals created many long-lasting problems for bilingual education in the United States (Crawford 2000:89).

In 1971, the Office of Education added a statement for those applying for Title VII grants that said, “it must be remembered that the ultimate goal of bilingual education is a student who functions well in two languages on any occasion” (Crawford 2000:89). Committee members in Congress did not agree with this sentiment and believed that Title VII was there to help overcome students’ “bilingual problem[s]” (Crawford 2000:89). The budget for Title VII was relatively underfunded with only $7.5 million appropriated for 1969. The funding increased in 1974 to $45 million dollars but this was only enough to support a little over 200 programs nationwide (Crawford 2000:89).

Title VII did not specify if it was going to fund transition or maintenance programs. This is because the difference between transition and maintenance had yet to be established in 1967 (Crawford 2000). Transition refers to a temporary bilingual education that eventually becomes English-only. In contrast, maintenance refers to instruction that is intended to promote fluency in both the native and 2\textsuperscript{nd} languages. Massachusetts was the first state to define their bilingual education as transitional in 1971. Illinois soon followed suit and included a stipulation about LESA students being integrated into regular school curriculum.

The first reports conducted on the impact of the Title VII legislation were not positive and found no significant impact on the students’ overall performance. One of the major drawbacks to the bilingual education program in the U.S. was a lack of competent teachers. As noted earlier, over 50 percent of all “bilingual” teachers were not proficient in their 2\textsuperscript{nd} language (Crawford 2000:90). The primary findings were criticized for not sampling enough
Civil Rights legislation and the BEA called for equal educational opportunities for all children, regardless of their race or language abilities, but only a few school districts obeyed (Crawford 2000:91). There were numerous court cases during the 1970s that opposed discrimination in U.S. schools, in particular for those of Latin American descent. Several districts were brought to court by parents who believed that schools were not addressing their children’s language needs and failing to provide them with an equal education (Crawford 2000:91). *The United States vs. State of Texas et al.* (1971) investigated whether or not the Del Rio and San Felipe School Districts were offering equal educational opportunities for Mexican-American children. This case produced a Federal Court Order, Civil Action 5281, which eliminated discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in both public and private schools in Texas. In 1972, Aspira of New York Inc. brought the Board of Education of the City of New York to court in order to prove that the cultural and linguistic needs of Puerto Ricans and other Latinos were not being fully addressed. The outcome was the development of bilingual programs for New York City school children.

In Colorado, *Keyes vs. Denver School District No. 1* was the first court decision that awarded Latinos the right to attend desegregated schools in 1973. The case decided that school districts were responsible for regulations that resulted in racial segregation, including schools in isolated communities of minorities. The case also compared Latinos to African Americans as “both groups suffer from the same educational inequities when compared with the treatment afforded Anglo students” (*Keyes vs. School District No. 1* 1973:195-198). While many African-Americans and Latinos fought exclusion, some language-minority plaintiffs fought for their child’s different needs (Crawford 2000:92).

The landmark case of *Lau vs. Nichols* was brought on behalf of Chinese-speaking students in 1974 in San Francisco. This case set a precedent for the government’s obligation to provide language accommodations in order to protect other fundamental rights (Crawford 2000:92). The decision meant that the San Francisco Unified School District had violated the civil rights of students by not offering them educational assistance in Chinese (Field 2011). Justice Douglas believed that merely providing students with the same curriculum, textbooks, and teachers does not mean that they are given the same education (Crawford 2000; Field
One must first understand the basics of the English language in order for any public education to be meaningful. The ruling did not decide if education should continue in the heritage-language (developmental) or if it should move towards English-only (transitional). Instead, the court decided that the decision should be put in the hands of the Board of Education. It also mandated that all school districts with over 20 ESL students would have to submit regular reports to the Office of Civil Rights regarding what types of programs they offered to children of language minorities.

The U.S. Office of Education took this court case to mean a mandate for bilingual education (Crawford 2000). The Equal Educational Opportunity Act turned the “Lau decision into law” (Field 2011:192). This meant that bilingual education was enforced in nearly 500 school districts across the country from 1975 to 1981. (Crawford 2000:93). The EEOA “made it unconstitutional to discriminate or deny educational opportunity on the basis of race, color, or national origin and/or language barrier” (Montaño et al. 2005:4). This act required educators to teach using two languages for instruction, both the child’s native language and English (Hirsh and Lays 1998). The school districts signed consent agreements known as “Lau Plans,” in honor of the ruling. The EEOA implied a previous failure to overcome language barriers in the public education system. Many states did not agree with that assessment and passed legislation that contradicts the mandates from Title VII and the EEOA (Allen 2006). Additionally, a significant number of Southwest schools had to address the needs of language-minority students for the first time (Crawford 2000:93).

The Office of Civil Rights had jurisdiction over the implementation of the Lau Plans and the schools that had large numbers of LEP (Limited English Proficiency) students. This was the first time that the federal government attempted to oversee and maintain bilingual education in the public schools. Many school districts initially resented the change; however, “most came to regard bilingual instruction as, if not a panacea, at least a substantial improvement over sink-or-swim” (Crawford 2000:93). The creation of Lau Plans and the enforcement of bilingual education made the federal government responsible for showing evidence of the benefits. Supporters of bilingual education viewed this as a positive step because they believed that the federal government would continue to fund and implement bilingual programs. However, anti-bilingual proponents who did not agree that the bilingual
programs should be maintained by the federal government viewed it as a negative thing. This conflict prompted another analysis of the impact of the BEA.

The Carter Administration initiated a review by the Department of Education that produced mixed results (Crawford 2000:94). The report, conducted by Baker and de Kanter in 1983, did not find transitional bilingual education (TBE) as optimal and suggested that it should not be a requirement in all schools. They cited a lack of funding, an absence of official guidelines, and insufficient teachers (Crawford 2000). The report itself had been criticized for reviewing mostly TBE programs, rather than maintenance schools. In addition, Baker and de Kanter relied on limited input from leading researchers in the field and many of the reviewed programs were “poorly designed and implemented” (Crawford 2000:94). The results of bilingual education appeared inconclusive to the public as the Baker-de Kanter study gained media attention and described researchers as being divided. This disagreement worried voters as they interpreted the conflicting viewpoints as evidence of bilingual education’s instability.

In 1978, Congress voted to renew the BEA but wanted to change federal support to only TBE programs (Crawford 2000:90). Instruction in a students’ native language could only be used as a platform for them to acquire English as a second language. Only a small portion of the funding was allocated for maintenance programs, renamed developmental bilingual education (DBE). The goal of bilingual education was redefined as being fully proficient in the English language, thereby limiting the scope of many dual language programs as temporary. The restrictions on bilingual education were eventually loosened in 1984, but that did not stop critics from objecting. Many critics continued to interpret the BEA as pro-minority and argued that it came “at the expense of English” (Crawford 2000:90).

The Baker-de Kanter study, along with the federal and state mandates, helped fuel a backlash against bilingual education. James Crawford (2000) argues that the bilingual education analysis was left to linguistic specialists to debate, while public opinion dramatically became unsupportive. The reasons for Americans’ negative attitudes towards bilingualism were a reaction to “increased immigration, economic stresses on education and the economy, and the desire to maintain a uniform culture” (Field 2011:193). The Lau Plans were short lived as a federal court ruled them as illegal and ordered the Carter Administration
to formally develop Lau Regulations in 1980 (Crawford 2000:94). Ronald Reagan officially withdrew the Lau Regulations at the beginning of his term as President in the early 1980s.

Attitudes towards bilingualism continued to “spiral downward” during the 1980s (Field 2011:193). In 1981, the court case of *Castañeda v. Pickard* “created specific criteria to help the government decide if a school was meeting responsibilities of the ESEA” (Field 2011:194-195). The ruling established that programs for LEP students must be based on three things: solid educational theory, carried out with appropriate funding, and regularly assessed and shown to be effective (Field 2011). These requirements have been useful in dealing with schools that only passively tried to help LEP students (Field 2011). It was a small step forward, while many aspects of bilingual education were dismantled.

The U.S. English Movement reemerged in 1983, when the English language debate became more common in public discourse. The Bilingual Education Act was reauthorized in 1984 with mixed results. Maintenance bilingual education was permitted but less funding was allocated for it. Transitional programs received more funding along with specialized English-only programs. Beyond the BEA, California declared English its official language in 1986 as part of the popular English Only Movement. The State of California responded to a perceived threat of having large numbers of Spanish-speakers by declaring English the authorized language. This is one of the noticeable anti-bilingualism changes that happened in California before the passage of Proposition 227. Bilingual education and support for heritage languages became less and less popular in the political and public debate.

Title VII was reauthorized once again in 1987-88 but not without contention. Congress allocated funding from bilingual programs to support special alternative instructional programs (SAIPS), which were developed as English-only (Crawford 2000). These SAIP programs received 25% of all bilingual education funds. Developmental bilingual programs lost more funding with the renewal. President Reagan’s secretary of education, William J. Bennett, was successful in pushing an English-only agenda. This prompted groups such as the Spanish American League Against Discrimination (SALAD), based out of Miami, to come up with the slogan ‘English Plus’ (Crawford 2000). The organization argued that in order to be successful in a globalized world, children needed to be fluent in more than one language. This movement was popular among ethnic minorities and educators (Crawford 2000).
The Bilingual Education Act was reauthorized a final time in 1994. This renewal eliminated the 25% for SAIPS and instead funded many emerging dual-language programs. It appeared that there was a change in public opinion one last time as this re-authorization favorably supported bilingual programs. However, this was short lived, as the final blow to bilingual education would come in the form of California Proposition 227. I will discuss the effects of CA Proposition 227 later in this chapter.

Critical to understanding current legislation today is the history of bilingual education in the United States of America. It has a deep and rich history, beginning with German, Scandinavian, and French parochial bilingual education. This historical narrative demonstrates the complicated trajectory that bilingualism has had in this country as it has fallen in and out of favor. As previously discussed the German language was spoken by 4% of all children in America in 1900 (Crawford 2000) but became unlawful following WWI. Spanish, on the other hand, was forbidden in Western schools up until the mid 20th century. In the subsequent section I provide a critical analysis of the historic lack of uniformity in the languages that were acceptable for bilingual education in order to situate present-day funding and discourse on bilingual education.

**Attitudes towards Bilingualism in the Southwest**

Although the United States has been portrayed as a melting pot of languages and cultures, there have always been specific forms of cultural influence that America has regarded with uncertainty. During controversial times, foreign languages have been suppressed or even outlawed in the United States (Field 2011). As discussed above, German and Japanese became illegal during sensitive periods in America’s history. The federal government attempted to subvert and destroy Native American languages for over 150 years. Certain groups evoke negative responses when their ability to assimilate into American culture seems inadequate. In particular, the American Southwest is known for having the most negative attitude towards languages other than English (Field 2011:174).

The European concept of race is integrated into America’s interpretation of cultural and ethnic differences (Field 2011). Racial classifications such as Caucasoid, Negroid, and Mongoloid have been major distinctions in the U.S. (Field 2011). The concept of racial categories has led to perceived differences in intelligence, capabilities, and rights. In the
Southwest, tensions began when Americans came into contact with Native Americans and Mexicans. Americans were already familiar with Native Americans and had an established pattern of interaction; however, Mexicans posed a new peril. America’s concept of Manifest Destiny, the Western expansion to the Pacific Ocean and beyond, led to a struggle for control of the Southwest region between the U.S. and Mexico. Scholar James Diego Vigil states, “driving this expansion was the idea that Anglos (and whites) held superiority over Mexicans as a people and race” (Vigil 1998:149).

“Hispanophobia” arose during the 1840s, when large numbers of Americans moved and claimed land in Texas. The settlers no longer viewed the Spaniards as Europeans, but rather as Mexicans. The desire for the U.S. to expand territory caused violent conflicts between the U.S. and Mexican military. Following the defeat of General Santa Anna’s forces, Texas was annexed and admitted to the union (Vigil 1998). The dispute over the Southwest continued through the Spanish-American War of 1898, which intensified anti-Mexican sentiments. The negative attitudes continued into the 20th century with the influx of large-scale waves of Latino/a immigration in the United States. The backlash against Latinos occurred because of ethnic prejudices and the assumption that they are disinclined to assimilate; however, as previously discussed, they are not the first immigrant group to be accused of resistance to assimilation.

As Leo R. Chavez (2008) argues, the “Latino Threat Narrative” is “a story with a number of interwoven plot lines, or narratives themes: the construction of ‘illegal aliens’ as criminals, the Quebec model, the Mexican invasion and reconquista (reconquest) of the United States, an unwillingness to learn English and integrate into U.S. society, out-of-control fertility, and threats to national security” (23). The Quebec model refers to the Quebec sovereignty movement, which seeks to gain independence for the predominately French-speaking providence. It is used as an example of a group of immigrants, and their descendants, “who supposedly maintain linguistically and socially separate lives from the rest of the U.S. society” (Chavez 2008:26). The Mexican invasion and reconquest concept is centered on the idea that the Southwest will be once again become part of Mexico, due to a large number of immigrants.

“Illegality” is a category that gets produced through the discourse on Mexican migration and through U.S. immigration law. During the 1920s, the Border Patrol and the
category of the ‘illegal alien’ were created (Chavez 2008). Anthropologist Nicolas de Genova contends, “the legal production of ‘illegality’ provides an apparatus for sustaining Mexican migrants’ vulnerability and tractability – as workers – whose labor-power, because it is deportable, becomes an eminently disposable commodity” (de Genova 2013:310). He shows that Mexican labor is related to migrants’ sociopolitics, immigration policies, and law. The process of citizenship, de Genova argues, was denied to migrants on the basis of “race” for “roughly three-fourths of US history” (312). The legacy of white-only policy represents the racialized narratives of who was entitled to be a citizen of the U.S., which has not yet been expunged from the memory of many Americans.

The U.S. immigration reforms of 1965 played a significant role in marking Mexicans as “illegal” because the laws severely limited the number of legal migrants from Mexico (de Genova 2013). The same reforms opened up immigration from Asia, which were generally viewed as progressive. This demarcation of inclusion and exclusion demonstrates the authority of the nation-state to decide which populations can become citizens. During the 1990s, California Proposition 187 was passed to create a state-run citizenship screening system and prohibit “illegal aliens” from using public services, such as health care and education. Proposition 187 was determined to be unconstitutional by a federal court, however, its popularity represented California state residents’ anxieties about the large presence of undocumented immigrants. Many of the people who fear Latinos view themselves as gatekeepers and protectors of the American dream (Field 2011).

It is important to note that Spanish has been spoken in the Southwest for centuries as a result of the Spanish colonization of the area in the 17th century. Fredric Field (2011:174) remarks that “if we call it a ‘foreign’ language in the Southwest, then we would have to call English a foreign language in the Northeast.” Despite the fact that much of the Western U.S. was at one time Spanish-speaking, Spanish has been repressed in American society. A loss or denial of an individual’s heritage language or culture can have damaging consequences, in particular for those who are second generation and beyond. It may affect an individual’s ability to fit into a culture or the ability to communicate with parents and/or grandparents (Crawford 2000). Some children may be unable to have strong community relations if they somehow lack cultural knowledge or insights. A loss of culture can have negative effects on self-esteem and create feelings of loneliness, alienation, and confusion. According to
Professor of Latin American and Latino/a Studies Suzanne Oboler (1992), “Latino-Americans are growing up in the border-lands of at least two cultures and are affected by and aware of the discrimination and prejudice against them as Latinos” (20).

This denial of the Spanish language has had lasting consequences for Latino/a children, as they have been the subject of punishment and embarrassment in school. Researchers, such as Rivera-Mills (2012), trace the three-generational loss of Spanish to English to the harsh treatment of Spanish-speaking students in school. Other scholars echo the notion that forms of cultural discrimination led to the intergenerational loss of Spanish (Alba et al. 2002; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Telles and Ortiz 2008; Waters and Jimenez 2005). Joshua Fishman, who investigated the dynamics of language interaction between English and other languages, developed the three-generation model. His intergenerational model showed that by the third generation, many descendants of immigrants are monolingual English speakers (Fishman 1964). The loss of an individual’s heritage language can negatively effect their perception of their cultural identity.

Throughout the 20th century, Latino/a children suffered maltreatment such as detention, public humiliation, and corporal punishment for speaking Spanish at school. It has been documented that students were paddled and fined anywhere from a nickel per infraction to a penny per word during the 1920-1960s (Field 2011:182). Some students were made to stand still for long periods or to walk lines continuously for speaking Spanish. In addition, students were also made to repetitively write, “I will not speak Spanish in school” as a punishment (Field 2011:182). The argument against speaking Spanish was that it was contrary to the goal of learning English in school (Crawford 1992a; Field 2011). It was assumed that children had an opportunity to learn their heritage language at home and to practice with their families. Penalties for speaking Spanish in school helped to reinforce the idea that English was main goal and that their heritage language did not have a place in their formal education.

Many Mexican American activists during the Chicano Movement of the 1960s and 1970s demanded an end to repressive language policies (Crawford 2000). The suppression of Spanish throughout the Southwest was seen as “a symbol of racial oppression” (Crawford 2000:91). Chicano/a activists were able to protest against the rigidity regarding use of the Spanish language in schools and successfully lifted many of the bans (Field 2011). Many
activists also demanded bilingual education as a way to maintain pride in their binational or multinational culture and to counter the negative effects due to suppression.

Unfortunately, even quality monolingual education was not viewed as a necessity for Latino-Chicano children. Prejudiced theories had emerged that depicted Mexicans as uninterested in academics and unable to maintain the mental efforts necessary in education (Field 2011). In addition, they were seen as disadvantaged due to a lack of parental involvement. Often times immigrant parents were not welcomed in the school setting and experienced challenges communicating with their children’s teachers. It was believed that a mixed school of both European-American and Mexican students would handicap English learners. The argument against integration was that separating the two groups would prevent Latinos from being compared with their “superior” Euro-American counterparts (Field 2011:180). De facto segregation worked in California by establishing boundaries that separated neighborhood schools in the barrios from the rest of the district. This partitioned White schools from Black, Asian, and Latino/a schools.

Beyond segregation, the method of tracking was used in order to separate ethnic groups. This process, also known as streaming, grouped minority students together based on assumed similarities. Students were divided into different tracks: higher education, vocational, and general (Field 2011:181). Those who were in the higher education track were perceived to be college bound while others were streamlined into domestic work or automotive mechanics (vocational), while the general track was reserved for those who had an opportunity to do white-collar jobs. Although this system may appear to be based on socio-economics, it is actually based on race. The process of tracking was seen as scientific and Darwinian by philosophers such as John Dewey (Field 2011:181). In reality, this process reinforced institutional racism and furthered an agenda of discrimination and segregation. It also is another example of how schools in the United States prepared some students for leadership and others to be a part of the workforce and military.

In states such as Texas and California, there was segregation of the schools for Latino-Chicano children. Many of these students were separated into “Mexican” schools that were largely inferior to White school but were seen as good enough for Latino-Chicanos in that they reflected their low status (Field 2011). Mexican American children were subject to shorter days and fewer years of education (Field 2011). Lowered expectations were seen as a
courtesy, instead of a disservice. There was a report that during WWII, only 58 percent of all school-age Mexican children were enrolled in school, leaving more than 42 percent without any formal education (Field 2011; Steele 2008). This type of discrimination and segregation has had enduring negative repercussions for Latinos in the United States.

Not surprisingly, many of these “Mexican” schools had problems with funding, facilities, and staff (Field 2011). Most of the Texas schools for Latino-Chicanos, considered a “crowning achievement” by school administrators, were severely underfunded, having fewer resources such as textbooks, desks, and other teaching materials and many of the school buildings were run down and not properly maintained (Field 2011:180). “Mexican” teachers were less likely to be qualified for their positions and were given larger classes due to funding constraints. In addition, there is a correlation between demographics and the enforcement of English only in schools (Field 2011). If a school had higher numbers of Latino-Chicano students, it was more likely to have “no Spanish” regulations imposed. These discrepancies are examples of racial prejudice and they demonstrate the ways that schools in minority communities were unequally maintained.

In California, the needs of the Mexican-American community were overlooked or used as an excuse for discriminatory practices (Field 2011). “Mexican” schools were typical in communities in Southern California during the 1930s. In 1931, over 80 percent of California schools with a high number of Latino/a students were segregated (Madrid 2008) and practices of de facto segregation remained in place until the 1950s (Madrid 2008). Similar to Texas’ “Mexican” schools, the facilities were often inadequate and not well maintained. Curriculum was underdeveloped and simplified to satisfy an Americanization agenda (Madrid 2008). The subjects taught in the Mexican schools were sometimes limited to English, civics, cooking, and hygiene (Madrid 2008). These schools frequently underpaid staff and attracted arguably less qualified teachers. The idea was that these unequal schools would serve their purpose of Americanizing Mexican-American students but did not have the intention of preparing them for inclusion in the American Dream; like BIA boarding schools, assimilation was the goal.

A particular “Mexican” school was the subject of a case in the San Diego area in 1931. Although not well known, the Lemon Grove Incident was a monumental win for Mexican-American education rights and the elimination of segregation (Madrid 2008). The
trustees of the Lemon Grove School District held a meeting in 1930 to discuss the conditions of the school that had become overcrowded. Their decision would become apparent after the children returned from winter break. Principal T. Green stood outside the school and allowed White children to enter, while 70 Mexican children were instructed to leave and that their personal belongings be transferred to a new school (Madrid 2008). This new facility was a two room segregated school known as the “caballeriza,” or barn (Madrid 2008).

Mexican and Mexican-American parents were not represented in the Parent-Teacher Association or the Chamber of Commerce. The parents organized neighborhood meetings instead and formed El Comité de Vecinos de Lemon Grove (the Lemon Grove Neighbors Committee) (Madrid 2008). This committee was able to link up with a representative from the Mexican Counsel, Enrique Ferriera, who put them in touch with two San Diego attorneys, Fred C. Noon and A.C. Brinkley (Madrid 2008). The parents organized a boycott of the caballeriza and refused to send their children to the school. The Lemon Grove School Board expelled students who were absent for more than 20 days as a way to discourage students from participating in the boycott (Madrid 2008). A social worker was also sent to the households of families who were receiving assistance as a way to intimidate those who were protesting. Threats of deportation became real as some adults were repatriated to Mexico as a result, including some who were U.S. citizens (Madrid 2008).

The parents responded with a Writ of Mandate, brought by attorneys Noon and Brinkley that addressed the board’s actions as discriminatory on the basis of race (Madrid 2008). The suit brought to light the fact that most of the children, 95 percent, were born in the United States (Madrid 2008). These children were citizens and therefore were entitled to the same rights as any other student in the country. The parents also requested that the matter be solved quickly so that the children would not suffer any embarrassment due to their bicultural heritage.

The case was filed in the San Diego Superior Court of California. One of the students in particular, Robert Alvarez Jr., was listed under the lawsuit because of his excellent English skills (Madrid 2008). Parents of the students reached out to the public via the media to gain support for their plight (Madrid 2008). Articles appeared in newspapers in Los Angeles and Tijuana (Madrid 2008). The parents wanted to let the public know that this segregation was
wrong and to inform other communities of the offense. On February 24, 1931 the case was heard in San Diego and the presiding judge was Claude Chambers.

Judge Chambers indicted all members of the Lemon Grove board for their illegal separation of Mexican-American students, while the board denied any wrongdoing (Madrid 2008). The board defended their actions as part of Americanization for children of Mexican descent and argued that any “deficiencies” would be corrected eventually (Madrid 2008). The board contended that the caballeriza school would prevent any hardships on White children. They believed that through the segregation and Americanization curriculum, the shortcomings of any Mexican children could be changed so that they would be on the level of their White counterparts (Madrid 2008). The Lemon Grove school board representatives maintained that the school was a new facility and denied any comparison to a barn (Madrid 2008). Furthermore, they were of the opinion that the location of the school, the Mexican area of Lemon Grove, would protect students so they wouldn’t have to cross the busy boulevards as they did when they attended the Lemon Grove Grammar School (Madrid 2008).

Representative of their prejudice, the board argued that the segregated school could safeguard Mexican students. They remarked that many of the Mexican students were “lacking English proficiency and, therefore required special attention” (Madrid 2008:17). Members of the board also stated that Mexican students’ heritage language, Spanish, could be construed as a handicap in comparison to other White students. They argued that a separated school would prevent feelings of inferiority (Madrid 2008). The defense continued to present that the caballeriza school was a way to address the needs of Mexican students, rather than a racist attempt to segregate them.

Throughout the course of the trial, it was revealed that some of the Mexican students lived in the White neighborhood and that some of the White students lived in or near the barrio, so the defensive position that this decision was based on safety was shown to be inaccurate. Judge Chambers also inquired if the mingling of students would facilitate the learning of English, to which the board members did not answer (Madrid 2008). More than ten witnesses for the plaintiffs appeared before the court to denounce the assumption that the separation was based on academics.
In March of 1931, Judge Chambers ruled in favor of the plaintiffs and denied all claims made by the Lemon Grove School Board (Madrid 2008). Judge Chambers decreed that separating a few students for special instruction was acceptable but that separating all Mexican students was an infringement on the laws of the State of California (Madrid 2008). He also demanded that all the Mexican and Mexican-American students to be returned to the Lemon Grove Grammar School because of their right to equal education (Madrid 2008). The case was resolved without an attempt of an appeal from the school board (Madrid 2008).

The caballeriza school was eventually demolished and life in Lemon Grove continued without any other incidents of this nature (Madrid 2008). Although the results of this case were favorable and just, the fact remains that this case is not commonly cited in history books or taught in the classrooms. This case was significant but it did not receive national attention perhaps because it involved a small community in San Diego and centered on issues relating to immigrant education. Brown vs. the Board of Education is a much more cited case and is seen as a landmark for anti-segregation in the schools, even though the Lemon Grove incident took place decades earlier. This case may not fit into the traditional White vs. Black paradigm, but that does not mean that it is not worthy of remembrance. It is important to note that the Lemon Grove case was remarkable and is representative of the Mexican community taking a stand against discrimination. Despite the fact that this case has faded away from public memory and was not used as a precedent in other segregated schools lawsuits, it did forever change the lives of the students and parents who were involved (Madrid 2008). It is a victory against prejudice and racism and shows that segregation, in whatever form, is unlawful. However, Americanization schools in border states were normal and unfortunately, this case did little to stop segregation beyond Lemon Grove.

Another noteworthy yet relatively unknown case took place in Orange County in 1946. This case, Mendez v. Westminster School District, et al., ruled in favor of desegregation and was another important step towards the landmark decision of Brown v. Board of Education. The El Modena (Orange), Garden Grove, Santa Ana, and Westminster School Districts were found guilty of purposefully segregating Mexican American children into different schools based on their last name and/or skin color (Aguirre 2005). It was the first federal court case to rule that racial segregation was unlawful (Aguirre 2005). The case
is not cited in Brown v. Board of Education; however it was used as a test case against the separate but equal doctrine (Aguirre 2005).

Demographics changed in Orange County during the 1920s because of a heavy influx of Mexican immigrants following the Mexican Revolution. During the 1930s, one fourth of the school children in Orange County were Mexican American (Aguirre 2005). Like much of the Southwest, Orange County maintained separate schools for Latino/a and White children.

The Mendez case begins in 1945, when Gonzalo and Felicitas Mendez moved from Santa Ana to the nearby city of Westminster. They were busy working their fields, so they asked Gonzalo’s sister, Soledad Vidaurri, to enroll their three children in school (Aguirre 2005). She was told that her two children, who were light skinned and whose last name did not appear to be Mexican, could enroll in the local 17th Street School but that the Mendez children would have to go to a “Mexican” school (Aguirre 2005). Despite the fact that Felicitas and Gonzalo and their children were all U.S. citizens, they were discriminated against based on their Mexican culture and skin color.

Mendez hired an attorney, David C. Marcus, in order to challenge the school districts. Marcus had previously won a case against discrimination for Mexican Americans (Lopez v. Seccombre, 1944) (Aguirre 2005). The attorney advised Mendez that there were not any California state laws that permitted segregation for Mexican Americans. In fact, segregation was only legally sanctioned at the time for Native Americans and Asian minorities, such as Chinese, Japanese, or Mongolian (Aguirre 2005). Marcus believed that the case would be stronger if they could prove that other school districts in Orange County were also participating in segregation against Mexican American students. Families came forward from El Modena (Orange), Santa Ana, and Garden Grove.

In March 1945, Marcus filed on behalf of the families against the four Orange County school districts in a Federal District Court (Aguirre 2005). The case was based on a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment. The trial lasted for two weeks and was overseen by Federal Court Judge Paul J. McCormick (Aguirre 2005). The trial did not have a jury due to an injunction. The plaintiffs called on 25 witnesses to testify to the effects of discrimination and the lack of facilities (Aguirre 2005). One of the witnesses was the head of UCLA’s Anthropology program, Dr. Ralph Beals, who testified that segregation would create negative attitude and self-esteem issues for Mexican Americans. He believed that this could create

Another superintendent was called from the Santa Ana School District, Frank A. Henderson, who testified that the decision to segregate students was based solely on their surnames (Aguirre 2005). He also stated that that some exceptions were made in the case of Latino/a children who appeared “White” or had European last names. The school districts defended their actions based on the fact that they were local school boards and that they believed there was no federal jurisdiction. They were proved wrong on February 18th, 1946, when Judge McCormick ruled the segregation practices unlawful and ordered an injunction against the four school districts (Aguirre 2005). Judge McCormick went on to state that that commingling between students fosters better attitudes and that segregation creates a false sense of inferiority.

The Orange County school districts appealed the case to the Ninth Circuit. In opposition, California’s Attorney General Robert W. Kenny went one step further and stated that the trial’s decision should be applied to the entire California Education Code because segregation against any group or culture should be viewed as unlawful, based on the Fourteenth Amendment. The Ninth Circuit upheld the original trial court’s decision (Aguirre 2005). They based their ruling on California State Law, which did not have any specific legislation that allowed segregation for Mexican Americans. The court would not comment or confront other segregation cases, such as Plessy v. Ferguson, because of their rationale for why this case was unlawful (Aguirre 2005). The four school districts did not appeal any further and were forced to integrate their schools.

This case brought to light injustices against people of color in the California School System. It allowed for the discriminatory regulations against Native Americans and Asians to be finally removed from legislation by Governor Warren in 1946 (Aguirre 2005). This ruling also prompted other schools to close their “Mexican” schools, including one in Riverside (Aguirre 2005). The decision was used in other cases against “Mexican” schools in Arizona and Texas. The case may not have the notoriety it deserves but again, it is an example of Mexican-American citizens fighting for their equal rights for education and the demonstration that segregation violates the 14th amendment to the US Constitution. Although
many segregative practices ended as a result of *Mendez v. Westminster School District* and *Brown v. Board of Education*, there was an exception for those who were seen as linguistically challenged.

Unfortunately, forms of segregation continued in the Los Angeles School District during the mid-1900s based on the idea that Mexican American children have special needs (Field 2011). Civil rights activists saw practices of tracking and segregation as discriminatory. These social injustices inspired protests during the 1960s. Places such as East Los Angeles became ground zero for protests by activists who saw Latino/a students being treated unequally by the school system (Crawford 2000). Community members had attempted to enact changes through traditional channels for years but did not see any real changes in the schools (Bernal 1998). High schools in East L.A. had the lowest reading score in the district and a dropout rate of over 50% (Bernal 1998). Facilities were underfunded and many classrooms were overcrowded. In addition, Mexican American students were frequently put into special education classes as a way to rebuff those who they did not want to teach (Bernal 1998). As a way to demonstrate solidarity against racist practices in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), student driven high-school walkouts were organized in 1968.

The walkouts began on March 1, 1968 when many Wilson High School students left school early and refused to return to class, even after police arrived (Soldatenko 2003). This marked an important moment that would help to define Chicano/a student politics and it would inspire other Chicano-Latino students to join in the movement. The walkouts were known as “blow outs!” because of students’ chants (Soldatenko 2003). The following week, more than 2,000 Garfield High School students staged a walk-out (Soldatenko 2003). These walkout protests would spread throughout the district, including Belmont, Lincoln, Roosevelt, and Venice High Schools, and Edison Junior High School (Mauler 1976; Soldatenko 2003). During this time period there were also a few African-American student walkouts at Jefferson High, which demonstrates the discriminatory atmosphere against other communities of color in the LAUSD (Bernal 1998; Soldatenko 2003). All of these protests contained an “aggressive” police presence, which resulted in injuries and arrests for the students who protested (Soldatenko 2003). More than 10,000 students participated during the almost ten day blow out demonstration (Bernal 1998; Soldatenko 2003).
Students, parents, and other community members would continue to fight for months for education reforms in the LAUSD, even forming the Educational Issues Coordinating Committee (EICC) (Bernal 1998). Students demanded “better education, improved facilities, and an end to discrimination” (Soldatenko 2003:288). A Board of Education meeting was held at Lincoln High School and over twelve hundred people attended (Bernal 1998). Predictably, school officials denied any official prejudice or racism. However, the board did agree with many of the students’ demands but blamed a lack of funding for the deficiencies (Bernal 1998). This caused numerous students to walk out of the meeting in response. The board went on the record to oppose any disciplinary action against the students and teachers who protested. Despite the opposition the Los Angeles district attorney brought charges against the students and community members (Bernal 1998). Thirteen men were charged with conspiracy for planning the walkouts (Soldatenko 2003). Activists in the movement proceeded to concentrate on school reforms and freeing the thirteen men.

Beyond the inaction of the LAUSD, the movement faced other hardships including police harassment and some public disapproval (Soldatenko 2003). The walkouts expanded to sit-in demonstrations at the LAUSD building and community organizing. Student activists created Chicano/a student organizations on high school and middle school campuses. Researcher Suzanne Oboler (1995) states, “through a series of Youth Conferences, the young generation of Chicanos organized to articulate their demands for better educational and social opportunities for their communities and their generation” (64). College students developed United Mexican American Student (UMAS) alliances and ran for student offices as a way to promote their agenda. The blowouts were successful in the election of the first Mexican American, Julian Nava, to the Los Angeles School Board. These more political methods had the unforeseen effect of diminishing popular action (Soldatenko 2003). Nonetheless, much of the East Los Angeles community had been brought together for a common goal of changing the education system.

The Mexican student movement in Los Angeles brought national attention to discriminatory practices in the school district. It also allowed for the voices of those affected, Latino/a students and their families, to be heard. Many of those who protested were of the working class who are often excluded in the national narrative of the United States of America. The blow-outs showed that their concerns for equal education were authentic and
that they were not going to be ignored or silenced. It is important to note that this movement was “largely urban-based and focused on the participants’ identities and rights as second- and later-generation United States-born citizens. It was removed from the culture of Mexico’s daily life, and its goals were in stark contrast to those, for example, of the migrant farmworkers movement” (Oboler 1995:69). Despite these contradictions, the Chicano student movement spread beyond the East Los Angeles community and became a part of public discourse. Cities such as Denver, San Jose, and Crystal City were spurred into protest because of the success of the East L.A. blowouts.

Demographics in the Southwest changed dramatically from 1970 to 2000. Issues related to immigration, language, and ethnicity polarized communities. As of 1998, English-language learners represented over 25 percent of California’s K-12 students and 33 percent of first-graders (Crawford 2000). California’s state population increased dramatically with millions of new residents identifying as Latinos or Asian Americans (Crawford 2000). These changes brought up old issues relating to public education and reignited the debate on bilingual education in the Southwest.

Attitudes in the Southwest about the Spanish language and Latin American influence have been predominately negative. Many politicians and officials have pushed a political agenda against bilingual education and have even gone so far as to make the speaking of Spanish in schools illegal. Their white constituents were threatened by changes in political power and did not want to pay taxes that would potentially benefit “other” people’s children (Crawford 2000). It is important to understand this complex history of bilingualism in Southwest states because it represents the struggle for political and social inclusion of minorities in the United States. The conflict regarding bilingual education “clarifies the role of the state in both protecting minorities and reinforcing through law the relationship between race, class, and language” (Oboler 1995:93). This history relates to my thesis because it is part of the reasoning why Spanish-English bilingualism has been under-funded and neglected in public schools.

California Proposition 227

The debate on bilingual education in California was front-page news during the late 1990s with supporters on both sides demanding reforms. Californian voters passed
Proposition 227 in June 1998 by a margin of 61% (Allen 2006; Crawford 2000; Hirsh and Lays 1998). This proposition was an attempt to limit bilingual education in the public school system but still allowed for exceptions by local districts to create programs that suited their communities. Anti-bilingual education activists referenced low English literacy levels and an increase in dropout rates for immigrant students as their rationale for voting for Proposition 227 (Allen 2006). Bilingual education proponents argued that the bilingual programs did not receive the proper funding or staffing in order to become successful (Hirsh and Lays 1998). Critics who have analyzed the impact of this legislation still debate whether or not voters understood that Proposition 227 would dismantle bilingual education of any kind (Field 2011).

Also known as the Unz Initiative, Proposition 227 was described as a reform that would improve English-language instruction and assist bilingual students in their transition. The slogan for this proposition was “English for the children” (Field 2011). Ron Unz, a politician in San Francisco, started the initiative and was critical of bilingual education and multicultural programs (Field 2011). Unz argued that bilingual programs were not effective and that English-language learners were not achieving the academic success that had been imagined. He proposed that English-only programs replace heritage language programs (Field 2011). When CA Prop 227 was presented to voters, public schools were presented as doing a “poor job of educating immigrant children, wasting financial resources on costly experimental language programs whose failure over the past two decades in demonstrated by the current high drop-out and low English literacy levels of many immigrant children” (English Language in Public Schools 1998).

Proposition 227 was a product of a nativist attitude that promoted a distrust in bilingual education programs, educators, and immigrants (Crawford 2000). Part of the reason why the legislation was successful in its passage was the language used by Unz’s team. The crafty slogan inspired voters because no one wanted to vote against English or against children. Ron Unz was also successful in representing himself as an advocate for Latino/a communities, as he opposed Proposition 187, legislation that targeted undocumented immigrants. Unz’s platform was that English was a ‘right’ for children and that this proposition would help students achieve literacy. On top of that, he stated that Proposition 227 was created in response to the 1996 demonstration against bilingual education in Los
Angeles at the Ninth Street Elementary School (Crawford 2000). In his version, administrators had refused to teach English to immigrant children, and the parents organized for their children’s right to learn English. The real reasons behind the protest are convoluted at best, as the main activist behind the campaign was a priest and the main daycare sitter for almost all the parents (Crawford 2000). All the same, Unz’s campaign got their message across: “…that bilingual education was unpopular among the very groups it was intended to serve” (Crawford 2000:107). This assertion was backed up by polling statistics reported by the Los Angeles Times and CNN (Crawford 2000). Arguments against bilingual education were strengthened with this idea that even immigrant parents don’t support the programs.

The campaign for Proposition 227 proposed important and complicated questions that had been unresolved about bilingual education since the beginning: Why does it take a long time for students to transition in the classroom from one language to another? Why do schools have a difficult time teaching two languages? These concerns, combined with media bias, and a growing dissatisfaction with the public school system created the perfect environment for this initiative to gain a great deal of public support. The discussion rested on the pros and cons of bilingual education, not the specifics of the legislation (Crawford 2000).

Proponents of Proposition 227 were aggressive in their campaign. The other side, No on 227, was late to the fight. Bilingual educators reached out to advocacy groups for immigration, education, and civil-rights (Crawford 2000). They formed an organization known as Citizens for an Educated America. However, the argument had already become a dichotomy of for or against bilingual education, rather than examining what the new regulations would mean. In fact, bilingual supporters were instructed to not publicly express support for bilingual education. They were unable to shake Unz’s image of a community advocate who only wanted to help immigrants achieve the American dream faster. The No on Proposition 227 campaign failed to organize its’ base in time.

Proposition 227 passed and the end result was statewide English-only instruction and curriculum (Montaño et al. 2005). Additionally, all ELL students would be placed into classes that were specifically designed to be English intensive for one year before being placed into regular English-only classes (Montaño et al. 2005). Many claimed that the point of this English-only curriculum was to create competent English-speakers as fast as possible. While others argued, “the real issue for the detractors of bilingual education and the
adherents of the English Only movement is not equal educational opportunities for each child but rather their persistent refusal to acknowledge or tolerate difference” (Oboler 1995:97). The anti-bilingual politics motivated states outside of California, such as Arizona and Massachusetts, to pass similar reforms against bilingual education (Field 2011). Legislation passed on the national level also affected California’s education system.

Proposition 227 changed the way that California treats English language learners and bilingual students. It effectively discontinued any maintenance or developmental bilingual education and sped up the process of transitional education. This initiative ensures that students will move from a bilingual environment to an English only classroom within a year, no matter the circumstances or skill level. This relates to my thesis because it directly led to the current lack of bilingual classrooms in the San Diego Unified School District. This initiative is part of the larger narrative of anti-bilingual movements in the United States and specifically California. Without this legislation, funding for bilingual education might still exist in the California public schools. Proposition 227 changed the way that California supported bilingual students and made a one-year transitional education standard for English language learners. This change inspired the movement for charter schools, as a way of circumventing the anti-bilingual legislation.

No Child Left Behind Act

The George W. Bush administration implemented the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act in 2001. This legislation affected the Bilingual Education Act on a national level by removing bilingual education as an educational objective (Allen 2006). In fact, the word “bilingual” disappeared from all federal legislation regarding education with the passage of NCLB (Field 2011). Bush’s reforms made school districts responsible for the success of LEP students to the federal government (Field 2011). Districts were given new guidelines that required them to (1) determine all languages besides English spoken by students; (2) create academic assessments; (3) gauge English proficiency for all LEP students; (4) assess reading and math skills for all LEP students grades 3-8; (5) determine English reading skills for all students who had been in American schools for three years (Field 2011).

Although some of these demands were lessened in 2004, there was still emphasis on testing ELL’s in English and math (Field 2011). Teachers and administrators are held
accountable for student’s progress and performance; otherwise they face professional consequences such as lower pay or firing (Field 2011). The NCLB Act makes no mention of maintenance bilingual education or any support for heritage languages. This measure redesigned the focus of schools from humanities, arts, and science to standardized testing. It transformed curriculum in public schools and adjusted funding to promote the success of students at taking national exams. It also forced teachers to adhere to testing standards as well.

According to the new law, potential teachers must pass the California Subject Examination for Teachers (CSET) in order to receive accreditation (Montaño et al. 2005). This requirement has been correlated with a decrease in number of potential teachers of color who are currently enrolled in Bilingual, Crosscultural, Language and Academic Development (BCLAD) programs (Montaño et al. 2005). BCLAD programs are specifically designed to foster a bicultural-bilingual foundation in future teachers. Bilingual education activists cite this as another challenge to creating a successful bilingual environment for students (Montaño et al. 2005).

The effect of NCLB has led to “the massive reorganization of school districts, the emergence of charter schools, and the upswing of private and parochial schools” (Field 2011:196) Many activists and researchers have focused on bilingual charter schools that are able to respond to the cultural and linguistic needs of immigrant communities as models for future bilingual education reforms (Gebhard 2002). Bilingual charter teachers often are political activists in regards to education and have strong connections to the Mexican-American community (Gebhard 2002). These schools are able to work around some of the bilingual education restrictive legislation by requesting waivers (Gebhard 2002). These waivers from the California State Department of Education allow charter schools to employ outside of the teachers’ union and to hire teachers who might be traditionally looked over because of their unconventional path to the profession (Gebhard 2002). Although unconventional, these teachers have the experience necessary to work effectively with bilingual students because they are bilingual and are aware of the cultural norms of immigrant communities (Gebhard 2002).

The No Child Left Behind Act dismantled federally endorsed bilingual education by removing even the phrase from education legislation. It has placed an emphasis on
performance on standardized testing by offering rewards for teachers whose students score high and consequences for those whose students fail. NCLB has implemented a new test for granting certification for teachers, which has had an adverse effect on the number of teachers who enroll in BCLAD programs. Bush’s prominent legislation affected funding, accessibility, and retention rates. It has also inspired more charter schools and other alternatives to traditional public education. NCLB impacted both of the schools that I conducted research at. It is important to understand its influence on allocation of resources and the way that it supports Proposition 227 in public schools. The NCLB Act also relates to the charter school as teachers must still take the CSET and the school’s performance is rated based on standardized testing scores.

**LANGUAGE STATUS IN LATINO/A EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT**

One of the main reasons for immigration to the United States is access to public education (Hill and Torres 2010; Moreno and Chuang 2011; Suárez-Orozco et al. 2008). Many immigrant children acquire skills through schools, such as “acculturation, socialization, and second language acquisition” (Moreno and Chuang 2011:239). For some immigrant children, not all of the subject matter may have been available to them in their place of origin. According to California’s Department of Education during the 2008-2009 academic year, 1,513,233 out of 6,252,011 students identified as English learners and almost 85% of these were Spanish-speakers (CDE 2009; Madrid 2011). During the 2013-2014 school year, 84.24% of English language learners spoke Spanish (CDE 2014b). They make up a diverse and significant part of the California education system, with many different cultural and economic backgrounds. English-learners have many obstacles to face within the educational system, including cultural and language barriers. That does not mean, however, that U.S. born Latinos/as necessarily perform academically better. In fact, some research shows that first-generation Latinos/as do better than later generations when they have academic ambition and a belief in the advantage of education (Hill and Torres 2010; Keith and Lichtman 1994; Tamis-LeMonda et al. 2011). Generational status can be seen as a positive and a negative factor in a child’s academic performance. This is one of the reasons why it is important to see the education of Latinos/as as not just an issue of immigration.
Language status deeply impacts the lives of Latino/a students in the United States. Of the students identified as Limited English Proficient (LEP), over 80% were Spanish-speaking (National Center for Education Statistics 2003). Latino/a children who are Spanish dominant “are more likely to experience academic delays, have a higher propensity to drop out of high school, to have negative peer relations, and to experience stigmatization and discrimination” (Araújo Dawson and Williams 2008). Further complicating the discussion on language status are those children who “pass” as English competent, even though they are not fluent. Monzó and Rueda (2009) argue that the children present themselves as English fluent because they have an awareness of the English language as a source of power and status.

Children who are “passing” as English competent are acting with a sense of agency, meaning an ability to affect desirable outcomes by interacting with the world through one’s own inner processes (Monzó and Rueda 2009). Based on observations and interviews with elementary school students, Monzó and Rueda found that students “passed” through a variety of strategies, including pretending to understand, even when they didn’t comprehend questions or lessons. Another tactic was “providing an affirmative response rather than ask for clarification” when unsure how to answer a question (Monzó and Rueda 2009:28). Some students chose to fill out homework assignments with any sort of response, rather than ask for help. There were also students who engaged in disruptive practices and mumbling during reading aloud in order to disguise their difficulties while reading in English. Furthermore, many of the Spanish-dominant students, Monzó and Rueda (2009) state, “were often seen sinking down in their chairs, averting their eyes from the teacher, or pretending to be engaged with another task” (30). Based on their research, Monzó and Rueda determined that some children were able to “pass” by deflecting attention about their English abilities and using the strategies discussed above. Students who were unable to give the teacher the impression of advancement in their English skills were subject to negative academic evaluations. The authors suggest that it is necessary for teachers to be aware of passing strategies and to create new pathways for students seeking assistance (Monzó and Rueda 2009).

An additional strategy used to show apparent competency in English, while maintaining an identity and continued practice of the Spanish-based culture, is acculturation. Acculturation describes the process when an individual comes into contact with an outside
culture and begins to acquire ideologies, language, or behavioral norms while still maintaining their own native culture (Luther et al. 2011). The process of acculturation allows immigrant children to learn about their new community or culture they have encountered through different ways. Some of those ways directly relate to academic curriculum, such as the mandated lessons, exams, and off-campus experiences (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2008). Other ways tend to come from peers and friends, who can help explain the “‘hidden curriculum’ related to cultural idioms and codes” (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2008:3). ‘Hidden curriculum’ refers to lesson or homework content that is culturally embedded. For example, a homework question could ask students, “If Michael has three Lego blocks, and James gives him two more, how many Lego blocks does he have?” While a student may be able to answer the question based on the math, it is helpful to understand what a “Lego block” is. Immigrant students may struggle to interpret academic content that is based on American culture. This process allows immigrant children to present themselves as English competent, while still resisting the overall identity shift that ignores or abandons their native culture (Monzó and Rueda 2009). In this way, children who are English-passing are able to work between multiple conflicting discourses and perspectives for a portrayal that gives them the social and potential economic mobility that would come with bilingualism.

Research has shown that students who are bilingual are more likely to succeed academically (Ngai 2002). Bilingualism, however, should not be seen as the dichotomy of Spanish in the home and English in school. In order to acquire English as a second language, a student’s native language education needs to be continued (Pimentel 2011). Those students who are forced into only remedial classes have the opportunity to pass as English competent because they are developing a surface-level understanding of both languages (Pimentel 2011). In contrast, students who are involved in a comprehensive bilingual program that addresses both languages are able to develop a deep proficiency in their native language that can be successfully adapted in English, which is an important topic in its own right (Pimentel 2011).

**Subjectivity**

The theoretical paradigm of Subjectivity builds on the work of Max Weber’s discussion of anxieties and Clifford Geertz’s concept of culture to address the interpretation
of the experiences and feelings of subjects, otherwise known as members (Luhrmann 2006; Ortner 2005). Subjectivity also builds on practice, agency, and standpoint theory to examine the fluidity of power and its ability to influence everyday life experiences (Biehl et al. 2007; Ortner 2005). It is an exploratory framework used to address issues of hybridity, agency, and globalization. It is for these reasons that I chose to use this as a basis of interpretation for my data. The issues of self-esteem, agency, and social capital as noted above are integral to every child’s success, but are especially important to understand for children who are undergoing the transition from one language and culture to another.

Tanya Marie Luhrmann (2006) suggests that the term subjectivity is “used by anthropologists to refer to the shared inner life of the subject, to the way subjects feel, respond, experience” (345). Luhrmann illustrates an issue of subjectivity when an individual is caught between different and conflicting cultural codes, otherwise known as hybridity. The concept of hybridity demonstrates the difficulty in being multicultural, as an individual may have cultural traditions and requirements that oppose one another (Bhabha 1994). Subjectivity allows for researchers to understand how subjects negotiate their multiple identities by focusing on a subject’s inner anxieties (Luhrmann 2006). For example, Pamela Sheppard (2001) discusses the emotional and social difficulties faced by Mexican-American adolescent girls because their traditional gender roles conflicted with the expectations of their teachers. The cultural expectations for a Latina woman often emphasize a complete devotion to family and motherhood. At times, this contradicted the autonomous lifestyle being encouraged by the teachers. Some of the girls in her study needed to explain “the purpose of going to college in terms that would benefit their present and future families” (Sheppard 2001:184). Hybridity relates directly to my research as I attempt to understand students who possibly have to represent themselves differently for their parents and teachers.

Subjectivity privileges member’s meanings as well as their feelings, desires, and anxieties (Biehl et al. 2007; Luhrmann 2006; Ortner 2005). One of the key advantages of subjectivity theory is the support for agency, which is especially important when looking at the worldview of groups who have previously been ignored, such as children and the family unit within discussions of Mexican migration. By focusing my research on the academic experiences of elementary students and their families, I hope to show how they describe their experiences regarding language barriers between their parents and teachers and how they
navigate the role of being their parents’ interpreters. Existing research has looked at this phenomenon among high school age youth where their role as interpreter has existed for years and is no longer a primary struggle for them. My research will look at children, as they are experiencing this phenomenon and how it impacts their lives and experiences at school.

The theory of subjectivity is used to investigate the “changing modes of subjectivation” and analyze subjectivity in terms of globalization and the many effects that growing technology has had (Biehl et al. 2007:5). Technology has allowed for social networking websites to be used in business, medicine, and now education. I will build upon this framework by addressing the effects of technology and hybridity and I will contribute by expanding the lens to include the agency of elementary children.

**Hybridity**

Homi K. Bhabha is central to postcolonial studies and developed the theory of hybridity in order to critically examine how resistance develops and influences dynamic power relations in colonial discourse. Bhabha does this by challenging traditional narratives that ignore or negate the power of the colonized “other.” He uses hybridity theory to describe the process of mimicry and the development of what he calls the Third Space. This theory relates to my research as I try to understand the position of children who are raised with both Mexican and American cultures.

Hybridity describes the state of the colonized as they exist between two cultures, one that existed prior to a new culture dominating it and the one that exists during domination. In this sense, hybridity refers to people who reside in locations after the immediate negotiation between two cultures and thus only knows the aftermath of the clash. These people are not considered part of the colonizer’s community and yet they are no longer able to be autonomous beings within their own cultures. Bhabha suggests that the hybrid identity of the colonized, a fluid mixture of both cultures, is one of their greatest strengths. Their hybridity is able to confuse, upset, and disrupt the colonists and colonial discourse because they do not fit into easy categories and dichotomies. This is known as the “Third Space” as they don’t belong fully to their home culture or their new culture. The colonists, in an attempt to reassert their power, push forward national narratives that repress ambiguity and the hybrid
individual can mimic the dominant culture while maintaining different meanings behind the practices and symbols.

To deal with this challenge, those who are colonized use mimicry in an attempt to fool the colonist. This tool is both threatening and supportive of the colonizer’s desires. It appears to the colonizer that the ambiguity of the hybrid has been mastered, as they camouflage themselves in an attempt to belong to the colony. But the disguise “marks those moments of civil disobedience within the discipline of civility” (Bhabha 1994:172). The hybrid, unable to fully be accepted as a citizen, is able to create discourses that challenge and undermine the colonizer’s power. While it appears to be conscious in these descriptions, Bhabha also argues that hybridity is an internal defense mechanism that is not always consciously articulated. Rather, it is a state of being that allows for a sense of continuity with the old while moving into the new cultural streams.

This hybridity can be seen in the U.S. education system when children act as language brokers between the schools and their parents. Often times, migrant parents are busy focusing on developing economic stability and creating new community ties with people from similar backgrounds (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2008) and are less concerned with acquiring knowledge of the dominant culture. At the same time, their children are exposed to American culture through school, new friends, and American media (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2008). These are the children from immigrant families who “translate, interpret and mediate information for their parents or other adults” (Love and Buriel 2007:473). Children who are language brokers are more exposed to American society and cultural norms because they are expected to be the language and cultural translators for adults.

For these children, their nationality is in flux as they navigate different situations, scenarios, and environments. As an example, a child who is Mexican-American may feel more “Mexican” when they are at home speaking Spanish with their parents and enjoying a traditional meal. While at a traditional public school, they may feel more “American” because they are speaking English and focusing on American history and culture. Bicultural children are able to reconstruct their own cultural identities through the processes of translation, coding, and assimilation. These techniques are representative of a bicultural child’s ability to maneuver in their own “Third Space.”
As they take on more responsibilities and become more autonomous, bicultural children may find their new roles coming into conflict with cultural norms. Tensions can arise from the cultural dissonance experienced between the parental values and the new society’s culture (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2008). The way in which children deal with this newfound situation is part of the development of their hybridity and Third Space. Bicultural children must negotiate their roles within the American education system with the expectations of their culture and community. Researcher Richard H. Thomson (2003) argues that biculturalism is an adaptive strategy used by immigrants or children of immigrants to overcome the effects of the marginalization that occurs with assimilation. Thomson defines biculturalism “as the ability to interact competently in two cultural systems” (Thomson 2003:101). In addition, he asserts that studies have consistently demonstrated that bilingualism is necessary condition of biculturalism (Thomson 2003).

I will use hybridity as a foundational theoretical framework for understanding the fluidity and duality of the child’s bicultural identity. Through this paradigm, I created interview questions that ask about their experience as a language and cultural broker for their families. It is important to keep in mind the influence of peers and American media, so I also asked students about their understanding of their own bicultural identity and bilingualism.

**Mexican Immigrant Parental Involvement in Schools**

Research on academic performance has shown that there is a high correlation between the success of children and parental involvement (Becker and Epstein 1982; Eccles and Harold 1996). Beyond academic performance, parental involvement in schools can improve attendance rates and encourage children to value education (Turney and Kao 2009). Language barriers pose problems for parents of immigrant families who are unable to communicate with teachers, specifically in school districts such as the San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) and the Cajon Valley Union School District (CVUSD) where the majority of students come from multicultural backgrounds and many are first generation immigrants.

Latino/a immigrants often face economic challenges, such as low-paying jobs with little to no benefits and inflexible hours (Moreno and Chuang 2011; Suárez-Orozco et al.
Researchers have found that Latino/a immigrants tend to have a variety of jobs, but many participate in construction, janitorial, medical services, production, and restaurant work (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2008:9). The low-wage structure, which many Mexican parents are trapped in, can contribute to their ability to be involved in their kid’s education. Immigrant parents in these types of jobs may be unable to request off time for parent-teacher conferences, school events, or regular after-school pick-up. The economic disparities faced by Mexican American parents may also limit their ability to communicate in electronic forms of communication, such as email and social-networking sites.

The 2012 U.S. Census revealed that 33.3 percent of Mexican American children under the age of 18 lived below the poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau 2012b). While researchers have shown a positive relationship between socio-economic status (SES) and academic success, they also claim that committed families, regardless of their SES, are able to help their children improve academically through parental involvement (Henderson and Berla 1997; Turney and Kao 2009). In fact, research has demonstrated that school programs designed to foster relationships between families and schools were able to surpass the limitations that SES had traditionally played (De Gaetano 2007; Henderson and Berla 1997; Lopez et al. 2001). In order to create successful relationships, elementary school staff often needed to identify cultural differences that impede communication (De Gaetano 2007; Delgado-Gaitán 1994; Henderson and Berla 1997; Lopez et al. 2001; Turney and Kao 2009).

Current literature on immigrant parent involvement in schools shows that the issue is much more complex than the assumption that “parents’ absence is an indication of lack of caring” (Garza and Garza 2010:200). Parental absence may be due to differences in expectations of involvement between the new culture and the culture from which they came, negative attitudes of school staff towards Latino/a parents, and lack of personnel who speak Spanish (De Gaetano 2007; Hill and Torres 2010). Additionally, parental absence can be linked to inflexible jobs that do not allow for parents to attend parent-teacher meetings, volunteer, or help children after school with homework (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2008). Parental involvement research has established the importance of school employees being open to understanding the experience of the Mexican-American communities in which they serve (De Gaetano 2007; Lopez et al. 2001).
According to Delgado-Gaitan (1994), parent involvement means something different to Mexican-American parents than it does to educators. This is because immigrant parents often bring their own perceptions and attitudes pertaining to their role in their children’s education (Moreno and Chuang 2011). Researchers have shown that parenting classes or attempts to change parents’ beliefs about their expected involvement with school staff members are not effective ways of dealing with these communities. Mexican-American parents value involvement when they see a direct relationship between their activities and enhancing the environment for their children. Delgado-Gaitan (1994) demonstrated that certain strategies worked better with Mexican-American parents including: building on cultural values, stressing the importance of personal communication, and creating an inviting environment for parents. Many teachers who created culturally affiliated projects for Latino/a parents, such as gifting at social events through recuerdos, which are small tokens that include the date or nature of the event, were able to attract immigrant parents and encourage them to be involved in more traditional classroom settings (De Gaetano 2007; Lopez et al. 2001). During my interviews, I asked elementary school teachers if they used cultural strategies aimed at engaging Mexican parents and if so, which ones prove the most beneficial. This will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 4.

Researchers Kristin Turney and Grace Kao (2009) also added to the literature by working with elementary school children, rather than adolescents, in examining the barriers that immigrant parents face when contacting schools. The authors demonstrate that a language difference between parents and teachers led to problems, such as inconvenient meeting times, a lack of greeting, and meetings conducted only in English. Turney and Kao (2009) mistakenly represent communities as homogeneous, as they did not attempt to break down the category of “Hispanic” into cultural subgroups. For the purpose of my project, I asked parents to report their ethnicity or country of origin so that I can specifically identify Mexican immigrants. I worked with Mexican parents and children within elementary schools and conducted interviews with teachers to discover what types of specific communication problems they encountered. For interviews conducted at the charter school, I documented a higher level of parental involvement due to the lack of language barriers and the employment of curriculum that focused on aspects of Latino/a culture. At both schools, I investigated what types of strategies teachers employ to reach out to parents in the community.
TECHNOLOGY TRENDS IN EDUCATION

Research conducted on social networking websites has emerged over the last ten years. School-based social networking sites currently allow students to communicate at any time with their peers and teachers, as well as with their peers around the world (Davis 2010). Although social networking has rapidly become popular among students, a survey done by the National School Public Relations Association (2011) showed that parents ranked social media as one of the least preferred methods of communication. Opinions on school-based social networking are divided as some administrators and teachers have embraced it, while others have resisted the use of technology in education, and there are those who don’t know exactly what social networking is. These divisions have created vast differences in engagement with technology between districts in the United States (Childers 2011).

Social networking research suggests that online learning communities encourage discourse among teachers and students (Maranto and Barton 2010; Mayes and Fowler 2006). In addition, the rise in social networking has increased collaborations between teachers and parents and the professional development of teachers (Davis 2010). It has the potential to create new spaces for students to discuss their assignments and foster an online community. Students are able to access lessons, interactive videos, and homework from the comfort of their computer. Breakthroughs in video conferencing allow teachers to interact and connect classrooms internationally (Childers 2011). School-based social networking websites can be a resource for parents to monitor homework assignments and communicate at any time with teachers.

Many school districts are beginning to prioritize the use of social networking as a way to improve communication between schools and parents. School staff members are able to provide parents instant updates in multiple languages through the use of Twitter feeds, text messaging, and Facebook (Fleming 2012). Leaders in education are investing in technologies that allow them to connect to parents in affordable and state-of-the-art ways (Fleming 2012). School officials are using digital tools to save time, assist with language barriers, and reach more parents (Fleming 2012). These advancements have led some of the largest school districts in the nation to launch digital technologies aimed at parents (Fleming 2012).

The New York Unified School District has developed a text-subscription system that notifies parents in either English or Spanish of school news and various available web
seminars (Fleming 2012). The Los Angeles school district hired its first director of social media in 2011. The position’s main objective is to communicate with parents and students through social media websites like Youtube and Tumblr (Fleming 2012). Other districts, such as Fairfax County in Virginia, have invested in outreach via text and email services along with Twitter and Facebook. Additionally, the Superintendent of the Vista school district, Devin Vodicka, created a Twitter account in order to document his goal of reaching every classroom in the district (Fleming 2012). While there are many benefits to social networking, websites can pose threats for children.

There are some school districts that discourage the use of social networking websites like Facebook, Twitter, and Skype because they can be viewed as improper for children. The decision to purposefully block these social networking websites is based on a state’s interpretation of the Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA). In 2000, Congress passed this act to protect children from harmful or obscene content on the Internet (Federal Communications Commission 2014). Due to the CIPA, some states in America, such as Tennessee and Rhode Island, have created filters that specifically block popular social networking websites (Childers 2011). Filters are seen as one way to safeguard children from potentially threatening situations online.

Social networking also brings up additional fears (Childers 2011). Student collaborations could become problematic for teachers due to unforeseen circumstances (Childers 2011). Cyber-bullying and shared inappropriate content could arise via an online classroom that may cause a teacher to lose his or her job (Childers 2011). There is also the issue of crossing professional boundaries when teachers “friend” students on Facebook that can expose them to the private life of a teacher. School administrators often are unable to provide additional support in these situations because they do not understand the educational value that school-based social networking websites can provide (Childers 2011). The fear of the unknown has caused many school districts to filter or prohibit the use of school-based social networking sites without really understanding the benefits they offer (Childers 2011).

Tim Childers (2011) believes that in order to change perspectives, a paradigm shift might be in order. By renaming social networking to academic networking, administrators might be more open to exploring educational opportunities online. Childers believes that with this new name, teachers and parents would consider viewing school-based social networking
websites as a way of “connecting in order to learn, grow, research, and develop” (Childers 2001:11). He asks researchers to talk about academic networking when reaching out to administrators, teachers, parents, and students. Childers views teachers and parents as the reason why online academic networking has not been fully embraced.

One of the issues with advocating school-based social networking to parents is that not all parents have access to or familiarity with computers (Fleming 2012). This phenomenon has been termed the “digital divide”. Almost 80% of low-income parents, those who make less than $20,000 a year, do not have a computer in the home or the resources necessary to pay for an Internet connection (Becker 2000). African American and Latin American families are “far less likely to have a computer or Internet access at home” when compared to other families (Becker 2000). Additionally, when families with equal annual incomes and parent education levels were compared, the majority of African-American and Latino/a children had 10% less computer and Internet access than Caucasian or Asian-American participants (Becker 2000).

The challenge that the “digital divide” presents has been tackled by some school districts in America by providing digital-training and free computers (Fleming 2012). The Houston school district partnered with the Microsoft Corporation and used $25,000 of local school endowment funds to create a “parent super center” on five campuses (Fleming 2012). These centers teach parents about Internet safety, how to use office programs, and how to access the district’s online grade-reporting system (Fleming 2012). In other districts, organizations are partnering with schools to provide training for parents, teachers, and administrators (Fleming 2012).

In major U.S. cities, organizations such as Technology Goes Home and CFY have collaborated to create programs for schools where at least 75 percent of students receive subsidized lunches (Fleming 2012). They provide parents an all-day training on the weekends to learn how to use a computer, the Internet, and online academic lessons (Fleming 2012). Parents who complete the program are able to receive a refurbished computer and additional assistance on how to get discounted Internet service in their homes (Fleming 2012). These programs are starting points to help bridge the gap in access to technology because of socioeconomic inequality. Organizations like Technology Goes Home have
helped empowered parents to participate in new digital technologies and to become a part of the emerging discussion on academic networking.

Whether or not some school districts are ready for the integration of social media, the developers of these networking websites have designed alternative websites to attract teachers and administrators. Skype, a leader in online videoconferences, has created an offshoot website for educators (http://education.skype.com). This site allows teachers to connect classrooms, conduct interviews, share lessons, and find guest lecturers (Childers 2011). Skype in the classroom allows teachers to upload virtual field trips, share cultural practices with schools around the world, and create long-distance pen pals. This education geared Skype website claims to have connected over 80,000 teachers (Skype 2014). A similar free social networking website that was constructed for teachers is Edmodo.

The Edmodo website is an education friendly version of Facebook. It allows teachers to create calendars, virtual classrooms, and share files to interact with students (Rivero 2011). This website has been seen as safe because students can only message with the teacher or with the class (Childers 2011). Beyond Skype in the classroom and Edmodo, teachers use Google Docs to upload homework assignments and share lesson plans with other teachers (Childers 2011). All of these websites are used as an alternative to Facebook and Twitter, which have the potential to be blocked or filtered by a school district online server. The debate on what is acceptable communication between teachers, parents, and students on the Internet is ongoing and will continue to change over time.

Much of the literature on the impact of social networking websites in education focuses on student relationships and their development of online communities (Jugert et. al 2013; Livingstone 2008; McKinley and Champagne 2013; Pempek et. al 2009). Many articles fail to address the needs of limited-English or non-English speaking parents in the debate on academic networking. Additional research needs to be done to understand the relationship between non-English speaking immigrant parents and social networking for schools; my thesis research will contribute to addressing this gap.
CHAPTER 3

METHODS

I conducted research for a period of four months at two different elementary schools from March 2013 to June 2013. I used ethnographic methods, including participant-observation, open-ended surveys, and in-depth interviews to collect both quantitative and qualitative research data in order to examine the effects of shared language or language barriers between elementary school staff, Spanish-speaking parents, and students. In total, twenty-five (N=25) people participated in this research study. Teachers at the bilingual charter school (N=5), and teachers at the traditional school (N=2) were interviewed. Interviews were also conducted with 4th grade students at the bilingual charter school (N=5). The overall average length of a conducted interview was approximately 41 minutes. Thirteen Spanish-speaking parents chose to participate in open-ended surveys at the traditional elementary school (N=5) and bilingual charter school (N=8).

The San Diego State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) under vIRB protocol number #1228088 on March 4, 2013 approved my research study, along with the research questions and instruments used. I conducted observations at both schools regarding interactions between students, parents, and teachers. I administered open-ended surveys whereby Spanish-speaking parents were able to express their experiences on interactions with teachers and staff at their child’s traditional school or a bilingual school. The focused interviews I conducted with 4th grade students and elementary school teachers allowed me to explore issues related to parental involvement, translation, and communication that were significant to the participants. By triangulating data from these three different groups, I was able to identify patterns related to translation and parental involvement that affected the participant’s subjectivity. Qualitative methods, such as the open-ended surveys and in-depth interviews used in this study, are a key component of understanding the lived experience of participants. The open nature of these anthropological methods allowed participants to
discuss aspects of communication that were important to them and aided in the discussion of their subjective experience. Below I discuss in more detail the reasons for the two different sites, the experiences I had with participants, and how these differences impacted my research.

**SETTING OVERVIEW**

San Diego County offers a distinct perspective on dealing with issues related to charter schools because it has almost a hundred more charters than the surrounding areas of Riverside and Orange County (CCSA 2013c; CDE 2015). I conducted research within the San Diego area to assess strategies used by teachers and staff in order to communicate with Spanish-speaking parents and bilingual students. My thesis research took place at two schools: a traditional elementary school in the San Diego Unified School District, and at a bilingual charter school in the Cajon Valley Union School District. Research data was collected in a confidential manner and all participants were assigned pseudonyms. The traditional SDUSD school will be referred to as “Armstrong Elementary”. The bilingual charter school will be known as “Heritage and Service Charter School”.

**SITE SELECTION**

This project was originally conceived of as a comparison between two elementary schools in the San Diego Unified School District. However, many challenges arose when I tried to gain access and appropriate permissions through the SDUSD and individual schools. The SDUSD permission protocol calls for a researcher to gain verbal and written preliminary approval from a school’s principal before applying to the SDUSD research committee. Approval to conduct at multiple sites is more stringent than a single site. Research at two or more sites includes principal(s) approval, finding a designated school sponsor, and getting reviewed by a panel of central office staff, whereas a project that conducts research at a single site requires approval from the principal and the Director of the Research and Reporting Department.

Most of my attempts to meet with the elementary school principals at two different sites were unsuccessful. I was instructed to go through one or two different secretaries before I would be allowed to meet with the principal. The secretaries told me that I would receive a
call or an email back but often weeks would go by without a response. Some days the elementary school secretaries were too busy even to speak with me and would only write down my message. I was told that these messages were going to be passed on to the principal, but again, I did not receive a return phone call or email.

It took over five weeks for the principal at Armstrong Elementary to set up a meeting with me. When we finally met, she informed me that she was only a temporary principal. This meant that she did not have the authority to grant the preliminary approval, even though she stated that she thought my proposed research was great. Furthermore, she was not up to date on SDSUD research procedures and instructed me that I needed the district’s approval first. This created confusion as to the actions I would need to follow, and I had to contact the SDUSD for additional information. More time passed for a permanent principal to be hired at Armstrong Elementary. When I was finally able to meet with the new principal, she approved my project and set some time guidelines for my interviews with teachers. She asked that I keep those interviews to less than 30 minutes because the teachers were very busy.

I attempted to make contact at an additional elementary school in the SDUSD, which I will refer to as “Hilltop Elementary”. I was in constant communication with two different secretaries and a school counselor for almost two months. The school counselor believed that my project would be beneficial to the SDUSD and she shared some background information with me about the school’s teacher demographics. Although the counselor approved of my research and told me that she was the last step in gaining access to a meeting with the principal, she stopped returning my calls and emails after a few weeks. I was also informed that there was no other way to set up a meeting with the principal because she was in charge of her own schedule. I continued to try to and meet with the principal, but to no avail. My research project still needed a second site.

I was familiar with the Heritage and Service Charter School (HSCS) through my work as internship coordinator at the Center for Latin American Studies. My thesis mentor, Dr. Ramona Pérez, suggested that I might want to consider conducting research at the bilingual public charter school as a comparison to Armstrong Elementary. After some consideration, I realized that the bilingual charter school would be an interesting and distinctive site. Not only would there be a lack of language barriers, but there would be an
opportunity to explore the unique relationship between bilingual teachers and immigrant parents. I met with the Executive Director in order to receive approval for this project.

With the approval from new Armstrong Elementary Principal, I was able to submit the paperwork required for official permission from the SDUSD. This set of documents included an application form, a description of my project, various consent forms, and my potential research instruments for the surveys and interviews. It also included an email correspondence that verified the Principal’s approval. All of my materials were reviewed by the Director of Research and Reporting Department in the Office of Accountability of the SDUSD. I received positive feedback that gave me formal approval for conducting research at Armstrong Elementary.

The process of gaining permission at SDUSD elementary schools was complicated. I only managed to get approval from one of the intended schools. I do not know why the school counselor and principal at Hilltop Elementary did not return my messages and phone calls. It is unclear if the principal did not have time to meet with me or if she did not agree with my proposed research. I learned a lot, however, about the role of gatekeepers and the realities of research. This challenge allowed another school, Heritage and Service Charter School, to become a part of my research. The additional of a bilingual charter school into my research was an unexpected gift that permitted me an opportunity to understand differences in organization and objectives between traditional and charter schools. While both schools are public schools within districts in the San Diego area, they have different processes to working with Spanish-speaking parents and bilingual children.

Furthermore, these schools were included in this research on the basis of their ethnic make-up as both have a majority Latino/a student population. Armstrong Elementary is made up of approximately 71% Latino/a students. Heritage and Service Charter School is approximately 83% Latino/a. This majority population creates the right environment for addressing issues related to language barriers as they potentially have more Spanish-speaking parents. It was crucial to conduct research at schools that had demographics that reflected a population with the potential to be bilingual or Spanish-speaking, because many of my research questions are aimed at assessing difficulties due to language skills, such as English language fluency.
DESCRIPTION OF THE PHYSICAL SETTING

Armstrong Elementary School is located within the city of San Diego. It is a traditional public elementary school run by the SDUSD. The school is within a residential neighborhood and is adjacent to a small public park. Due to the temperate climate in Southern California, most of the school is open with uncovered walkways. It is a medium sized school, with approximately thirty-five classrooms. The classrooms I observed had room for roughly twenty five to thirty desks. Many classrooms also contained a teacher’s desk, a larger table for assisting multiple children, a sink, and a computer. The school itself has two perimeter chain-linked fences around it, one inner and one outer, in order to protect the children from outsiders. This gives the school a very secure and protected appearance. One of the school’s buildings appears guarded because it is a two-story building with a wrap-around balcony on the second floor that is partially gated.

There are two entrances to the school: the main office and through the inside gate. During school hours, the two perimeter gates remain locked and the only entrance is through the office past a locked gate. Shortly before the students are released from school, a police officer or teacher comes to open the outer gate. This is only done five or so minutes before the last bell, so parents are forced to wait outside on the school playground and basketball court. The policy regarding parental visits of the school campus is relatively strict. Parents must pre-arrange with teachers before entering the classroom and must go through the office, as well as sign appropriate paperwork first.

Armstrong Elementary is a traditional public elementary school that is well established in its local community. As a school that is part of the San Diego Unified School District, the California State Board of Education developed its curriculum. The current standards are focused on English-language arts and mathematics, along with social studies and science. During the time period that I collected data, I was informed that only three staff at the school were identified as bilingual (Spanish-English) speakers. The district allows school staff to request a translator from the district if they need to communicate with non-English speaking parents.

Heritage and Service Charter School is within the city of El Cajon. Similar to Armstrong Elementary, it is located in a residential neighborhood and is a mostly open campus because of weather conditions. The school is a single story, with multiple student
created murals around all parts of the campus. Heritage and Service Charter School is an elementary and middle school, which means there is a broad range of ages present on the campus. There are approximately forty classrooms. Similar to Armstrong, each classroom contained twenty-five to thirty desks, a teacher’s desk, computer, and a sink.

The school is accessible from the office, soccer field, or through a gate near the lunch area. Parents are allowed to be present on the campus. HSCH originally maintained an open-door policy for parents to visit at any time; they have recently changed this rule because of potential legal issues. Now, parents are asked to sign in the office with the proper paperwork before entering the campus, but they are still encouraged to visit at their convenience. Based on my observations, many parents enjoy the freedom of visiting the school campus and felt comfortable waiting for their children.

HSCS is a public dual-language (Spanish-English) charter school. Kindergarten classes begin with 90 percent Spanish and 10 percent English instruction. This becomes an 80-20 ratio during first and second grade, 70-30 ratio in third grade, 60-40 ratio in fourth grade, and 50-50 ratio in fifth grade and middle school. The design of the 90-10 dual-language program model is to help immerse children in both languages. In transitional bilingual education models, Spanish is used as a tool for basic comprehension and then used less frequently in order to give preference to the new language, English. In public California middle school language classes, Spanish is taught as a subject whereby a student learns specifics about the language, such as conjugation of verbs and basic grammar. However, in the dual-language programs, students are taught fundamental subjects in both languages in order to acquire and master two languages at a high level of competency. At HSCS, kindergarten, first, and second grade are taught predominately in Spanish, with limited daily instruction dedicated to development of the English language. By fourth grade, subjects such as mathematics, language arts, social studies, or science are taught in alternating Spanish and English. This allows the development of literacy, vocabulary, and critical thinking to happen in both languages.

HSCS is a charter school, which means that the school is able to be autonomous in its hiring decisions from the district. They require teachers to have their California state teaching credentials and to be completely fluent in Spanish. In addition, HSCS teachers must be willing to create new and creative curriculum, as well as tackle any challenges that arise from
working in a non-traditional environment. Almost the entire staff speaks Spanish and English, with the exception of a physical education instructor and librarian who are monolingual English speakers. HSCS also employs parents as school staff in the office and encourages their participation in a Parent-Teacher association on campus.

**PARTICIPANT SELECTION**

This project focuses on the experience of three different types of participants: Spanish-speaking parents, bilingual students, and elementary school teachers. The criteria for selecting each one of these types were different. The first requirement for all three groups was that they were associated with either Armstrong Elementary or Heritage and Service Charter School. The second was that they were willing to participate in my research study. For each type, there were potential additional conditions that will be discussed in the following subsections.

**Parents**

My research questions focus on the effects of language and the medium of communication and parental involvement for limited-English or Spanish-speaking parents. “Parents”, for the purpose of this study, is a general term used to refer to the legal guardians of the students at HSCS, which could include adopted parents, extended family members, and foster parents. I use the term parents because it most predominately used in the literature and when referring to legal guardians by the participants interviewed in my thesis study.

As part of my research on emerging forms of teacher-parent communication, I surveyed parents about their use of social media websites. School based social networking websites are tailored for parents, so it was necessary to determine parent’s awareness and use of these technologies. In addition, I wanted to assess what resources Spanish-speaking parents used for information about their child’s education. In order to understand potential difficulties that immigrant parents face, I conducted surveys with Spanish-speaking or limited-English speaking parents. This meant that my consent and survey instruments needed to be written in Spanish. Parents were only selected if they currently had children enrolled at either Armstrong or HSCS during my data collection period.
Teachers

Communication between school staff and Spanish-speaking parents is another aspect of this research study. My thesis research focuses specifically on elementary school teachers so participant selection was open to any kindergarten through fifth grade instructor. For Heritage and Service Charter School, I was interested in working with a variety of different teachers who could provide me with multiple experiences, included heritage language speakers, those who learned Spanish as a second language, and those who had worked in traditional elementary schools. At Armstrong Elementary, I was also interested in working with a variety of teachers. I wanted to conduct in-depth interviews with teachers who were bilingual, if any, and those who were monolingual English speakers.

Students

This research project addresses the experiences of three different types of members in a school setting. The experiences of students are often overlooked in the literature because children are perceived as passive participants. In this sense, it was essential to interview bilingual students who attended either Armstrong Elementary or HSCS to give their experience agency. It did not matter how developed their bilingual language skills were, but that the child was capable of basic communication in either language. It was also important to interview students who were at the older end of the spectrum in elementary school because they were more likely to aid in translation for their parents. This is why I selected 4th and 5th grade students as my target participants in this group. Additionally, it was a requirement that I acquired parental consent and child assent from student participants.

Participant Recruitment

Twenty-five participants agreed to be a part of this research study. Thirteen Spanish-speaking parents, seven teachers, and five students were recruited through face-to-face communication that was conducted after school. I met each participant briefly before asking him or her to consent to the project to establish a relationship. This entailed having a short conversation with participants and introducing myself. I discussed my project with parents while they were waiting for their children. I initiated chats with teachers while they were cleaning up their classroom or grading after school. I spoke with student participants after
they were dismissed after school. All potential participants were asked basic questions (e.g. Do you have a child who goes to this school?; Are you a student or teacher at this school?) before agreeing to participate in my research study and I confirmed their connection to the elementary school (either Armstrong or HSCS).

**Parents at HSCS**

Heritage and Service Charter School’s parents were likely to be waiting in one of three areas; in front of their child’s classroom, at the lunch benches, or in their cars. I approached only those who were at the lunch benches or outside of their children’s classroom. I did not ask those in their cars to participate because they were instructed to pull out of the parking lot immediately after their child had entered and was secured inside the vehicle. Parents frequently hung around after picking up their child because of the policies regarding parental visits at HSCS.

I would position myself at the lunch benches around thirty minutes before school was dismissed. This allowed me to observe the other parents and take field notes regarding after school practices. There were always at least two parents present when I would arrive. By the time that the bell rang for the elementary school, there would be anywhere from 10-30 parents waiting in the area. Teachers would walk their students to the lunch benches for dismissal before taking them to the small-cemented area next to the parking lot but outside of the school.

Most times I would approach a single parent who was waiting for their child to arrive. The majority of these parents were female and they often had younger children with them. There were groups of female parents who would gather at the lunch benches and talk with one another. I would position myself in a place close to them in order to determine what language they were speaking in. If I could determine that they were speaking Spanish, I would wait until their conversation slowed down or stopped before I approached. I spoke in Spanish when I introduced my thesis project and myself. If they said that they had time, I discussed my research and asked if they had any questions before inquiring if they would participate. If they wanted to participate, I had them sign the consent form before giving them the survey.
Unfortunately, not all parents that I approached agreed to participate. Some parents
told me that they had things that they needed to do so they didn’t have any time, and others
responded that they had to meet with their child’s teacher. Parents who were waiting outside
of the classroom were more likely not to participate because they had scheduled meetings to
attend. I was also unlikely to approach a parent who had more than three younger children to
take care of because they were already fully engaged in caring for their children.

Parents at Armstrong

Parents at Armstrong Elementary waited after school in three main areas: in their cars
on the street, standing at the outer gate, or sitting at the benches near the playground. I most
often made contact with parents who were waiting at the benches because they stayed for the
longest period of time. Parents who waited outside the gate typically found their child
quickly. They would walk home or to their car without lingering. I did not attempt to make
contact with parents in the car because I observed many of them talking on cell phones.
Parents who waited in their car would leave immediately after their child had entered the car
and were secure.

I tried two different techniques to speak to parents. I stayed outside of the second gate
and attempted to make small talk with parents who were also waiting. Many times, these
parents told me that they were too busy to talk. Other times, I walked around the field and
waited at the benches with the other parents. These parents were more likely to stay after
school and would allow their children to continue to play on the playground after they were
dismissed from school. There was usually a daily group of parents who were at the benches
that faced the playground and additional parents would stand around the outskirts of the play
area.

Like HSCS, the majority of parents at the benches were female. I would approach a
small group of women or a woman who was sitting by herself and introduce myself in
Spanish. My initiation of the conversation in Spanish was a crucial part of the recruitment
process. I spoke to parents to determine if they were Spanish-speakers and potentially
limited-English speakers. After a polite introduction, I asked if they had children who
attended Armstrong. If they said yes, I asked if they had time to speak with me about a
project. If they agreed, I would proceed to tell them about my project. Following questions, I
went over the consent form and asked them to sign if they wanted to participate. Parents who consented were provided with a pen and a survey to complete.

Similar to Heritage and Service Charter School, not all of the parents I approached were able to participate. Some of the parents told me that they were busy or they simply declined. I also felt uncomfortable approaching when multiple parents were deep in a conversation as to not disturb them. Sometimes they would leave quickly if they spotted their son or daughter leaving school. Other parents were on their cell phone, so I did not want to interrupt their conversation.

**Teachers at HSCS**

I tried to recruit a variety of teachers to better understand the dual-language structure at HSCS. The school’s counselor offered her guidance as to who would be most likely to participate. She gave me a list of about five teachers who she believed would be happy to help me in my research. All participants in this research project were assigned pseudonyms. I found the first teacher on the list, whom I will call Miss Rivera, in her second grade classroom cleaning up after school. We spoke briefly about my project and she agreed that she would be willing to be interviewed the following week. I sought out another teacher on the list, Miss Sanchez, but she told me that she would be unable to participate in an interview until near the end of the school year because she was working on her Master’s degree. Using the suggested teachers list, I went after one of the 4th grade teachers at HSCS. His name was Mr. Parker and he agreed to be interviewed after we had a brief conversation while he was helping to direct parents out of the parking lot.

Another name on the list was a third grade teacher, Miss Lopez, who frequently tutored her students after school. I waited in her classroom for a few days while she assisted students before she was actually able to have a conversation with me. After we finally spoke, we set up an interview for another day later in the afternoon to give her time to complete her work with her students. I planned an interview with the Executive Director and founder of HSCS, Mrs. Gonzalez, in order to gain a better understanding of the history of HSCS and the reasoning behind many of the unique features of the charter school. Finally, I was able to secure an interview with the kindergarten teacher, Miss Sanchez, right before the last days of school before summer break. These five teacher participants show a diverse set of
experiences at HSCS because they have different backgrounds, techniques, and teach varying grade-levels.

**Teachers at Armstrong**

I planned to interview the 4th and 5th grade teachers at Armstrong Elementary because that was the grade-range of the students I intended to interview. One of the school’s secretaries told me that there were four 4th and 5th grade teachers, two female and two male. I found one of the teacher’s names, Miss Costa, on a classroom door. I introduced myself and described my project to her, as well as asked if she would be willing to participate. She agreed and asked me to return for the interview before school the following week. Following my interview with Miss Costa, she informed me that there was another teacher, Mrs. Williams, who previously worked as the bilingual teacher and had experience with topics similar to my research project.

I approached Mrs. Williams after school while she was dismissing her students and she asked me if I could come back the next week because she was busy with parents. I observed her translating for multiple other teachers and speaking with parents in Spanish. The following week, we met and she allowed me to interview her. I attempted to make contact with the other 4th and 5th grade teachers but on the days that I visited, they were either unavailable or outside of their classroom. I conducted in-depth interviews with these two teachers, one monolingual (English) and another bilingual, as representative of some of the experiences of staff at Armstrong Elementary.

**Students at HSCS**

Mr. Parker offered his assistance in my recruitment of 4th grade students at HSCS. Based on his experience with our in-depth interview, he believed that my project had beneficial outcomes for research on bilingual education. Mr. Parker acted as a gateway between the parents and me to acquire parental permission. He picked out students that usually participated in the after school program at school, who would be more likely to be able to stay on campus after dismissal. The students that he selected were bilingual, had different perspectives, and were generally outgoing.
Prior to my thesis, I worked for over 7 years as an after-school teacher and camp counselor for non-profit organizations, such as the YMCA and Boys and Girls Club. While I worked for these organizations, I acquired the skills and experiences needed to connect with children in a positive manner. During my research project, I employed these skills to observe body language, gage comfort levels, and concentrate on the child’s perspective. My previous experiences also aided in the creation of age-appropriate student interview questions.

Interviews were conducted with students after I had an opportunity to briefly meet them and introduce myself. I asked basic questions about what they did during the school day or what they thought about the weather before going into more specific details about my project. I would then explain what they would be asked to do for my project and I had them read out loud the student consent form. After they finished reading, I would tell them to decide if they wanted to participate or not and to have them sign their name after they made their choice. All students elected to participate.

**DATA COLLECTION AND INSTRUMENTS**

**Participation-Observation at HSCS**

At Heritage and Service Charter School, I was told that I could observe the school or any classroom at any time. The only requirement was that I sign in as a visitor in the main office, which was a very simple process. This allowed me almost unlimited access to their school site. I was able to sit in classrooms during school hours on five different occasions in order to observe the varying structure of the dual language program. I was able to view kindergarten, third grade, fourth grade, and middle school classrooms. Most of my observations were conducted after school at the lunch benches, where parents would wait to pick up their children.

I arrived early, anywhere from 15 minutes to 30 minutes before the bell dismissal for elementary school. There were always at least two parents present when I would arrive at the lunch benches. A majority of the parents who waited after school were Latina. However, I also observed male parents, as well as adults of different ethnicities, including, but not limited to: Caucasian, African-American, and Asian. Over half of the parents observed had younger children with them.
There were often times more parents in their cars than the number of those who were sitting at the lunch benches. As time would pass, more parents would arrive on foot and other parents would pull into the half-circle parking lot to wait. During this time, I was able to observe parents interacting with one another or speaking to their younger children. Closer to dismissal, teachers would walk their students to the lunch benches for pick-up. The elementary school principal would often be the one who opened the gate to allow students to exit and she would remain outside in order to help facilitate dismissal and direct traffic. The remaining elementary students, who did not immediately find a waiting parent or go to the after-school program, would sit with the teacher on the other side of the gate to wait.

As more teachers brought their classes, I was able to watch interactions between parents, teachers, and students. I observed teachers giving reports to parents about the student’s progress during that day. Most of the time, these interactions were in Spanish but there were a handful of interactions in English for non-Spanish speaking parents. Many parents would leave after having a brief conversation with the teacher and collecting their children. Some parents would stay at the lunch benches to talk with their children, feed their child before they went to the after school program, or to chat with other parents.

My classroom observations were conducted sporadically throughout my research period. I was encouraged to enter any classroom by the school’s counselor. I entered classrooms while they were being conducted in Spanish and English. When I would enter the teacher would continue their instruction without acknowledging my presence. This is because HSCS is often the site of observation from the district, other developing bilingual schools, and educational program reviewers. During one of my visits to the kindergarten classroom, I was able to informally interact with a number of children. This allowed me to better understand their daily classroom routine and their curriculum.

**Observation at Armstrong**

My participant-observation was limited at Armstrong Elementary because of their regulations and procedures. I was never invited to participate in the classroom setting and I was not offered access to observe during school hours. This restricted my ability to examine teaching strategies and teacher-student interactions in the classroom. I was only able to observe interactions and practices that happened after dismissal or on the playground that
was outside of the gated boundaries. Depending on where I was stationed, I was able to observe either parents speaking to one another, or parent-teacher communications.

When I arrived approximately thirty minutes before school ended, I observed a police officer guarding the inner gate of the school. After the bell rang, he would then open the inner gate and allow teachers to escort students out of the school boundaries. Very few parents were observed walking freely through campus during school hours, and the majority of them waited outside of the inner gate or near the playground. Teachers would walk their students to the outside of the gate and wait for parents to pick up their children. During this brief time period, I was able to observe parent-teacher-student interactions.

Most of the parent-teacher conversations were short and would consist of a simple greeting. Sometimes, teachers would give the parent a note that was written in Spanish. I was able to observe Mrs. Williams translate on two different occasions for another teacher so that they could communicate with a Spanish-speaking parent. I did not observe any other teachers participate in translation, but that does not mean that it did not occur. I did not participate in any classroom activities so in this sense, I conducted only observations at Armstrong Elementary.

**Surveys**

Thirteen surveys were conducted with Spanish-speaking parents for this research study. Eight surveys were collected from parents at HSCS. I collected five surveys from parents at Armstrong Elementary. All potential parent participants were spoken to solely in Spanish while being asked to take part in the study. Before filling out the survey, parents had to sign a lengthy consent form, which may or may not have impacted their attitudes towards the questions. It took an average of sixteen minutes for parents to complete the surveys.

**In-Depth Interviews with Teachers**

I conducted seven interviews with elementary school teachers. Five of these were with teachers at HSCS and two were with teachers at Armstrong Elementary. All of these interviews took place inside their classroom or office. The average length of an interview with a teacher was roughly 54 minutes. The interviews conducted at HSCS were longer than those conducted at Armstrong because the principal at Armstrong asked me to limit my
interviews to less than thirty minutes. Six out of seven interviews were conducted with female teachers because of the high ratio of women instructors at both schools.

All teacher interviews were conducted after a preliminary meeting and this helped to build trust. Interviews at HSCS lasted an average of 1 hour and 8 minutes. These interviews were all conducted after school. Three out of five of these interviews were private, while two interviews had students and support staff present. The two interviews at Armstrong lasted an average of 18 minutes and 24 seconds. One of these interviews was conducted before school while the other took place after school. Both interviews at Armstrong were conducted in private.

I used a set of interview questions that were developed during the planning stage of this research project. The full set of questions can be found in the Appendix section. Some examples of open-ended questions that were asked to teachers are:

- What is your preferred method of communication with parents?
- Do you incorporate any Latino/a or Mexican cultural aspects into your teaching?
- If you need to communicate with a parent that doesn’t speak English, what do you do?
- Have you had any challenges working with bilingual children or Spanish-speaking children?

**In-Depth Interviews with Students**

Five interviews were conducted with students at HSCS. The average length for these interviews was 23 minutes long. The interview time with children was limited to less than one hour and was based on criteria set by the Institutional Review Board of San Diego State University. These interviews were conducted in two different places: inside the teacher’s workroom and outside on a set of benches on the blacktop. If I had more than one student with me, I would place the student who was not being interviewed at a different table to limit what they would be able to overhear. Three girls and two boys were recruited for student interviews.

For interviews with students, I relied on a set of prepared open-ended interview questions. A full list of the questions asked can be found in the Appendix section. Examples of questions that were asked:

- How did you learn Spanish?
• Do you ever translate things for your parents?
• When your teacher needs to talk to your parents, what do they do?
• What is one good thing about speaking two languages?
• Is there any bad thing about being bilingual?

**Challenges**

Some unforeseen challenges arose during this research process. As previously discussed, this project had been conceived as a comparison between two different SDUSD elementary schools. When I was unable to gain permission from the second school, a new opportunity emerged at Heritage and Service Charter School. This problem became a blessing as a majority of the data collected comes from that research site. However, this change in setting added time to the preliminary research planning phase and conception of the research proposal.

Secondly, I had originally planned to conduct interviews with 4th or 5th grade students at Armstrong Elementary. However, difficulties arose with gaining access to students at Armstrong Elementary. Although I had spoken to Miss Costa about potentially interviewing some of her students, she did not seem very comfortable with offering any more assistance. When I asked parents if their child could participate, they also seemed uneasy about the idea of me interviewing their child. Unfortunately, I was not able to interview any students at Armstrong.

**DATA ANALYSIS**

The qualitative design of this research allowed for open-ended questions and responses during interviews and surveys. Participants were not limited in their responses and had the ability to discuss topics that were important to them. During interviews, teachers and students were allowed the freedom to answer questions based on their experiences and subjectivity. The methodology employed allowed for diversity and multivocality in the discussion chapters.

After I finished collecting the data, I transcribed the in-depth interviews. Surveys from Spanish-speaking parents were translated and transcribed as well. I analyzed my data through the use of open coding. Open coding is the process of identifying trends and patterns from data and field notes. This type of analysis allowed my thesis research to develop new
themes and not be bound by preliminary topics (Emerson et al. 1995). The topics that emerged were discerned patterns based on the response of participants. Through the use of carefully selected ethnographic excerpts and integrative memos, which explore relationships and connect observations, I will discuss issues that were reported as important by participants (Emerson et al. 1995).

This research builds upon the work of Lurhmann and Biehl et al. by using subjectivity as the primary theoretical paradigm. I chose to include my original questions in multiple ethnographic excerpts to reflect the fundamental stance of a beginning research and the interactive quality of participant’s responses. There was more than one occasion in which I found myself using an assumption as the basis of a further question, which may have impacted a participant’s reply in a potentially negative way. Also, I incorporated any field-notes that were related to the themes in order to show my own reflections and observations. This methodology demonstrates the ways in which my research project has been shaped by my fundamental framework and biases.
CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

DATA COLLECTED FROM RESEARCH

It is important to recognize and analyze the fundamental differences in pedagogical techniques and parental involvement between Armstrong’s traditional school and HSCS. This chapter provides a thorough investigation of the strategies used by both schools based on interviews with six teachers, one administrator, five 4th grade bilingual students, and thirteen surveys with Spanish-speaking parents. I was also able to spend time in the classrooms conducting participant-observation at HSCS and observed the after school environment at Armstrong Elementary. I analyzed my data through open coding, which led to the creation of themes. The qualitative methods employed assisted in privileging the voices of participants and their experiences.

In this chapter, I will first discuss the history and mission statements of HSCS and Armstrong, as they are foundational to my analysis. Building upon the theoretical framework outlined and discussed in Chapter 2, this chapter connects the research conducted at HSCS and Armstrong Elementary with the historical narrative of public elementary schools in Southern California. Additionally, I will analyze the impact of Proposition 227, which severely compromised the funding available for bilingual programs and represented the fading public support of bilingual education.

Second, I will examine the ways in which the interviewed teachers use Latin American cultural activities and curriculum to promote diversity in the classroom. I will also analyze HSCS’s use of home visits, caring, and collaborations as successful techniques to connect with students and their families. In addition, teachers were interviewed about the benefits and challenges of teaching bilingual students which puts these approaches into context.
Third, I will analyze the data collected from five interviews with 4th grade students at HSCS. My study was constructed with the objective of understanding the agency of the students by uncovering their perspectives on bilingualism. The 4th grade students interviewed provided significant insight for this project because understanding the children’s perspectives is essential to evaluating and improving bilingual education outcomes. I examined the perspectives of five different 4th grade students and inquired about their identities, preferred language, views on acting as translators, and future career plans.

Fourth, I will investigate issues relating to the Spanish-speaking parents. Through the use of surveys, I asked parents about their identities, language abilities, and experiences in public education. Spanish-speaking parents at HSCS were also asked to write about the reasons why they enrolled their child or children. Additionally, I will discuss the critical importance of parent-teacher communication and parental involvement.

Fifth, I will investigated the use of academic networking and awareness of HSCS’s or SDUSD’s Facebook webpage. The data presented on school-based social networking builds upon the current discussions in the literature about the function of technology in education. New digital technologies are emerging at a rapid pace, but that does not mean they are suitable for or utilized by bilingual schools or a bilingual student.

Lastly, I will reflect upon the results collected from both schools. Through the inclusion of ethnographic excerpts regarding advice from the interviewed bilingual teachers, I will further illuminate strategies that may help monolingual English teachers connect with Spanish-speaking, or limited-English, parents. I will conclude this chapter with an exploration of the comparisons drawn between Armstrong and HSCS.

THE HISTORY AND MISSION OF HSCS

While conducting research at HSCS, I learned very quickly that the school was tied to the story of its founder and director, Mrs. Gonzalez, and her desire to fight for quality education. HSCS has a mission to create global citizens who are responsible, caring, and capable of academic excellence. The purpose of HSCS has emerged over time as an amalgamated vision of Mrs. Gonzalez, the parents, and children of El Cajon. Mrs. Gonzalez did not originally see HSCS as the end goal; however, it became a labor of love for her community.
I knew that HSCS replaced a traditional elementary school that was shut down by the CVUSD, but I did not understand the history behind the endeavor. HSCS began as a parents’ organization to help assist Spanish-speaking children in the public school system and provide information to families. During our interview, Mrs. Gonzalez shared with me her personal story exemplifying the grassroots campaign of immigrant parents to get their children access to good public schools.

Annika: When did you become involved with you were involved with the elementary school that was here before?

Mrs. Gonzalez: No.

Annika: Okay.

Mrs. Gonzalez: No, I was involved in my children’s school, here in El Cajon because they were in- they were in a bilingual program. So, when we came here, my children were already in fifth and third grade. So, I got involved in there because my daughter was in fifth grade and when she came home the first day, she was crying. She didn’t want to go back to school because she couldn’t understand anything. So I went to the school and I request if I can be in her classroom and I couldn’t understand anything because everything was in English. And I assume that is why my daughter is like crying. So, I request to the teacher- not the teacher, the resource teacher if I could be of help-helping my daughter because I knew what the teacher was teaching. They had books in Spanish. So um, at that time, I was in the classroom but also many kids like my daughter were coming to me, asking for help. So I-I become hired by the district to support the students who were not speaking any English but I was able to teach them in Spanish because I was teaching in Mexico. So, but really, really, the involvement within the school system came when a Principal wanted to close all the bilingual program and she wanted to fire the resource teacher also. So that time is when I call my husband and I ask, you need to come and get involved. So at that time, we organize the parents there, we form the first the first bilingual committee in El Cajon, defending bilingual education. We won. The teacher was not fired. The bilingual program continued and the principal left because I think that she was so-uh, well, I cannot say how she was. She didn’t want anything about bilingual education. So instead of accepting, she decides to go. To left. And then, after that we- we become like activists, organizing parents. Organizing parents to inform them how to get access to quality education and the only one- and the only, the only way we will have access is by getting involved. Otherwise, our children are lost. (personal communication, May 30, 2013)

After emigrating from Mexico, Mrs. Gonzalez and her husband enrolled their children in a public school in El Cajon. At the time that Mrs. Gonzalez’s children were attending school in the late 1980s, there was minimal support for bilingual programs because funding had been cut by President Reagan earlier in the decade (Crawford 2000). The
Bilingual Education Act was still in effect but much of the funding had been redirected towards special alternative instructional programs (Crawford 2000). Many traditional public schools in California were operating on inadequate resources for limited English speaking students. Mrs. Gonzalez’s children were enrolled in a public elementary school that only had one resource teacher and a few books available in Spanish.

Mrs. Gonzalez: They told me that they will be placed in a bilingual program. At that time, I was recently a newcomer, I can say. I didn’t know anything about bilingual education.

Annika: Or how the school system worked here.

Mrs. Gonzalez: No, I didn’t know. But when they explained me that my children will be attending a bilingual program and they will ride the bus, not to where we were living at the time, but it was about two miles far from home. So, um, yes, they had the resource teacher, they had the materials in Spanish, but yet the teacher was monolingual. So they have aides in the classroom but they were not teaching, they were just supporting the students.

Annika: Mhmm, but they spoke Spanish?

Mrs. Gonzalez: But they spoke Spanish. But they were not teaching, they were just, oh let me help you. So, when I saw that, I said I can teach. I can teach my daughter because I know what the teacher is teaching. And just provide me the books in Spanish. And I, they were able to do that. So, when I was helping her, at the end I was helping like 11 students. (personal communication, May 30, 2013)

The environment that Mrs. Gonzalez describes was not uncommon in California during that time period, as discussed in the literature review. One of the biggest criticisms of bilingual education was the lack of qualified bilingual teachers (Crawford 2000). This is part of the criticism that would eventually lead to the passage of Proposition 227. Mrs. Gonzalez’s story also touches upon a significant issue in regards to who had power in the classroom. Although the designated bilingual teacher did not speak Spanish, the school district employed teacher’s aides were Spanish-speaking. Mrs. Gonzalez, however, interprets the teacher’s aide’s role in the classroom, as minimal. This aspect reflects the stratification in hegemony in education, as competent bilingual assistants are put into a position that diminishes their ability to make an impact.

Mrs. Gonzalez’s involvement in her daughter’s education led her to see the difficulties other Spanish-speaking children were having with the available resources in public education. She was motivated by her own background as an educator to take an active role in helping her daughter and other children. Mrs. Gonzalez was hired by the CVUSD as a
support instructor for Spanish-speaking students. Her involvement with students, parents, and teachers allowed her to build a community of people who were interested in advocating for Spanish-speaking students. When threatened with the closure of the bilingual program in El Cajon, Mrs. Gonzalez asked her husband to help her form a parents’ organization. They ended up creating the first bilingual committee in El Cajon and a very strong grassroots parents’ organization that eventually led to the formation of HSCS. When I asked Mrs. Gonzalez about her difficulties organizing parents, she told me it was “very rough” (personal communication, May 30, 2013). She went on to explain the requirements for forming parent organizations in the county.

Mrs. Gonzalez: It’s because I remember when we were organizing this- we organize the first school committee in El Cajon in 1990. The first one. It was the committee where my children were attending. From there, we organize all the schools who have bilingual children because according to the law, if you have twenty- no, if you have 51 students who speak other language than English then you must have a parent’s committee. So we were able to organize in each school, the committees. And then we organize the district committee and then the county. And it was because that organize, the county still having the parent involvement unit. (personal communication, May 30, 2013)

The minimum requirement of fifty-one (51) bilingual students was put into place following the last reauthorization of the Bilingual Education Act (Crawford 2000). This regulation provided that any district with a discernible bilingual population would have to provide certain resources for families (Crawford 2000). Mrs. Gonzalez was able to create a network of parents’ organizations for Spanish-speaking parents across the county. The parents’ committees at each campus throughout San Diego worked with Spanish-speaking parents and teachers to help support bilingual students. The parents performed volunteer work in the classrooms and in the community. The parents’ committee that Mrs. Gonzalez created was offered the opportunity to become a formal non-profit with support from a local San Diego organization.

Mrs. Gonzalez: Um, and that’s when HSCS become a parents’ organization. I was leading the organization for since 1990. So it was right when we came. For about ten years, or eleven, every day we were doing volunteer work. So, and then HSCS becomes a non-profit because San Diego Ventures Partners was gave us a $90,000 grant to formalize the organization and to provide parent education, especially to Latino parents. So, from there, we were organizing conferences, we were participating in the school system, and at that time we were already
participating at the county, county-wide. (personal communication, May 30, 2013)

San Diego Venture Partners (SDVP, 2014), founded in 2001, is a “501(c)3 organization of individuals who invest their time and money in nonprofit organizations to accelerate and scale their impact to significantly improve more lives. SDVP has contributed more than $2 million to local nonprofits since its inception.” HSCS used that donation to become a formally recognized non-profit organization. This change in status would later help the organization file a petition to create a charter school, as many school districts in California invested in private-public partnerships (CCSA 2013c). With the non-profit organization operating to provide parent education, Mrs. Gonzalez continued to work within the school system for positive changes. She joined the task force for education in the CVUSD during a time period when the school district was weighing difficult decisions regarding finances.

Mrs. Gonzalez: So then, when, in 19, no it was in 2004, that we were working at Robert Kennedy Elementary School* with the Cajon Valley. So, in at that time, I was participating in a task-force for education, with the Cajon Valley. So, when they decide to close a school because of financial reasons. We never imagine it was Robert Kennedy Elementary, because I was a part of the task force and they were talking about closing the school that has the less students, and the school that has the lesser students was Canyon*. But Canyon is in a wealthy area. So, they decide to close RK. So, um, we again organize the parents and we organize the community also to ask the district not to close the school. But, uh we were not successful. They, at the end, close the school and that’s when we decide, okay, then, we want the school to be open as a charter. (*School name changed for confidentiality.) (personal communication, May 30, 2013)

Mrs. Gonzalez did not take the failure of preventing the closure of Robert Kennedy Elementary School lightly. She worried about the 500 low-income students who were sent to overpopulated and under-achieving schools. Not unlike *Mendez v. Westminster School District, et. Al (1946) case, which documented a situation where Mexican children were banned from a local school and forced to attend a racialized school. Mrs. Gonzalez had been personally invested in the Robert Kennedy Elementary because it was the school that she had been working at. Instead of accepting the district’s decision, the parents’ organization used the momentum from their organizing against the closure of Robert Kennedy Elementary in order to create their own charter school. The non-profit organization asked for support from
those families who had participated before, and they turned to other local charter associations for help.

Mrs. Gonzalez: This is not a job. This is not a something we don’t want to do. This is a mission because not only our children were displaced to over-crowded schools, to under-performing schools, very far from home. We say this is the neighborhood school and we want this school to be open, as dual-language program. So, again, we come together, we wrote the charter and present the charter to the Cajon Valley because it was a lot, a lot of pressure. I think that the district couldn’t say no because at that time, we knew that they have closed the school not because of financial reasons. They close the school because they already have made a deal with the city. And the city wanted a school out from there because of the condo-conversion developments there that happens in El Cajon. (personal communication, May 30, 2013)

HSCS opened the first independent and community led dual-language school in the county. While HSCS was granted the charter, that did not translate into an easy process during the first couple of years. Charter schools, unlike traditional public education schools, are not given access to facilities for free and are required to ask the local district for permission to use any campuses. In addition, charter schools must account for the rental of school facilities as part of their operating budget (CCSA 2013e). HSCS was held to these conditions and the outcome was a shared space with another elementary school during their first year.

The school opened in 2005 with 110 students. Mrs. Gonzalez stated that it was “hard” (personal communication, May 30, 2013). HSCS originally had three kindergarten classes, one first grade, and one second-grade classroom. The following year, HSCS doubled in size to over 200 students. Currently, HSCS has 680 students, with a waiting list of over 800. These numbers represent many parents and students who are interested in dual-language programs in El Cajon and believe in the vision of HSCS. The mission of the school is to “prepare students from diverse populations to excel in higher education and to be leaders in creating a just global community”, which is stated on the school’s website. In particular, Mrs. Gonzalez’ goal is to serve more students and provide graduates with opportunities for higher education.

Mrs. Gonzalez: I think the most important things for us is for them to have an opportunity that other children will not have. And you’ve seen what they have for any career that they chose to go to the college, if not, at least they have the skills to go into the community and hopefully be successful. But most important for us
is that they will be a good citizen. And so, they will be able to have those skills to help others because ultimately we live in a very individualistic society and according to me, it’s not good. It’s not good. So, we really want- We want them to be successful but successful in regards in supporting other people and supporting the community that they live in that’s how I envision it. (personal communication, May 30, 2013)

In this excerpt, Mrs. Gonzalez refers to “other children” who don’t have access to opportunities. The poverty level in El Cajon is 24.8%, which is nearly 10 percent more than California’s average of 15.3% (U.S. Census Bureau 2014). The amount of people over the age of 25 with a Bachelor’s degree is 17.9% in El Cajon, whereas the average in California is 30.5% (U.S. Census Bureau 2014). The mission of HSCS is to overcome those barriers and to provide students with upward social mobility. Mrs. Gonzalez hopes that the students at HSCS will attend college, become successful, and return to help the community.

The goal of college was a big theme during my interviews with teachers. All of the teachers discussed their desire for their students to see college as a possibility. I interviewed one of the third grade teachers, Miss Lopez, who had been at HSCS for two years at the time of the interview. When I asked her about the mission of HSCS, she talked about her students becoming critical thinkers and the importance of college.

Miss Lopez: Because we are not only concerned with the child’s academic well-being, but also their self-esteem, their leadership and … the hope that they will be critical thinkers to go, you know what, not everyone was as lucky as you are. And not everything is as fair as you think it is. So when you leave HSCS, we hope that you are critical enough to not take situations at face-value and to go, wait, that’s not fair and to do something about it. So we want them to be active and… know that education is an avenue for social mobility. (personal communication, April 30, 2013)

Miss Lopez points out that HSCS is concerned with more than a student’s academic success. One of the ways that the school demonstrates this is by running a mentorship program, which allows community members, students, and volunteers to mentor elementary and middle school youth who might be struggling academically or personally. The middle school students are also encouraged to mentor younger HSCS students or to volunteer in the elementary school classrooms. This allows them to build leadership skills and to give back to the school. The mentorship program is one of the ways that HSCS offers assistance to students outside of traditional tutoring help.
During my interview with Miss Lopez, she said that, “education is an avenue for social mobility” (personal communication, April 30, 2013). Many of the teachers that I spoke to talked about the education at HSCS as being part of the opportunity for social change that the students and families have through the school. By offering quality bilingual education, the school is able to give students an excellent education taught by creative and dedicated teachers. The teachers hope to inspire students to dream big and see college as an option when they graduate from high school.

Other teachers that I interviewed echoed the dream of having college become a choice for all of their students. One of the fourth grade teachers at HSCS, Mr. Parker, spoke to me about the future that he saw for his students. At the time of the interview, Mr. Parker had been with HSCS for 7 years and had been teaching for four of those years. He had been the principal of the middle school for three years and returned to teaching because it was his passion. Mr. Parker emphasized his hope for his students to have the opportunity to go to college and pointed out that the bilingualism of the students makes them marketable in a globalized society.

Mr. Parker: That’s really our goal. That’s really the goal. But the opportunity to go to college, choose their life, choose.. everything. And these guys right now could all be translators. Right? And just in that way they have a huge advantage. Right, you tell me you are going to be a doctor, you be a doctor and you speak two languages, you are incredibly more marketable than a doctor who just speaks one language. You know? You’re going to be a social worker and there’s two social workers, one is bilingual and one of them only speaks English, which one do you think they’re going to choose if everything else is the same? You know? And I tell them if I wasn’t bilingual, I wouldn’t have this job. Right? And so being bilingual really will open so many opportunities for you. (personal communication, April 25, 2013)

Additionally, some of the teachers expressed that bilingualism also has to do with understanding the culture. Learning how to speak, read, and write in Spanish allows many of the students at HSCS to stay connected to their Latino/a heritage and Spanish-speaking family members. Miss Rivera, a second grade teacher who had been with HSCS for three years at the time of our interview, wanted her students to embrace their biculturalism.

Miss Rivera: I want them to have both cultures. It’s absolutely critical for me that they not only don’t lose their Spanish and they feel proud of their heritage. And the battles that they have – that the Mexican people have gone through and still going through. You know, despite corruption in government, despite poverty,
despite lack of opportunity, or you know whatever they’ve encountered that there’s still – there are these still these wonderful things to be very, very proud of and to love about the culture. So I try to definitely I talk about it a lot with them. (personal communication, April 23, 2013)

Not all students at HSCS are Latino/a, however, a majority of the students are Mexican-American. As discussed in Chapter 2, Mexican-Americans have been denied equal rights and education based on the color of their skin or the sound of their last name. HSCS places importance on the retention of students’ heritage language and culture, rather than abandoning it. Miss Rivera encourages her students to be proud of their heritage and to embrace their hybridity.

Mrs. Gonzalez and her team created a Spanish/English bilingual charter school so that the students of El Cajon would have a place that embraced their culture and heritage language. What started as a small parents’ organization grew to be an entire elementary school and middle school, with plans for expansion into a high school. More than a thousand parents have picked HSCS and currently over 800 children are on the waiting list. The school’s success was solidified when it was the only elementary school in the nation to be awarded the Gold Award from The National Center for Urban School Transformation (NCUST).

THE HISTORY AND MISSION OF ARMSTRONG ELEMENTARY

Armstrong Elementary originally opened in 1909. The school was considered outside of San Diego’s city limits and was made up of only two rooms. The school’s name changed multiple times before it was replaced in the 1930s by a two-story brick structure. The red brick building eventually had to be torn down because of earthquake safety requirements in the 1950s. It was rebuilt in 1961 and reopened with over 700 students. Since then, Armstrong Elementary has dramatically decreased its numbers and currently has less than 350 students.

The school’s mission statement focuses on the students’ ability to adapt to a changing world. According to the website, their mission is “for all students to achieve academic excellence in a safe, engaging, supportive environment that is welcoming to families and community and will prepare students to be contributing, highly productive citizens whose decision-making is based on strong core values in a global society”. Armstrong’s goals
closely resemble HSCS’s in its emphasis on the creation of global citizens, however, the two schools have different pedagogical approaches for ELLs and bilingual students. As a traditional public school, Armstrong Elementary is heavily regulated by the SDUSD in terms of hiring, curriculum, and resources.

The elementary school teachers in the SDUSD, including Armstrong, are required to have a California State Multiple Subject teaching credential and be fluent in English (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing 2008). The two teachers that I interviewed were both Caucasian females who had been working at Armstrong Elementary for over fifteen years. Miss Costa is a fourth grade teacher and a monolingual English speaker who had been at the school for 16 years at the time of the interview. The other teacher, Mrs. Williams, taught first grade and had been at Armstrong for 22 years at the time of the interview. Mrs. Williams speaks English, Spanish, and a little French. Mrs. Williams learned how to speak Spanish in college and from communicating with her Spanish-speaking friends. Mrs. Williams was the bilingual teacher at Armstrong until California Proposition 227 and the NCLB Act changed the structure of bilingual education in traditional public schools.

Mrs. Williams loved being at the school for over two decades because of the relationship she built with the families and community. She discussed the enjoyment of teaching multiple generations of students: “I’ve already had like five or six parents come back and visit me when they have kids of their own, and I’ve had some in my room. And so, I can’t stop that tradition. I love it” (personal communication, June 5, 2013). She gave the specific example of one former student, who had arrived in her classroom from Mexico as a Spanish-speaker and became bilingual through the program at Armstrong. That student grew up, had his/her own children who attend Armstrong Elementary, and still maintains a friendly relationship with Mrs. Williams.

Mrs. Williams is one of three people who are able to speak Spanish at Armstrong Elementary. The other two Spanish-speakers on campus are the English Learner Support Teacher and an office secretary. Mrs. Williams provides an immeasurable amount of support to the staff through her language skills and dedication to the families. The school makes an effort to place Spanish-speaking students in Mrs. Williams’ class, if they enter in the first grade.
Mrs. Williams: They put them in my class on purpose if they are going into the first grade, if they are Spanish-speaking. Because they know that both the parent and the child feel more comfortable. Yes, and I know this little boy who was in-he was in another school and there’s no Spanish-speaking teachers and he felt like he didn’t belong and everything so they came over here. And [his mom] just loves it, she wrote me a note with really nice things... in Spanish but...

Annika: Oh, that’s really nice.

Mrs. Williams: She gave it to the Principal. But I said, the Principal doesn’t speak. but the secretary speaks Spanish. (personal communication, June 5, 2013)

As a former bilingual teacher, Mrs. Williams is able to help ELL students with the transition because of her experience and language skills. The other teacher I interviewed, Miss Costa, was also aware of the challenges that ELL students face. When I asked her about why she taught at Armstrong, she discussed the school’s transformation from a low-performing school and the difficulties that many of the families face. Miss Costa believes that the students have to overcome issues relating to their families’ socioeconomic status (SES) and language skills.

Miss Costa: It’s a low SES. There is a lot of newcomers and um, you know, obviously the bilingual parents and a lot of ELLs and so my experience is.. Obviously, I’ve stayed here since 1997 so I enjoy it.

Annika: Yeah.

Miss Costa: And love the community that I’m working with so I don’t really have all the experiences because I don’t work with so many- like another population.” (personal communication, May 24, 2013)

Armstrong Elementary and HSCS have similar demographics: predominately Latino/a students who may face challenges associated with low SES or limited English language skills. Both schools want their students to be academically successful and capable of critical thinking in a modern society as demonstrated by their mission statements. The schools’ goals are similar, however, they have different approaches to providing students with a skill set for success based on California’s legislation regarding bilingual education. California Proposition 227 impacted the experiences of Spanish-speaking students and bilingual teachers across the state.

THE EFFECTS OF PROPOSITION 227

California Proposition 227 effectively removed bilingual curriculum from public education and made way for English-only instruction (Montaño et al. 2005). As discussed in
Chapter 2, the regulations imposed a limit of one year of semi-bilingual instruction for most ELL students, before they would have to transition into an English only classroom. It also put the duty of English instruction in the hands of monolingual English speaking teachers, who were not able to communicate in the native language of many of the students. The ballot measure left many immigrant students and parents in a position of confusion as bilingual curriculum and resources were reduced.

The anti-bilingual legislation heavily impacted all public schools in California, including Armstrong Elementary and the schools where Mrs. Gonzalez worked. Three of the teachers I interviewed witnessed the effects of wavering opinions on bilingual education. During my interview with Mr. Gonzalez, I asked her to describe the ways that this California ballot measure affected schools in the CVUSD.

Mrs. Gonzalez: But they approve allowing the districts to eliminate anything other than English. They were giving money to the district to train the monolingual teachers to teach bilingual students. But they were not training bilingual teachers to teach bilingual students. So, at that time, it was at another school. We were participating, they asked the teachers, they told the teachers not to teach in Spanish anymore. So the teachers call us, they say, “Do you know what is going on?” They just told us this and this and this. And then, because we were already organized and we asked, “Why is this happening?” (personal communication, May 30, 2013)

The teachers reached out to Mrs. Gonzalez to let her know about the detrimental results that would happen after Proposition 227 went into effect. The HSCS parents’ organization’s relationship with the teachers at the elementary school allowed the group to gain understanding of the real effects that this legislation would have on them, their families, and the larger community. Mrs. Gonzalez and other parents asked the district to clarify what that would mean for their specific elementary school.

They met with a district personnel person and the school’s Principal to find out more information about the effects of Proposition 227. The district representative stated that the students would have access to bilingual education, but only after school. Mrs. Gonzalez and the other parents argued that the plan they currently had, with bilingual teachers and materials, was sufficient and they were not interested in limited bilingual education. When they asked why this change was occurring, they were informed that California offered compensation for the reduction of bilingual programs. Mrs. Gonzalez and the parents
believed that money would only be used to support the district, rather than the students or individual schools.

According to Mrs. Gonzalez, the State was asking to hear from teachers and parents about their feelings regarding bilingual education. This was an opportunity to make their belief in bilingual education known. Therefore, parents’ organization turned to the community for support and organized more people to join their cause. The close connection the parents’ committee had with the teachers, according to Mrs. Gonzalez, allowed them to rally together for the betterment of the students.

Mrs. Gonzalez: So we have a meeting there and fortunately the teachers were able to speak out and that they were told to eliminate anything related to Spanish. So, the district person that was there, she couldn’t say anything, so we were able to keep. And it was the only district in the county to continue with bilingual education at that time. They totally, totally eliminated it. Totally, but we were able to keep that. (personal communication, May 30, 2013)

This was a foundational achievement for the parents’ committee and non-profit organization. It established a commitment between parents, teachers, and local community members to stand against the attacks on bilingual education. The battle helped prepare them for the formation of a successful bilingual charter school. Without grassroots organizing, bilingual education might have faded out in El Cajon as it did in most schools throughout California, including Armstrong Elementary.

Mrs. Williams had been at Armstrong Elementary for over 22 years at the time of the interview and has seen many changes in the California State public education system. She was employed by the SDUSD when Proposition 227 and No Child Left Behind went into effect. This legislation removed bilingual education from the classrooms and forced Mrs. Williams to become a traditional teacher. It was important to understand her perspective regarding the changes and the ways in which she adapted to them. Her story is representative of many other bilingual teachers across the country who had to readjust their teaching pedagogy when bilingual education became less favorable in popular opinion.

Annika: Since you’ve been here, I’m doing a lot of my research on how the bilingual laws changed in California, would you be able to tell me about what it was before and how the changes affected or anything like that?

Mrs. Williams: Yes. I used to be a bilingual teacher. I taught bilingual. I had my b-class and um, when I was doing bilingual, everything was in Spanish except for the part of the day that was done in English. And I just feel like, the kids are
picking up more English now even though I feel like some kids- I have two in here that could benefit from being in a bilingual classroom because they have no English at all. And I think they feel so uncomfortable, even though I speak Spanish to them. And they just don’t feel like they belong here, so I think that giving them that opportunity to have a couple of years of their own language and assimilate them as best as they can after that. That’s the biggest drawback I see.

Annika: Mhmm.

Mrs. Williams: But otherwise I think the kids who speak some English and Spanish, it’s fine just to be in an English. (personal communication, June 5, 2013)

While the students in Mrs. Williams’ class are able to find assistance in Spanish, the effects of Proposition 227 caused many schools to remove all traces of bilingual teachers and curriculum. The California legislation impacted the funding and resources available at traditional public schools in many different ways. Miss Costa, the other teacher I interviewed at Armstrong, spoke about the changes that happened to the school’s population overall. When Miss Costa started teaching, there were still bilingual classrooms. She said that there were many more teachers and that the school had around 800 students before Proposition 227 passed. There has been a large reduction in the number of students at Armstrong since the 1990s because there is currently less than 350 students enrolled. Miss Costa said that there were more resources and bilingual staff available when Armstrong had that many Spanish-speaking kids.

The transition from having ample resources for bilingual education to minimal support was difficult for Mrs. Williams and other teachers in her situation. As discussed, not every school in the San Diego area abandoned their bilingual instruction. Mrs. Gonzalez and the parents’ organization protested and allied with teachers to keep their Spanish resource teacher and materials. I asked Mrs. Williams about the support for the bilingual program at Armstrong. Unfortunately, there was none.

Annika: Did you try to fight for your position? Was that- did you feel like there was any support at the school for you?

Mrs. Williams: No, there was no support. It was either become English or move to another school. There was no support. I was saddened, but I didn’t really want to move to another school because this had kids that I just loved being around and I didn’t know what I’d end up with so I just stayed here and it’s been fine. (personal communication, June 5, 2013)

This situation represents what many bilingual teachers went through across the state in the aftermath of Proposition 227. Mrs. Williams was “saddened” by the removal of
bilingual education at Armstrong Elementary. She felt her options were to become an English-only teacher or transfer to another school. Her relationships with students and their families as well as her ability to connect with multiple generations kept Mrs. Williams at Armstrong Elementary. Her commitment to the school positively impacted the environment at Armstrong because they gained a permanent Spanish-speaking teacher. Despite her decision, I asked Mrs. Williams if she thought about going to a bilingual school to teach.

Mrs. Williams: Um, in earlier. When I was younger, yeah, probably. But not now, I only have a couple more years until retirement. Yeah, so I just want to stay here. It’s too much trouble to pack my stuff up. (personal communication, June 5, 2013)

Mrs. Williams decided to stay at Armstrong because of her connection to the community and her teacher tenure. She remained hopeful that the school would once again offer bilingual education. She held on to many of her materials in Spanish just in case. I conducted research at Armstrong Elementary while it changed hands from a temporary Principal to a permanent one. This changeover brought the possibility of a reinstated bilingual classroom because of parental support. Mrs. Williams discussed the impact that the new Principal had on this possibility.

Mrs. Williams: ‘Cause last year, there was talk of a bilingual classroom coming up.
Annika: Really?
Mrs. Williams: Yeah.
Annika: Talking about creating a bilingual classroom here?
Mrs. Williams: The parents wanted it. So, they were going to make a K-1 and I was going to take it. But then, the new Principal came and no. She didn’t want it.
Annika: Oh, okay.
Mrs. Williams: It’s fine. ‘Cause I only have...
Annika: A few more years left.
Mrs. Williams: Two so I’m not going to ruin it. (personal communication, June 5, 2013)

As the legislation currently stands, there are exceptions made for school districts to allow individual schools the right to decide what type of heritage instruction is suited for the community it serves (Crawford 2000). Parental support and district approval are necessary components to any campaign for bilingual education, as seen by HSCS’s parents’
organization. The SDUSD empowers Principals to make decisions regarding the school campus, including issues like a bilingual classroom. Therefore, the new Principal at Armstrong was able to cease any progress on the creation of a bilingual K-1 program. Mrs. Williams did not discuss with me what would potentially happen and did not offer any more details about the potential bilingual classroom.

Mrs. Williams’ language skills benefit many of the teachers at Armstrong. She regularly translates for four or five teachers. She translates written notes, good citizen comments, and at the school assemblies. SDUSD has designated translators who are scheduled ahead and cost around 70 dollars an hour. Mrs. Williams gave an example of when the translator didn’t show up for a Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) meeting and the Principal asked her to translate instead. Mrs. Williams was not given additional compensation for her language skills or time. Mrs. Williams stated that she was happy to help because she loves the community and the school, however, it demonstrates the way in which bilingual teachers can be taken advantage of and not rewarded for their abilities.

California Proposition 227 impacted the education of ELLs and immigrant students. Bilingual teachers were left with few options: adapt to English-only or find a school that kept their bilingual program. The legislation marked a division in the journey for Mrs. Gonzalez and Mrs. Williams. They adapted to the changes in public education in California in different ways. Mrs. Gonzalez and the parents’ committee fought to keep the bilingual resources at a school in El Cajon and went on to form their own bilingual school. Mrs. Williams was forced to become a traditional teacher and found alternative ways of assisting Spanish-speaking students and families. Both bilingual women continued to support their community, even though they chose different routes following the passage of California Proposition 227.

**LATIN AMERICAN CULTURAL ACTIVITIES, PRACTICES, AND CURRICULUM**

As discussed in Chapter 2, parental involvement can be encouraged through the use of cultural activities (De Gaetano 2007; Lopez et al. 2001). Cultural activities can allow a diverse set of students to learn more about each other and the various cultural traditions that are celebrated in the United States of America. The teachers at both schools spoke about their use of cultural activities to connect to the local Latin American community, Spanish-
speaking parents, and bicultural students. In this section, I will discuss the use of Latino/a
cultural activities at Armstrong Elementary and HSCS as a way to promote diversity. In
addition, I will review three key themes that teachers felt made HSCS different from
traditional public schools: home visits, caring, and collaborations.

During my preliminary stages of research, I hypothesized that teachers at HSCS
might be more inclined to teach about Latin America than Armstrong Elementary because of
the school’s focus on the Spanish language. Therefore, I asked each teacher if they
incorporated Latin American cultural activities into their classroom and I have illuminated
some of their examples in this section. At HSCS, three out of four teachers told me that they
make an effort to use Latino/a or Mexican culture activities and all of the teachers are
required to conduct home visits. While teachers at Armstrong are held to a stricter standard
of curriculum, both Mrs. Williams and Ms. Costa still invest in learning more about Latino/a
culture in order to plan engaging activities for their students.

Traditional public schools in California must follow rigid course descriptions that
 correspond with “Common Core” standards (CDE 2014a). This includes a heavy emphasis
on English and math, instead of other subjects such as art or music. Despite curriculum
obstacles, both teachers at Armstrong devoted class time to Latino/a cultural lessons. Miss
Costa spoke about reading Latino/a stories in her 4th grade classroom, specifically Gary
Soto’s books and Sandra Cisneros’ House on Mango Street. She had recently learned more
about Mexican-American literature during teacher training, including Francisco Jimenez’s La
Mariposa. Miss Costa uses these narratives to help students learn more about Latin American
heritage.

Miss Costa: And obviously just highlighting the children’s backgrounds and their
experiences and the events they go to when we are having conversations. So, um,
getting to know them in the beginning.. when they tell me about their families. I
think that’s about it. And I think some of that is missing because of the drive to
perform on test scores. (personal communication, May 24, 2013)

Like Miss Costa, Mrs. Williams also believed that it was important to incorporate
Latino/a cultural activities as a way to connect with students and their families. Her previous
experience as a bilingual teacher allowed her to accumulate materials in Spanish. I asked
Mrs. Williams about the resources that she used and where she was able to find them. She
explained that when she started working as a bilingual teacher, there were few materials available at SDUSD and was asked to help acquire more materials.

Mrs. Williams said that when she first began looking, “there was barely anything” (personal communication, June 5, 2013). She was able to find books that suited her bilingual classroom and would aid ELLs in Chula Vista. She even traveled to bookstores in Mexico. Mrs. Williams also created her own materials by translating documents in order to fit her curriculum. She still has many of those Spanish books because she loved them and “you never know” (personal communication, June 5, 2013). When I asked her about the use of Latin American cultural activities, she laughed and told me that they occur regularly in her classroom.

Mrs. Williams: All the time! All the time! Because I know how important it is because we have so many at our school. I did a unit on Mexico and we had Independence Day, I did another unit when we were doing multi-cultural stuff and oh I always bring it in and we talk about it all the time. And at Christmas, I always talk about Las posadas (the inns) and I’m always bringing in the Spanish aspect culture. I know it’s important so I do that. But I also touch on other cultures to make sure we are equal. (personal communication, June 5, 2013)

Although the pedagogy at Armstrong doesn’t include bilingualism, there are at least two teachers who incorporate Latino/a, specifically Mexican-American, cultural aspects into their curriculum. At HSCS, the teachers I interviewed discussed their use of Latino/a cultural activities as a way to discuss diversity in Latin America. However, I learned that teachers are not required to incorporate Latino/a lessons. Mrs. Gonzalez wants students of all colors and backgrounds to feel comfortable at HSCS and asks teachers not to focus on any one group in particular. That being said, it is up to the individual teachers to decide if they want to have their students engage in cultural activities or to observe culturally specific holidays. Miss Rivera, for example, makes an effort to conduct arts and crafts in her classroom about Latino/a culture.

Miss Rivera: I have such a love for you know Mexican artesanías [arts and crafts], I mean you would laugh. My kids tease me, oh god Mom not more, cause I still just… I’ll see the Oaxacan carvings or weavings. I think it’s all so fabulous and beautiful and rich. And el Dia de los Muertos. [Day of the Dead]. And everything that the tradition and love that surrounds that. And when I was down in Mexico, the place that I lived and worked the first time as part of the program, it was a smaller town. The people were so welcoming and generally poor and still invited me – you know come on let’s eat – We’d all sit in the back yard and the dirt floor
and the *comal* [skillet]. It’s just this very loving warm culture. So I think certainly, besides I’m one of the few teachers I always do like a Day of the Dead altar and spread it out. And we talk about how that love of family, love of the continuation from generation to generation how important it is to just be connected to the people who have gone before. And as a matter of fact, we are teaching a unit right now on cultural traditions. And we talk about – teaching my kids about interviewing their parents and timelines. The real thing is why is that important. Well it connects us, it’s that thread that helps us remember where we’ve been and where we’ve come from gives us the appreciation for where we are now. You know, I want them to have that appreciation. I don’t want them to become Americans. Not that it’s not great here but I think I appreciate things more here also knowing the great things that I’ve seen other – you know, you see that balance. (personal communication, April 23, 2013)

Other teachers at HSCS teach Latino/a cultural activities in conjunction with other cultural projects. This way, the children are able to see how other places celebrate holidays. The ability to compare and contrast is a cornerstone of elementary education. Teachers at HSCS are able to use comparisons between Latin American and American cultural activities as part of their examples. Miss Lopez explained that she celebrates *Dia de los Muertos* in her classroom at the same time that the students are celebrating Halloween.

Miss Lopez: Yeah, so for the Day of the Dead, we celebrate it in conjunction with Halloween. I won’t say celebrate it but pondered it…

Annika: Observed?

Miss Lopez: Observed. Yes, with Halloween. So we had *pan de muerto* [bread of the dead], we had the hot chocolate, we made *papel picado* [paper mâché], we played *lotería* [lottery]. Uh, just very typical things. So that gave third grade, as a whole, we had centers. So, one classroom watched a video on Dia de los Muertos, the next classroom was watching a video on Halloween. The next class did, they decorated the skeleton faces, papel picado, so each one did a different thing, so we compared and contrasted Halloween with the Dia de los Muertos. So, we did that for *Dia de los Reyes* [Day of the Kings], we did the fork of the bead, and had to find the little baby Jesus. What else have we done? For *Cinco de Mayo*, we are going to talk about it. And um, just talk about how that’s not the real Independence Day. (personal communication, April 30, 2013)

HSCS does not focus on only Mexican culture, but other Spanish-speaking countries as well. Miss Lopez’s heritage is El Salvadoran and she lets her students know that there are cultural differences between Central and South America. She said that it allows her to talk to her students about having respect for other cultures and understanding that not everyone has the same background or traditions. It also allows for the heterogeneity of Latin American
cultures to be explored. Other teachers at HSCS also make an effort to talk about different cultures. Miss Sanchez, for example, plans lessons about other Latin America countries, as well as the Middle East.

Learning a language goes beyond just words and grammar. There is an embedded cultural knowledge that goes along with any language (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2008). In order to address some of the ‘hidden curriculum’ that may affect some of the students’ comprehension abilities, Miss Lopez caters to the students by being immersed in their culture and referring to things in their community. Miss Lopez stated that she knows most of her students’ families don’t shop at Vons or Ralphs, so in her examples, she is more likely to use Food 4 Less instead. By incorporating culturally relevant concepts, students struggling with language acquisition are more likely to be able to follow lessons and complete homework. Students at HSCS benefit from their teachers who believe there is more to being bilingual than just speaking Spanish and English. When I asked Mr. Parker about the bilingualism of his students, he spoke about the way in which cultural knowledge is also acquired when learning a language. He brought up the common misconception that Mexico’s Independence Day is Cinco de Mayo. For his students, the growth of their bilingualism includes learning about culture and deconstructing fallacies.

As a bilingual charter school, HSCS has the freedom to use non-traditional methods, such as home visits. Home visits are required so teachers can meet with families, make a connection, and understand the type of environment that his or her students are living in. Teachers are asked to visit the home of every student either before the school year or within the first couple of months. If parents do not feel comfortable having the teacher(s) in their homes, then they can agree to meet somewhere public. Home visits are a way for both families and teachers to meet outside of school in an environment where the children may be more comfortable (Meyer and Mann 2006).

Home visits in Mexico are not a requirement; however, they do happen frequently because of the way in which teachers are respected. Mexican teachers are invited to the home as a way to honor them or express gratitude. Miss Sanchez, a kindergarten teacher at HSCS who was raised in Baja California, explains the normalcy of home visits in Mexico.

Miss Sanchez: One of our goals was to provide support to the parents. So to me, that was a transition, an easier transition because I was used to doing because
that’s one of our requirements. That was something good because my teachers went to my house. In Mexico, our teachers are very welcome to our houses and a lot of the parents- my mom invited a lot of the teachers to our house so it was very normal. For me, that’s something very normal. I was used to it since being in Mexico.

Annika: I’d never heard- nobody ever told me that was a normal thing in Mexico.

Miss Sanchez: It also depends on the type of school that you are because in rural areas, it’s very common that parents do invite teachers to their houses, especially when there is a special event. And they feel honor because their teacher, you know, back then, and still today in some regions, you know teachers were very respected and they had very high status among parents. After the priest, it was the teacher, and then the parent. At home and at school, a teacher was the same as a parent. That’s changing a little bit and a lot actually. Like in here, you don’t have any respect. Teachers are not respected at all. You have to earn the parents’ respect by your actions, through your actions, whatever you do to show that you are qualified and worth it. So you have to prove every single little thing that you do. So for me, it goes back to the fact that it’s something normal and exposed to since I was in kindergarten. It’s very normal. (personal communication, June 4, 2013)

Research has documented home visits as the catalyst for improving relationships between teachers and parents (Acosta et al. 1997; Aguerrebere 2009; Meyer and Mann 2006; Reese 2002). Only a small number of schools, however, provide teachers the resources necessary or make it part of the requirements for teachers to conduct home visits (Baker et al. 1999; Meyer and Mann 2006). When I asked Mrs. Gonzalez where this idea came from, she was straightforward in telling me that it was a necessity that allows teachers to “learn something” or gain empathy for the students (personal communication, May 30, 2013).

Home visits have the potential to shed light on home environments, which may explain a student’s behavior (Meyer and Mann 2006). It also allows teachers to focus on one particular student at a time, rather than having 20-30 students in the class. Children who seek out negative attention in the classroom may be doing so because of personal issues going on in the home environment. Home visits can create empathy for students who have more economic or personal barriers to overcome (Meyer and Mann 2006).

Mrs. Gonzalez: Um, I think that was, again it was something that if you really want to know the child, you need to know the family. It’s not science. If you really want to build a relationship with the children, you need to know where they come from. Because sometimes we tend to .. if a child is like acting out, or if a child is not wanting to do something. It’s not the child. It’s something that’s happening to them or something at home or it’s just .. it’s just knowing them. And
for me, if you do not know the families, you don’t know the child. So that’s why for us, it’s very important. It’s a requirement. (personal communication, May 30, 2013)

According to scholars of primary education, home visits should be conducted as early as possible in order for teachers to be able to make early connections with families and assess potential problems (Acosta et al. 1997; Meyer and Mann 2006). Some teachers at HSCS had trouble completing home visits for every family during the first couple of months. Many teachers had to conduct home visits on the weekends, as well as after school or before school. One of the teachers that I interviewed expressed to me that they often couldn’t get the visits done until winter break, which is almost halfway through the school year. In order to deal with this, Mrs. Gonzalez applied for a grant that gives teachers a stipend to help offset the cost of visiting families. Despite the extra work that home visits require, the teachers at HSCS asserted the value of home visits during their interviews.

Mr. Parker: Oh yeah. It definitely gives you like these ah-ha moments. You know, like, you see a kid whose like struggling – their homework’s not turned in, their desk is always a mess. You know it’s pretty cool, and you visit the home and you’re like, that’s why! Like, these are the situations going on and so now I know how can I support this kid, right? Like, so this is what is going on at home – what can I do to close some of that gap? Fill in a bit – like what is it extra that they need? Um, and then on the other side, you see a kid who is like on it – in class, their hands up, their talking and you go to visit their house and you’re like, this is why, right? Mom is doing this, Dad is doing this, or like whatever the structure is, the dynamics are, it really opens your eyes and gives you a better understanding. (personal communication, April 25, 2013)

The moment that Mr. Parker is referring to is when the understanding of why a student has certain behavior emerges. It might be because their parent(s) work 2-3 jobs and don’t have a lot of time to spend checking homework (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2008). Another situation is that a child might have many brothers and sisters with whom they share a room so they don’t really have a quiet space to finish their homework. These are examples of awareness that can come from home visits that might not be as clear without an observation of the home environment. Teachers at HSCS have an opportunity through the home visits to gain knowledge about the inner workings of family dynamics before the school year even begins. This can help them make choices about how to motivate struggling students (Meyer and Mann 2006).
Miss Rivera: Their – and – I want to, I look at that family and I visit their homes. I go and I see these apartments that are just – Very impoverished. Very rough situations. And I see that child in my class, and especially when the kid is making an effort. I think, I can’t. I mean, this is the door. I’m – me – the next teacher, the next teacher, every teacher through here is – is possibly changing, really making a huge difference for that child, for that child’s parents, their whole family, for their siblings, and for the kids that follow. How can you not kinda try to do – step up to the plate on that? You know? (personal communication, April 23, 2013)

Furthermore, home visits demonstrate a teacher’s ability to care for their students, as shown in El Paso, Texas when the teachers began home visits in public schools (Acosta et al. 1997). When teachers demonstrate that they care for the student, parents and guardians are more likely to trust them (Acosta et al. 1997). In this sense, the home visits enhance “the potential for future communication” between teachers and parents (Meyer and Mann 2006:95). Mr. Parker uses home visits as a way to connect with troubled students and build positive relationships with them.

Mr. Parker: So the goal is to do those students who you know are going to be the most challenging – you visit their homes first. And those who you know don’t need a home visit as much, you push them towards the back. Right? So those one’s you really are touching base with and building that relationship with – because again they know you can care. If they know that you care for them, you can really do a lot more than if they think it’s just like a job. (personal communication, April 25, 2013)

Caring is a theme that many teachers at HSCS discussed during their interviews. Caring, trust, and empathy are how teachers establish concrete relationships with families. Teachers at HSCS make the effort to get to know families on a personal level. Parent-teacher conferences are about the student’s academic progress, whereas home visits can create an opportunity for families and teachers to discuss interests or share a meal. Home visits enable teachers to make a connection with students and their families that can improve trust and communication.

Another distinctive practice at HSCS is the teacher collaborations that allow them to plan and create curriculum. The teachers at HSCS also discuss new ideas for teaching as a group during staff meetings. During these meeting, teachers debate the usefulness of textbooks from Mexico and the incorporation of digital technologies in the classroom. Mr. Parker remarked during our interview that seasoned teachers have a larger box of resources
to pull from, so the collaborations between teachers can promote successful strategies that can be passed down to new teachers at HSCS.

Miss Lopez: We are- we work collaboratively here with our grade level team and also the rest of the school. So we definitely bounce ideas back and forth. The Internet is so rich, in so many resources now, you can google something, “How to teach fractions”. Not for third graders, for fourth. You can find anything online. So that in itself is fun. You can like bring pop videos and just using videos and media to kinda get the kids motivated to learn about it. To teach them something that they can’t- I can’t do without a visual. You know? So, that’s really helpful. The administration is super, super helpful as well. Miss Gabriela* and the counseling, like we do have a lot of resources. (*Name changed) (personal communication, April 30, 2013)

Digital technologies have a unique role in the classroom today (Davis 2010; Maranto and Barton 2010; Mayes and Fowler 2006). Teachers can use Internet videos and websites as a way to engage students and generate interest (Childers 2011; Rivero 2011). The staff meetings between teachers at HCSC allow them an opportunity to discuss successful techniques that have worked in their classroom. This is especially helpful for showing the usefulness of newer technological resources. Miss Rivera, shared her success with using Just Dance!, a video-game, in the classroom as a reward for good behavior with the other teachers. At least five teachers now use this technique as a way to get children to be physically active and relate to their generation. The teachers at HSCS have the freedom to incorporate emerging digital materials as part of their curriculum.

While most of the teachers that I interviewed expressed to me that creating curriculum was a challenge, it is important to point out that not all teachers agreed. Some teachers at HSCS expressed that they enjoy creating their own curriculum because it gives them the freedom to pick and choose. One teacher, Miss Lopez, stated during her interview that she sees other obstacles, such as reading comprehension, as more challenging than developing curriculum. She also appreciated the ability to adapt materials in Spanish to the needs of her students.

HSCS teachers use Latino/a cultural activities, home visits, caring, and collaborations to connect with students and families. The teachers at Armstrong also relied upon Latin American cultural activities to highlight students’ backgrounds. Although at different schools, Mr. Parker and Mrs. Williams both focused on the cultural nuances, such as the contrast between Cinco de Mayo and Mexico’s Independence Day. Miss Costa used literature
and art to bring Latino/a heritage into the classroom, much like Miss Rivera and Miss Lopez. These examples demonstrate the effort made by teachers at HSCS and Armstrong Elementary to connect with many of the Latino/a families and their heritage inside the classroom.

**THE BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF TEACHING BILINGUAL STUDENTS**

There are obvious differences between HSCS and Armstrong Elementary in terms of their pedagogy. HSCS’s goal is to produce bilingual students, while Armstrong Elementary is concerned with creating competent English speakers. This section addresses the teachers’ perspectives regarding their students’ language skills and any hardships that they face. All six interviewed teachers stated that they had a majority of bilingual students in their class and that they did not perceive any additional challenges associated with working with bilingual students.

When I first asked teachers if their students were bilingual, many of them asked me to define what bilingual meant to me. I define bilingualism as the ability to read, write, and speak competently in two different languages, based on the meaning provided by Suárez-Orozco et al. (2008). After my definition, I would ask the teachers how they understood bilingualism. Many of them agreed with my description and a few added on other concepts such as comprehension or the ability to use their skill set in a different country. While I expected the elementary teachers to tell me that competency was emerging, some of them informed me that many of their students were proficient in both languages. I incorrectly assumed that students in the lower middle grades might be less bilingual because they are beginning their education. For example at HSCS, Miss Rivera considers her entire second grade class as being able to communicate in both languages:

> Miss Rivera: Yeah, it is second grade. When you say competent, I mean, all of my students can get their ideas across in either language. Not necessarily. Some have total fluency in both and some have a far more limited vocabulary and comfort level but will – they’ll still – they still can write with mistakes, they can speak, um, in – with a lower level of comfort. But certainly all of them can communicate further than just the basics. (personal communication, April 23, 2013)

Bilingualism is a core aspect of pedagogy at HSCS because of the many benefits that speaking two languages can provide. For example, bilingualism has been documented as
increasing cognitive functionality (Bialystok 2011). It is important to understand the differences between total fluency and being able to communicate the basics of a language. The goal is for students of HSCS to leave the middle school with a full grasp of both languages. This begins in kindergarten and continues through elementary and middle school. Students in the second grade have an 80-20 ratio of Spanish to English. This means that students are getting more exposure to reading, writing, and speaking in Spanish in the lower grades, while students in the middle school receive equal instruction in both languages because of the 50-50 ratio.

The ratios are important because the languages spoken at home can influence students’ bilingualism (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2008). The development of Spanish or English can rapidly increase when students are getting exposure in both their homes and schools (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2008). Students who become bilingual earlier in life may have developed language skills because of the amount of experience they have with each language. Teachers at HSCS provide different types of activities, including a focus on media, to help give students more exposure to the languages. By fifth grade graduation, students are expected to be relatively proficient in both languages. This means that teachers in the elementary school must work hard to tackle any deficiencies in a student’s language skills.

Miss Rivera sees bilingualism as a unique skill that sets her students apart from other potential job applicants or gives them access to more opportunities in the world. The language skills taught at HSCS include a formalized version of Spanish, with an emphasis on reading and writing. While many immigrant children learn how to speak their heritage language at home, they can be restricted by their parents’ highest completed level of education. This means that although numerous immigrant children learn how to speak Spanish, it may not be a formal version that can be used as a tool in the workplace.

Miss Rivera: Exactly. It’s not an advantage if you just can speak, you know.. like, you know.. just like.. conversational playground Spanish. But when you can read, and write, and WOW, where can you go? We talk about-- you can – my globe is actually – the top is worn out because we bring it out all the time to talk about the world and “Here’s…”, and look at, go here, and imagine what you’ll see and what you can do and if you speak Spanish and English .. Oh my gosh. I told you, I love to travel. That’s my reward at the, you know, end of things. And to have, to give them that idea that they can just go places and that this little – this El Cajon and that little apartment, with the stairs falling down, that is – that is so much just a bump in the road right now, not even a bump, but that’s such a tiny part of their
life. That they’re going on to so many more great things. And, you know, it’s because they are working so hard to learn both languages and to write well in both languages. Not just speak but you know, read, write, so yes, we talk about it constantly as being their ticket, their advantage, their, one of their special things that makes them such an amazing ambassador to the world, right? (personal communication, April 23, 2013)

Another teacher, Miss Lopez, discussed the difficulties that her students are having with reading comprehension. In her classroom, she considers only a “handful of students” to be conversationally bilingual (personal communication, April 30, 2013). She told me that her students have trouble with decoding words and that has a lot to do with their reading exposure. I asked her about why some of her students were having a difficult time grasping the languages, and if she believed they would eventually gain competency in both languages.

Miss Lopez: Yeah. I am pretty confident that a lot of them will. Of the students that I don’t consider completely bilingual yet, um... I’ve been on their home visits and based on those, I also know that they don’t get any English exposure other than what they get here. In other words, their parents are Spanish-speakers and they speak Spanish at home. But I know that, when they go home, they watch TV in English. I know that they go on the Internet and they do things in English. They are reading in English. And they spend their time in the U.S. … a lot of those students, I know that over the weekends, they go to like Tecate or Tijuana, and they spend their time there. I know that these students, when they watch TV, they add subtitles to everything. And, or they want to change it to Spanish. Right? So, they are just a lot more comfortable with the Spanish language. So, for those students who aren’t spending enough time immersed in the English, you know, I think that they may struggle. But I am pretty confident that a majority of those will get there if they stick to the program and the way that it’s designed. (personal communication, April 30, 2013)

Miss Lopez’s discussion of how the language that is spoken in the home can influence the language abilities of students demonstrates some of the challenges that teachers face in getting their students to become bilingual. Students who travel to Mexico on the weekends might not get as much exposure to English as those students who stay in California. They also might not be exposed to the acculturation process that happens for bicultural students (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2008). That being said, that doesn’t mean that they won’t eventually become fully bilingual.

Based on the interviews with the second, third, and fourth grade teachers at HSCS, I believed that students became progressively more bilingual. Hence, I was curious about what the kindergarten teacher, Miss Sanchez, would tell me when I asked about the bilingualism of
her students. Miss Sanchez differentiated between being fully bilingual and having the
capacity for full bilingualism. Her definition of being fully bilingual includes reading,
writing, an ability to translate, and an understanding of the two cultures. In her kindergarten
class, she considered only four (4) out of twenty-one (21) students as fully bilingual. Despite
this, Miss Sanchez acknowledged that twenty (20) out of twenty-one (21) of her students
were able to read in both English and Spanish at the end of the 2012-2013 school year.

Traditional public schools, like Armstrong, are designed for students to become fully
competent in English. California Proposition 227 mandated that immigrant children be put
into an English intensive environment as soon as possible (Montaño et al. 2005) The teachers
I interviewed at Armstrong, Miss Costa and Mrs. Williams, stated that they would consider a
majority of their students bilingual. This shows that although Armstrong is not a school that
is specifically created for bilingual students, bilingualism is still a major part of identity for
many of the students.

Miss Costa’s classroom is made up of 32 students and 19 of those are bilingual. Miss
Costa told me that there are “different degrees of bilingualism” (personal communication,
May 24, 2013). Her knowledge of the students’ bilingualism is based on observations
of parent-child communication in Spanish. She presumed that her 4th grade students “probably
[have] like a third, second grade level” of Spanish literacy (personal communication, May
24, 2013).

Half of Mrs. Williams’ class is bilingual because 10 out of 20 students speak Spanish
and English. Mrs. Williams defined students as bilingual when they “can understand what
another person is saying in Spanish and in English and they can respond to either” (personal
communication, June 5, 2013). She mentioned that she’d previously had students who were
on “the cusp” of being bilingual because one of the languages was more dominant than the
other (personal communication, June 5, 2013). Mrs. Williams’ awareness of students’
bilingualism happens when she meets the parents and learns what language they speak at
home. She will attempt to speak Spanish to those students that she believes to be bilingual as
a way to gauge their level of language competency.

Mrs. Williams and the five other teachers interviewed expressed that they didn’t
perceive any additional challenges with bilingual students when compared to their
experiences working with monolingual students. Nevertheless, she discussed her experiences
with Mexican immigrant children when I asked about the challenges that she faces teaching bilingual students. Although she is able to communicate with Spanish-speaking students and parents, she still encounters difficulties in helping them transition.

Mrs. Williams: Umm.. not real challenges, just that some of them just come from Mexico and I’m supposed to teach them only in English and they just don’t have anything. But they understand in English so I have to use my Spanish for them. But trying to teach them how to read is very difficult because they don’t have the background that the kids who were raised in the United States have. That would be my biggest challenge. The ones that come straight from Mexico. (personal communication, June 5, 2013)

The teachers at HSCS and Armstrong stated that they considered at least half of their class to be bilingual. My interviews with teachers highlighted the large bilingual presence in many elementary classrooms in the SDUSD and CVUSD. Based on my research, teachers do not associate additional challenges with working with bilingual students. By providing formal education in bi-literacy, HSCS students have potentially more opportunities following graduation. While traditional public schools in California are limited by restrictive policies from the 1990s, HSCS is able to aid the development of bilingual global citizens.

**IDENTITY, HERITAGE, AND THE BENEFITS OF BILINGUALISM**

While I was conducting research at HSCS, I interviewed five fourth grade students who were selected by Mr. Parker as being bilingual and willing to participate in the project, with parental permission. I interviewed two boys and three girls and assigned them pseudonyms: Manuel, Juan, Alejandra, Diana, and Maria. All of the students had begun school at HSCS during kindergarten, when the school had a different name. Therefore, all the students had been exposed solely to the dual language format and did not have experiences in the traditional public school system.

The student demographics of HSCS show that the school is a majority Latino/a. During my interviews with five fourth graders, I wanted to know how they self-identified so I asked each student to tell me how they saw themselves. The students’ responses show their interpretations of their cultural heritage and many of their answers demonstrate their bilingualism. Students were asked how they identify themselves and about the benefits of speaking two languages.
Three out of five students stated that they were Mexican-American, including: Manuel, Alejandra, and Maria. Juan told me that he was “mostly American because I haven’t been to Guatemala” (personal communication, May 7, 2013). Juan felt that he would be more attached to his Guatemalan roots after his planned summer trip. One student, Diana, stated that she identified as a “Latina” because of her mix of Mexican and Nicaraguan heritage (personal communication, May 9, 2013).

In addition, I asked them to tell me whether or not there were good and bad things about being able to speak two languages. All of the students communicated that there were advantages to being bilingual. Each of the students also expressed that they didn’t know of any “bad” parts about speaking both Spanish and English. This showed that the students are aware of present and future rewards of their language skills and that they have not been exposed to a culture which devalues their heritage language.

Manuel said that the benefit of being bilingual is the ability to translate in both languages. He stated that bilingual people are able to travel to places, like Mexico, and communicate with the people who speak Spanish. During our interview, Manuel said he was able to speak Spanish with his grandparents who live in Mexico. Additionally, Manuel was firm in his assessment that there is “nothing bad about talking in both languages” (personal communication, May 7, 2013).

The other fourth grade male student, Juan, also believed that a positive aspect of being bilingual is the ability to translate. Juan added that being bilingual allowed him to “talk to more people” than he used to (personal communication, May 7, 2013). Juan recognized that developing his language skills in Spanish and English would help him make more friends. For example, the kids in his neighborhood primarily speak English. Juan told me that because his English is improving, he is able to play more with them.

Alejandra, Maria, and Diana all stated that there were no problems associated with being bilingual. Alejandra believed that her bilingualism would allow her to “help other people” through assisting them with translation (personal communication, May 14, 2013). She commented that bilingualism gives people a chance to get a better job. Another student, Maria, articulated that being bilingual allows you to understand more people. During my interview with Diana, she told me that she knew “a lot” of good things about speaking two languages (personal communication, May 9, 2013).
Diana: I’ll tell some. One is because it’s really helpful during school and during my life because of my family heritage. Also, because I have a lot of family members. Third, because jobs require different languages. Say, if you are an accountant, somebody speaks Spanish and they aren’t going to have anybody to help. And no help in both languages, no money. (personal communication, May 9, 2013)

Her family members in Mexico and Nicaragua don’t speak English, so her ability to speak Spanish is a necessity if she wants to communicate with them directly. Her response corresponds to Manuel’s, who also saw Spanish as a gateway to speaking with his Mexican family. When I asked Diana if she will always speak Spanish, she said, “My goal is to never forget my heritage and forget my own language. So that’s my goal” (personal communication, May 9, 2013). Heritage was a word that she specifically brought into the conversation twice. When I asked her what heritage meant, she told me about her Mexican-Nicaraguan ancestry. She spoke at length about the food and environment of Nicaragua, a place she had yet to visit. Her grandparents and father told her many stories about the country, which made her want to travel there. Diana saw a direct connection between her ability to speak Spanish and her heritage. I wanted to know how she imagined her connection to her family and identity if she was unable to communicate in her heritage language.

Annika: Okay, so, let’s just say you couldn’t speak Spanish. I know that’s a weird thing, but let’s just pretend. Do you think that you would feel less connected to your heritage, to your family, if you didn’t speak Spanish?

Diana: I would feel that I wouldn’t be, that I wouldn’t feel very connected because I know that, I would probably be letting myself down and be very frustrated because is almost all Mexican. And they always have conversations in Mexican because that’s their first language. But if I didn’t speak Spanish, I would feel really left out. Because my family, because all my cousins know Spanish as their one language. (personal communication, May 9, 2013)

Diana saw her progress at HSCS in reading, writing, and speaking Spanish as a part of her connection to her biculturalism. She said, “I feel like I’m continuing my heritage because I practice here and I still have some words to learn. Like a lot of them” (personal communication, May 9, 2013). The bilingual charter school helped her gain the tools necessary to be a competent Spanish speaker who can communicate with her cousins, aunts and uncles, as well as her grandparents. Diana’s older brother’s traditional public elementary education that did not include Spanish courses and she was keenly aware of that difference, as you will later read in this chapter.
In Diana’s opinion, HSCS was teaching her “the real thing” about history of America (personal communication, May 9, 2013). Diana discussed her knowledge about Civil Rights Movement leaders, such as Mahatma Gandhi, Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr., and Caesar Chavez. When I asked Diana what Chavez did, she said, “Um, he stood up for Mexican farmers because they threw pesticides at them and they just treated them like animals. And I thought that was very wrong because of their skin color” (personal communication, May 9, 2013). In my opinion, it is impressive that a fourth grader was aware of the civil injustices sustained by people of color in United States history and had such a profound grasp on many of the themes central to my thesis.

The fourth grade students at HSCS that I interviewed allowed me to recognize the diverse experiences of bilingual students in regards to identity and heritage. All of the students believed that there are only positive benefits to being bilingual. They did not identify any negative aspects to being able to speak two languages. Diana’s insights show how students are being taught to be critical thinkers about the connection between the mission of HSCS and her heritage.

**Students’ Preferred Idiom and Languages Spoken at Home, by Parents, and Friends**

During my interviews with students, I inquired about their parents’ and friends’ language skills, their home language, and their language preference. I designed the interview questions to gauge the exposure of languages in the child’s home environment and to focus on the students’ experiences as developing bilingual speakers. Additionally, I wanted to determine if there were any discernible patterns in regards to language preferences. The students’ responses varied greatly and they each had their own unique take on family dynamics in regards to language.

The students’ responses concerning their parents show the diversity at HSCS. Manuel’s mother is bilingual, while his father is Spanish-dominant. Juan’s mom speaks Spanish but is learning English and his dad is bilingual. Juan also mentioned that his aunt lives with them and she only speaks Spanish. Alejandra’s parents are both bilingual and work at schools. In Diana’s family, her parents are bilingual, however, her Nicaraguan grandmother struggles to speak advanced English. Maria’s parents both speak Spanish and
are extremely limited in English. She stated that she lives with her mom who only speaks “two words” of English (personal communication, May 14, 2013).

The language skills of the parents greatly influenced what language was spoken at home. Half of the students reported that they spoke Spanish in the home, while the other half stated they spoke a mixture of Spanish and English. Four out of five of the students remarked that they spoke both languages with their siblings. Diana’s response reflected her family’s desire to help her brother become fully bilingual because he is older and did not have an opportunity to attend HSCS.

Annika: Um, and when you are at home, what language do you speak?
Diana: Mostly English but we try to speak Spanish with my brother.
Annika: Okay. Does he need to work on his Spanish or why?
Diana: Yeah, he can read and write Spanish really good but when he reads out loud, he can’t really pronounce the words like Nicara—uh, Nicaragua. (personal communication, May 9, 2013)

After discussing what languages the students spoke at home, I asked the 4th graders about the languages that their friends speak. I also inquired about the importance of their friends being able to communicate in Spanish. This question produced mixed results, which may have been due to the nature of the question in general. The fourth grade students generally believed it was important for their friends to speak Spanish because it was easier for them to speak in Spanish and their relationship wouldn’t require any translating. For certain students, the need to speak in Spanish with friends was based on their own perceptions of their language skills.

During my interview with Manuel, he concentrated on the fact that if his friends spoke Spanish, then they could communicate without a translator. Manuel believed he was more advanced in Spanish; therefore he thought it was necessary for his friends to speak Spanish. Juan had similar concerns about speaking with the children in his neighborhood due to his comfort level with English.

Annika: Okay. So, do you think it’s important that your friends speak Spanish?
Juan: Yes, so we can communicate because I don’t know that much English so we can communicate.
Annika: You’ve been doing good on your English here with me!
Juan: But I barely know some words!
Annika: Okay, so you feel like you are still working on your English but you feel like your Spanish is really good?

Juan: My Spanish is really good but English.. I’m kinda working on it.

Annika: Okay.

Juan: Like some words, I don’t understand. Like I do know English but the definitions of the words.

Annika: So you think things are maybe easier in Spanish for you? And why do you think they are easier in Spanish?

Juan: ‘Cause they teach me a lot of Spanish ‘cause also on Saturdays, we have like people come over, and we teach Spanish. And I mainly the one paying attention so I could pay attention for more Spanish. (personal communication, May 7, 2013)

Based on this interview excerpt, it is clear that Juan’s lack of confidence in English impacts the way that he perceives the value of Spanish in his life. His insecurities in English demonstrate some of the difficulties that students have when learning two languages during elementary school. Although Juan did not have any trouble expressing himself in English to me during our interview, he still was under the impression that he was not adequate in English because he doesn’t understand certain words. Juan prefers to maintain friendships with children who speak Spanish because it allows him to be more relaxed in his language skills. Other students also believed that it was important for their friends to speak Spanish, but not because their own language skills were lacking.

Alejandra and Maria both stated that they preferred their friends to be Spanish speakers. For Alejandra, she saw a direct relationship between language abilities and future job prospects for her friends. She said, “if they have a job like being a teacher or something like that. They have to know both languages” (personal communication, May 14, 2013). Maria, on the other hand, stated that it was important for her friends to speak Spanish “because then you can, if some-if there is an emergency you can know- you can actually understand what the people are saying” (personal communication, May 14, 2013). Maria and Alejandra’s answers showcase real world examples of how having multilingual friends can positively impact the world.

After discussing their friendships, I asked the students about their language preference. Of the five students, three stated that they preferred Spanish and two students preferred English. The split in their answers demonstrated the impact of their parents’ and
friends’ dominant languages and their home environments. A pattern emerged regarding their language preference that had more to do with their experiences outside of school than their education at HSCS.

Manuel and Juan stated that they felt more comfortable in Spanish. While both boys had at least one parent who was bilingual and another parent who was Spanish-dominant, they both told me that they speak Spanish the majority of time when they are at home. In addition to Manuel and Juan, Diana also stated that she preferred Spanish. She stated that she liked Spanish because of the fast manner that people speak the language, which “gives me a lot of laugh because I can’t understand anything they are saying mostly” (personal communication, May 9, 2013).

The two other girls told me that they preferred speaking in English. Maria said that she thought that learning Spanish was not fun in school because in class there was a lot of reading, which is why she preferred English. Maria’s preference of English was also influenced by her mother’s limited skills in English, which require her to be the main translator for her family. The students’ feelings regarding translation will be discussed in the next section. The other student who preferred English, Alejandra, based her answer on her relationships with her friends.

Annika: Okay, what language do you like to speak the most?
Alejandra: English.
Annika: And why English?
Alejandra: I don’t know cause like, like um, most of my friends speak English. And then I got like used to it since I started going to this school and I don’t know. I just like it. (personal communication, May 14, 2013)

In summary, almost all of the 4th grade students at HSCS had at least one bilingual parent. During interviews, I discovered that the students spoke to their siblings in a mixture of English and Spanish. Additionally, all of the students believed it was important that their friends speak Spanish. The students were divided in their preference for language, based on their home environment and exposure. My findings bring attention to the multiple factors that can influence a child’s perception about their bilingual skills outside of the academic setting.
The Process of Translation for the Families of 4th Grade Students

As bilingual students, I wanted to determine if students were being used as translators for members of their family and under what circumstances. The teachers at HSCS are able to communicate with every parent; therefore, students are not asked to be mediators for their parents during parent-teacher meetings. I wanted to understand the students’ experiences with translating outside of HSCS and how they perceived their role as a cultural interpreter.

I began with asking students about whether or not they translated for their parents or their extended family. This conversation built upon the discussion of what languages their parents spoke and the home environment. Manuel, for example, only had to translate for his father because he is Spanish-dominant. Manuel said that he began translating at age “seven or eight” and only really translates for his dad “when he’s talking to his boss” (personal communication, May 7, 2013). Manuel’s father works in construction and Manuel sometimes helps his dad communicate with the boss.

Juan was also six or seven when he started translating for his mother, father, and aunt. I asked him to clarify for me what he helped translate for each member of his family. Juan told me that he helps his dad speak to his boss occasionally and joined his father at the job site last year. He also spoke about helping his aunt at her job at the hospital because she couldn’t communicate with her English-speaking boss and didn’t know which beds to clean. For his mother, Juan helps her negotiate issues with the neighbors.

Annika: So let’s just talk about your mom, what do you translate for her?
Juan: ‘Cause like when, our neighbor is talking to her, she calls me to translate her, like our neighbor tells us, “You can’t have those curtains” And she says, “What are you saying?” And my mom calls me and she wants me to say it in Spanish, “Why do you have those curtains?” or something.
Annika: How often does that happen?
Juan: Me translating to her?
Annika: For your mom, yeah.
Juan: Like.. every seven days a month. (personal communication, May 7, 2013)

Maria, whose parents are both Spanish-speakers, has to translate for her mother on a regular basis. Maria began helping her family translate when she was five years old and assists her mom when they are running errands. Maria remarked that all of her siblings have
to help her mom translate except for her “baby brother” who was too young to speak (personal communication, May 14, 2013). Maria stated that she does not have to help her father with translation because she doesn’t see him often and when they are together, they typically go to a place that is operated by Spanish speakers.

On the other side of the spectrum were Alejandra and Diana. Both of Alejandra’s parents are bilingual and she stated that she does not have to translate for her parents or her uncle, who lives with them. Similarly, Diana responded that she does not translate for her parents because they are bilingual. She does translate things into Spanish for her brother and she also helps her Nicaraguan grandmother with “real hard, difficult words” in English (personal communication, May 9, 2013).

I followed up only with four out of the five student participants to inquire whether or not they liked translating for their families because Alejandra did not have any experiences translating. The students expressed a variety of reasons why they did or did not enjoy translating. On the positive side, Manuel and Juan both stated that they liked translating. Manuel said it was “fun” and allowed him to experience new things in his conversations that he had not done before (personal communication, May 7, 2013). Juan enjoyed translating because it allowed him to learn “more than [he] knows” (personal communication, May 7, 2013).

Diana and Maria had conflicting opinions in regards to translation because both girls stated that there were good and bad aspects to translating. Diana liked translating for her grandma and brother “sometimes yeah, and sometimes no. Sometimes no because I’m really tired and I just want to go do something else, like play with my dog” (personal communication, May 9, 2013). Diana also said that she enjoyed helping them because she knew that they needed help and that she is doing a good deed. At the end of our discussion, I asked Diana if there was anything else I should know about children translating for their parents.

Diana: Well maybe, there’s only thing I could think about it.
Annika: Okay.
Diana: Um, say like, when they translate, they translate something that many often is very easy to pronounce. But maybe sometimes, their parents haven’t gone to school and they haven’t spoken that language.
Annika: Mhmm.

Diana: So maybe, you should know that, it’s very common that people in the U.S., the kids translate for the parents because the kids had the privilege. But the parents did not because of their families not having a lot of money because of their skin color. (personal communication, May 9, 2013)

Diana’s comments about the educational level of immigrant parents impacting their language abilities awed me. She connected the educational opportunities of the United States to “privileges” that second generation children have in comparison to their immigrant parents. Her observations regarding wealth and people of color also demonstrate her understanding about discrimination and the need for process of social mobility in El Cajon.

Diana shared a unique impression of what it meant to be bilingual with monolingual parents. While Diana only assists her brother and grandmother occasionally, Maria often has to assist her mom because she doesn’t speak English. Maria did not find the process of translating for her mother very rewarding.

Annika: Do you like translating for your mom?

Maria: But sometimes it gets annoying.

Annika: What do you mean sometimes it gets annoying?

Maria: Like, to always translate.

Annika: Yeah? ‘Cause you feel like you have to help her a lot with translating? How often do you think you help her? Every day?

Maria: I think like maybe every two days.

Annika: Every two days? Okay, and it’s mostly when you guys are outside of the house shopping, or does she ask questions when you guys are watching TV or something?

Maria: Well, we watch TV in English only. Because we have it mostly in English so they can’t be in Spanish. We have to, and I don’t like them being in Spanish, it’s weird.

Annika: Yeah?

Maria: So then, I don’t- I don’t- she’s just looking at the pictures but she never understands it. Like, do you understand Chinese? Like, it would be weird if it was like they don’t know. That’s how it would feel for her.

Annika: Okay. So, you said it’s not always annoying. So, sometimes it’s okay when you translate? Why is it okay some days and annoying other days?

Maria: Because it’s like having to wait a lot and be with her and not do my own stuff. And then the other days when I’m like happy.
Annika: Do you feel like she is happy that you help her? Does she say Thank you when you translate?

Maria: She doesn’t say thank you but she hugs me. (personal communication, May 14, 2013)

Not all the students enjoyed translating for their families and expressed a variety of reasons for their feelings regarding translation. The diversity of their responses represent the multiple experiences that bilingual students can have regarding using their skills as a translator. Maria, who had experience translating for her mother frequently, found the process to be “annoying” (personal communication, May 14, 2013). Whereas Diana’s comments regarding it being a child’s “privilege” to help their parents shows her understanding of the way in which the children of immigrants can help their parents (personal communication, May 9, 2013). Diana’s comments demonstrate that fourth graders are more than capable of expressing their knowledge and insights about concepts such as heritage, identity, and community.

**Future Jobs**

Mrs. Gonzalez’s goal was to provide quality bilingual education to the children of El Cajon so that they could have an opportunity to go to college. All of the teachers that I spoke to also echoed the objective of college and better job opportunities for their students. As part of my thesis, I wanted to find out what future occupation the students at HSCS envisioned for themselves. Most of the jobs that the five students had a preference for were jobs that related to the mission of service and care.

Manuel first stated that he wanted to be a construction worker, like his father. After thinking about it, he amended his statement to include a firefighter or a police office. Juan had a similar response and told me he wanted to be a firefighter, a SWAT (special weapons and tactics) police officer, or an EMT (emergency medical technician) but didn’t want to “like operate [on] people” (personal communication, May 7, 2013). Additionally, Juan stated that he wanted to remain close to the border and thought about becoming a teacher as well.

Alejandra also stated that she would like to be a teacher. She was inspired by the teachers at HSCS and told me that she enjoyed learning. Alejandra likes “to say stuff about what we learned when they ask a question” and to participate in class (personal communication, May 14, 2013). She believed that it was possible to teach in a fun way that
allowed students to go beyond what is learned inside the classroom. Alejandra elaborated that she’d prefer to teach about nature with a class outdoors so that her students could experience it firsthand.

Diana was very firm in her decision to be a veterinarian because she “loved animals” (personal communication, May 9, 2013). She told me about all the different pets she’s ever had and how she really enjoys being around her dog. Another student, Maria, wanted to become a beautician, like her aunt. Maria believed that she would enjoy doing nails and having a lot of make-up.

In closing, the students of HSCS saw a bright future for themselves. All of the students had ambitions to have an actual career, not just dreams of becoming famous. Although the students’ career ideas may be stereotypical and gendered, their choices could positively impact the demographics for the U.S.’s labor force. According to statistics from 2013, Latinos only made up 15 percent of the “protective service occupations”, such as firefighters and police officers (U.S. Department of Labor 2014). Additionally, less than 10 percent of all veterinarians and teachers are Latinos (U.S. Department of Labor 2014). These annual averages demonstrate the need for more Latinos to enter into professional occupations.

**SPANISH-SPEAKING PARENTS**

I surveyed thirteen Spanish-speaking parents while they waited to pick up their children after school. All of the parent participants were female and had at least two children, which represents the demographics of a majority of the parents that I saw picking up their children. The age range for participants was 28 to 43 years old and the average age was 37 years old. In this section, I will discuss the responses from parents at HSCS and Armstrong Elementary regarding their identity and language abilities. In addition, I asked HSCS participants about their previous experiences in traditional public schools and why they chose the bilingual charter school. HSCS attracts parents for a variety of reasons: location, mission, pedagogy, and caring. The survey instrument was mainly open-ended so that participants could state their experiences and opinions without limiting their responses.

The first question that parents answered on the survey was a blank line for their ethnicity or place of birth. This was intentional to allow parents to self-identify. At HSCS,
five out of eight women chose to write their country of birth, “Mexico” and one woman self-identified as “Mexicana”. One parent specified her city of birth, “Mexico, D.F.”, otherwise known as Mexico City. The last parent wrote her place of birth as “Chula Vista”, which is part of San Diego County. A majority of the parents that I spoke to were immigrant parents from Mexico, and only one stated that she was born in the United States.

The majority of parents at Armstrong Elementary also identified as Mexican. Similar to responses at HSCS, two women specifically referred to themselves as “Mexicana”. One participant stated that she was from San Diego. The remaining two parents stated that they were from Mexico, one of which listed “GTO,” which stands for Guanajuato, Mexico.

I wanted to determine the language skills of the parents I was speaking to and verify that they were Spanish-speakers. In the survey, there were check boxes for English and/or Spanish and a blank line for any additional languages. The five Armstrong participants all stated that they spoke Spanish. Two of these were English speakers as well, including the San Diego woman and one of the “Mexicana” parents. At HSCS, three parents marked that they were bilingual in Spanish and English. The remaining five women identified themselves as Spanish-speakers.

My data demonstrated that a majority of the parents are Spanish-dominant, based on surveys and interviews with fourth grade students and the teachers. Despite this, my survey instruments were not fail proof because at least one of the parents marked Spanish only, even though she did have limited English skills. This observation was made while I was conducting surveys at HSCS and I recorded the inconsistency in my field notes from May 5, 2013:

I ask if she speaks Spanish solamente (only). She says yes. So imagine my surprise when she asks, in English, if she has to put her phone number and asks if I’m going to ‘call or something’. I say it’s not necessary. When she gets to the English/other languages section, she looks at me. I ask if she speaks English and she says “only little bit”, then shakes her head and does not check the box. I can tell she’s uncomfortable in English but obviously she knows parts.

Based on my interactions with this parent, I would say that she has a basic understanding of the English language, however, I am not in a place to judge her skills. This represents one of the drawbacks in using simple quantitative measures, as I gave parents the
option to mark which languages they spoke. A Likert scale option for language skills might have allowed parents more selection when it came to their language skills.

The parents at HSCS were asked to respond to additional questions: ¿Fue su hijo en una escuela pública antes HSCS? Si es así, ¿Cómo se siente sobre esa experiencia? (Was your child in a public school before HSCS? If yes, how do you feel about this experience?) Five out of eight of the women chose to answer this question. Their answers show the differences that Spanish-speaking parents are aware of when comparing traditional public education and bilingual charter schools. The parents expressed their frustrations with previous administration and curriculum, as well as praised the environment that HSCS has created.

Two HSCS parents discussed the ways in which schools make commitments to the students and how important it is to them to honor those promises. One parent said, “muy diferente esta escuela tiene un compromiso real por cada niño” (very different, this school has a real commitment with each child). HSCS makes the promise for each child to have an opportunity to go to college, which is something that the parents responded positively to. Another parent mentioned the failures of other schools, “para mi opinión la escuela a la que mis hijos asistieron no cumplía con las requisitos” (in my opinion, the school that my sons attended did not fulfill the requirements).

The dedication of traditional public school teachers was called into question by one of the parents. She commented, “Fue algo deprimente porque los maestros no tienen las ganas de enseñar a los alumnos” (It was kind of depressing because the teachers have no desire to teach the students). A parent from Mexico commented on her son’s preference for English because he became “acostumbrado” (accustomed) to it in his English classroom. The differences between traditional public schools and HSCS were further discussed by this parent: "Bueno siento que una publica no pone un enfoque en el rendimiento académico como HSCS en HSCS los maestros visitan su casa y hay una conección mas cercana con los maestros y la Directora” (Well I feel that the public school does not put a focus on the academic performance like HSCS. At HSCS the teachers visit your house and there is a closer connection with the teachers and the Director).

Following the question about previous experiences at public schools, HSCS parents were asked to state their reasons for enrolling their son or daughter in the bilingual charter
school. All eight parents decided to answer this open-ended question. Location, pedagogy, heritage language instruction, and caring emerged as major themes. One parent based her decision entirely on the idea that charter schools are superior. She said, “A mi siempre me a parecido que las escuelas charter son mejor” (It seems to me that charter schools are always better).

The convenience of location appealed to at least one parent in El Cajon. After her children were enrolled and as she learned more about the school’s pedagogy, she believed that HSCS provided students with opportunities and tools to succeed. The mission of HSCS appealed to another parent, who stated that she applied her children to go to school “por la amplia visión y las metas de educación” (for the broad vision and the goals of education). The parents that I surveyed value the mission of creating students who are critical thinkers, global citizens, and bilingual communicators. While not all of the parents may initially understand the predominance of Spanish instruction at first, parents eventually learn to support the school’s goals and format. One parent discussed her original apprehension of the Spanish to English ratio as part of her answer.

Al principio dudaba si era lo correcto aprender puro español para kínder pero después del primer trimestre me di cuenta del rendimiento de mi hija en los dos idiomas fue muy bueno. Que me gustaría que hubiera más escuelas como esta que los maestros dedican extra tiempo para estar listos al día siguiente con sus clases y que se preocupan por cada uno de sus estudiantes como si fueran sus propios hijos.

(At first I doubted if it was right to learn pure Spanish for kindergarten but after the first trimester I realized my daughter’s performance in both languages was very good. I wish there was more schools like this that the teachers devote extra time to be ready for the next day for their classes and who care about each of their students like their own children.)

Her response shows that even parents who are Spanish-speaking may have concerns about the 90-10 ratio in kindergarten. This parent, however, saw over time that her daughter was developing skills in both languages. Her skepticism is warranted because the format is different from traditional public schools and she was able to see the differences in regards to the dedication of the teachers. She believed that HSCS teachers committed more of their time so that they can provide their students with the best instruction possible. Additionally, she also recognized the amount of caring that the teachers demonstrate, which was a theme discussed by Mrs. Gonzalez, the teachers, and the students of HSCS.
More than half of the parents discussed the dual-language format of HSCS as the main reason for their children being enrolled. Many of the parents rely upon the teachers of HSCS to help their children gain competency in their heritage language. A parent wrote that her two older sons are unable to speak Spanish fluently, so she enrolled her youngest so that he may become bilingual. Another parent put it simply, “para que hable y escriba bien en los dos idiomas” (so that he can speak and write well in both languages).

The advantages of bilingualism were the rationale for a parent who said that she wanted her daughter to speak two languages “para su futuro mejor” (for a better future). She also envisioned her daughter being able to help people who only spoke Spanish. Spanish-speaking immigrants can feel a sense of shock when they first move to the United States and are surrounded by a new culture and different language. This was a major concern for one of the parents and was part of her decision to enroll her daughter at HSCS.

Porque cuando llegamos aquí Estados Unidos ella no sabia ingles y no la quise llenar con tantos cambios primero de país y luego de lenguaje y me siento muy satisfecha de que no perdio su lenguaje principal sino que aprendio uno nuevo y los 2 los habla muy bien.

(Because when we arrived here to the U.S. she did not know English and I did not want to fill her with so many changes, first of country and then of language and I feel very satisfied that she did not lose her native language but that she learned a new one and she speaks both really well.)

The Spanish-speaking parents that I surveyed for this study were predominately immigrant women from Mexico who had multiple children. According to my data, 8 out of 13 women surveyed had limited English language skills, which indicates a need for permanent Spanish-speaking staff members at public schools in the San Diego area to improve parent-teacher communication. The mothers at HSCS who had previous experiences in the traditional public education system expressed that they were dissatisfied with the teachers and pedagogy. Spanish-speaking parents enroll their students at HSCS for a variety of reasons, including their ability to communicate with all of the bilingual teachers, which can create a closer connection that encourages parental involvement.

**Parental Involvement and Communication**

The literature shows that parental involvement means something different to Mexican-American parents than it does to educators (Delgado-Gaitan 1994). By being open
to the experience of the families, teachers are able to connect and communicate effectively with parents (De Gaetano 2007; Lopez et al. 2001). The teachers at HSCS and Armstrong Elementary involve parents in Latin American cultural activities and encourage parent participation in the classroom, which are cultural strategies that work for immigrant parents (De Gaetano 2007; Lopez et al. 2001). This section triangulates the data from teachers, Spanish-speaking parents, and 4th grade students in order to understand the nuances of successful strategies that work at both schools to increase parental involvement and parent-teacher communication.

Teachers discussed their use of a variety of methods to communicate with parents: face-to-face, phone calls, text messages, and written notes. Many of them stated that their preferred form of communication depended upon the situation. For issues regarding behavior, most teachers choose face-to-face because it is more personal. The teachers I interviewed presented different perspectives on each school’s outreach to parents. HSCS encourages parental involvement through shared language, an open visitation policy, an active parent-teacher organization, and activities such as “Math Nights”. Armstrong Elementary uses a welcoming environment, “Family Wednesday”, and flyers to encourage participation by Spanish-speaking parents.

At Armstrong Elementary, I asked Mrs. Williams and Miss Costa about the impact of parental involvement and if they promote participation in their classrooms. Miss Costa told me that parental involvement is important because parents can positively or negatively influence the relationship between students and teachers. She creates a rapport with parents by smiling and greeting them, regardless of language barriers.Acknowledging Spanish-speaking parents makes them more likely to feel welcome on school campuses and therefore more likely to volunteer (De Gaetano 2007).

To help facilitate a welcoming environment for parents, Armstrong Elementary invites families to the campus once a month for an event called “Family Wednesday”. During my interview with Miss Costa, she expressed that over the last two years, she has “had the most parents every month” and holds the record (personal communication, May 24, 2013). After their visit, Miss Costa sends home thank notes in English to the families who participate. In her opinion, the parents appreciate the gesture regardless of the language that the note is written in. Miss Costa said, “And um, I believe some of the parents really like to
hear the English. Um, cause they’re um, interested in learning too what their kids are learning” (personal communication, May 24, 2013). Miss Costa’s opinion is that the parents appreciate her efforts despite any language barriers. She has maintained successful relationships with Spanish-speaking parents because she created a warm environment and invited parents to volunteer in her classroom every morning.

Annika: You mentioned that you had a Spanish-speaking parent who helps you out in the mornings.

Miss Costa: I do. I have two.

Annika: How do you guys navigate that? That’s what I was curious about.

Miss Costa: So, the way it started out is that a Spanish-speaking support staff asked like, ‘Miss Costa would like to have more instruction time during her day and she can buy back like 5-7 minutes everyday if you wouldn’t mind putting out the breakfast.’ And so she does that for me. And so that’s how it started. And now, just saying hello, greeting her, and saying thank you, and um, just the kids cause before the kids were doing the job. So the students knew what their mom should be doing sort of thing. And um, I think it’s just the welcoming and saying thank you, even though we don’t communicate much, helps. And it’s funny because there are a lot of words in Spanish that I know but I have a very hard time putting them into a sentence.

Annika: I was going to say, if you’ve been here since 1997...

Miss Costa: And so I’ll say a couple of words, and the kids always laugh if they hear me say anything in Spanish. It’s like, ‘Oh my god Miss Costa said...’ And so, the kids also, the two little girls, they tell their moms, they talk, and the mom listens, she a lot of times, if I’m saying something, she’s trying to pick up a lot of the English words. So...that’s how we communicate. (personal communication, May 24, 2013)

This was the only time during the interview that Miss Costa acknowledged that she had any competency in Spanish. She admitted that the students tease her when she tries to speak in Spanish, which may discourage her from making real strides. Even so, she relies upon other methods to show her appreciation for the parents’ assistance in her classroom. Miss Costa makes sure to greet the parents and thank them for their help, so that they know they are welcome in her classroom. Her communication with Spanish-speaking parents may be brief or non-verbal but it is clear that she is successful in maintaining relationships and is undeterred by language barriers.

Mrs. Williams is able to communicate directly with Spanish-speaking parents and enjoys having parents volunteer in her classroom. On the day of the interview, I observed
two parents helping in her class. Mrs. Williams encourages parents to help in the classroom, regardless of their education level, and finds tasks that they would be comfortable completing. She said that she sees Spanish-speaking parents as “role models” for the immigrant students (personal communication, June 5, 2013).

As previously discussed, parental involvement by Mrs. Gonzalez and other parents was the catalyst for the creation of HSCS. The level of parental involvement at HSCS is high because there is an active parents’ organization on campus that helps teachers through volunteerism in the classrooms and in organizing events. The parents’ organization, during the 2012-2013 school year had over 100 parents volunteer for more than 30 hours each at HSCS. Miss Rivera, a second grade teacher, explained why parents at HSCS are so active.

Miss Rivera: I’d say it’s about double the parental involvement here. The most – the most simplistic straightforward answer would be it’s part of our requirements. If your kids are going to come here, it says it in the handbook. But that’s not really why. Because even though it says it in the handbook, not everybody is going to do it just because of that. I think that parents are involved here because they’ve made – they choose this school. It’s a charter school so it is a choice. They want their children to come here because they have certain goals for their children; they want their kids to be bilingual, in general. I think a lot of parents really are looking at looking way down the road, and they’re wanting, they’ve seen what they’ve struggled through, they know what it’s taken them just to get almost high school education. Or, you know, most of our parents are not college educated and they just think “I want my child’s life to be different”. And they are willing to really do a little bit more to support that (personal communication, April 23, 2013).

While almost all of the teachers I interviewed expressed that they had only one or two committed parents in the classroom, this was not the case for the kindergarten teacher at HSCS. Miss Sanchez revealed that she has many more parents involved in her classroom, including parents from previous years. Miss Sanchez said she had “15 parents” volunteer during the school year whose “main job “is to make sure and I tell the parents, you don’t need to speak in Spanish or English – it doesn’t matter. What matters is that you are able to communicate with the students and make sure that they are on track.” (personal communication, June 4, 2013)

Volunteering in the classroom and events like Armstrong’s “Family Wednesday” allow parents an opportunity to participate in their child’s educational experience. At HSCS, “Math Nights” were held by Mr. Parker for parents to gain the skills necessary to help
children with their homework. By hosting “Math Nights”, Mr. Parker helped empower parents to assist their children with their homework. He invited parents to become part of the conversation in regards to what is being taught to their children (De Gaetano 2007; Lopez et al. 2001).

Mr. Parker: Umm, I think one of the first things that we used to do was “Math Nights” for parents because they wanted to help their kids in the math in fourth grade. But it’s not up to the point where you can just pick it up, like fractions and decimals and things like that. Umm, and so when I used to have math nights, I would really prepare. Like, make sure I had all the vocabulary right because it was for the parents. And so, I think just being overly prepared. Just really making sure that I knew-- and I’m someone who, like, I always have little notes and little things to remind me of what I’m going to say or important vocabulary in English and Spanish so that I use the right words. I mean it’s really easy, like for factors, if I’m not thinking about factors, I’m just saying and these two numbers multiply together. Oh, you have to multiply, So like, we want to make sure that we are using the word factors. So we will write factors. Factores. And so we have those- we are using the right vocabulary. So I think it’s helped me in both English and Spanish to help me make sure I’m saying the right way... the words the right way. (personal communication, April 25, 2013)

Miss Lopez discussed another example of how teachers show that they care. She calls parents when their child does something right, rather than communicating only when there are behavioral issues. She believes that this technique shows parents that she is invested in their children for the right reasons. Miss Lopez stated that letting parents know when their children are excelling is changing the dynamic between herself and the parents, as well as the student. The positive association with communication between teachers and parents connects families and teachers in a way that encourages involvement and academic success.

The fourth grade students at HSCS that I spoke to also discussed the fact that their parents received a majority of positive reports. Juan said that his parents don’t speak with the teacher that much because he is “good” (personal communication, May 7, 2013). Alejandra’s parents communicate directly with the teachers about her performance on a regular basis. In Diana’s case, she said that her teacher would call on the phone for issues relating to behavior. Diana remarked that her teacher sends out flyers for parent meeting nights and that the home visits are when they talk about “my grades and what I’m doing in school” (personal communication, May 9, 2013). Parent-teacher communication is necessary to prepare students for challenging academic pressures like testing.
While I was conducting research at HSCS, I was able to observe the school’s strategies for boosting scores on California State Testing (CST). HSCS prepares for statewide testing by creating theme days the week before testing starts. I observed the teachers and administrators wearing t-shirts that encouraged the students to do well on the exam. The following is an excerpt from my fieldnotes that documents the symbolic activities created for the CST as described by the school’s counselor recorded on May 10, 2013. “She says the pajama day was to remind them of getting 8 hours of sleep. They did a mix-matched sock day to “sock the CSTs”, stars because they are superstars. Sports jerseys because they are a team.” Additionally, I observed parents volunteering on campus during standardized testing to provide additional support for students.

The visitation policy at HSCS has fostered a unique environment where parents feel comfortable on campus, as I frequently noticed parents wandering freely on campus. The visitation policy at HCSC was originally open door. Parents needed to sign in the office and take an identifying “Visitor” badge. The visitation policy has recently changed due to California’s Megan’s Law (State of California 2013) Megan’s Law refers to legislation that deals with notifying the public about the whereabouts of convicted sexual offenders in their community. HSCS has complied with Megan’s Law regulations regarding visitors on the campus. In order to verify that visitors are not sexual offenders, potential visitors must fill out additional paperwork. This change in policy also requires parents to submit formal identification, such as a driver’s license or government identification. The new rules at HSCS have not necessarily deterred parents from visiting the school; however, some teachers have noticed a small decrease in parent volunteers. Additionally, the rules regarding providing government identification may prevent undocumented immigrant parents from visiting the school.

There is a key difference in the way that the two schools allow visitations because many traditional elementary schools, including Armstrong Elementary, require parents to set up a meeting in advance that can be denied by teachers. One of the parents that I surveyed at Armstrong spoke to me about the difficulties she encountered when she tried to enter her child’s classroom. The parent was under the impression that the teacher maintained an open door policy and that she was able to visit the classroom at any time. The teacher asked the
parent to leave the classroom in front of all the students because she felt the parent caused a
disruption. I recorded the parent’s recollection of events in my fieldnotes from May 20, 2013.

“Upon entry, the teacher became upset and asked her to leave. She said she might
have entered loudly but it wasn’t the right way to talk to her. She thought the teacher
shouldn’t talk like that in front of the kids. The teacher said to make an appointment to visit,
but the participant said that she knew she’d be prepared and on her best behavior. She wanted
a chance to drop in whenever and see her daughter too. She ended up taking her daughter
when she left the classroom and talked to the Principal. But she told me it wasn’t fixed and
there was tension still. She said there was never a mention of what the teacher did wrong in
the situation.”

This incident reflects contrasting expectations between a parent and school staff. It is
possible this event was due to cross-cultural miscommunications. The parent expressed to me
that she felt it was her right to check up on her daughter at school at any time. The mother
also stated that she felt a lot more was going on and implied there were vast differences in
how Mexican parents were treated, compared to Euro-American parents. This
misunderstanding could have been an opportunity for the Principal and school administrators
to discuss visitation policy and to show consideration for the parents’ expectations. Cross-
cultural misunderstandings can occur due to culturally embedded, or ‘hidden’, knowledge
about rules and policies. Immigrant students and parents must navigate culturally sensitive
situations based on unfamiliar customs and practices.

Although I documented one example of parent-teacher miscommunication, almost all
of the Spanish-speaking parents surveyed stated that they felt they were aware of their child’s
progress in school. Spanish-speaking parents were asked to check all the methods they
receive information, including: letters, talk with teacher, Internet, Facebook/social
communication websites, talk with another parent, talk with your child(ren), or to list other
forms. Additionally, parents were asked which language they used to speak with their child’s
teacher(s). Not surprisingly, the Spanish-speaking parents at Armstrong used their English
skills to communicate with teachers or required a translator. At the bilingual charter school,
the parents predominately preferred to speak to teachers in Spanish.

At HSCS, all eight mothers responded that they spoke with their children and the
teachers for information. The third most popular method was letters, followed by the Internet,
and then talking with other parents. Spanish-speaking parents at HSCS are less likely to rely on written information or other parents for information when they are able to communicate directly with the teachers. One parent wrote in an additional method, phone calls. Direct face-to-face communication and phone calls were preferred by most of HSCS’s teachers.

In comparison to HSCS, four out of five Spanish-speaking parents at Armstrong prefer letters to speaking with their child’s teacher. The language barriers at Armstrong impact a Spanish-speaking parent’s ability to communicate directly with teachers, so they relied on alternative methods for information. Three parents marked talking with the teacher, talking with their child, and the Internet as the way they received information. Only one parent used talking with other parents as a method. The responses indicate that the Spanish/English flyers are making an impact to reach Spanish-speaking parents at Armstrong.

All of the parents at both schools said they were comfortable speaking with a teacher or administrator if they had a problem about the education of their child. At Armstrong, two parents wrote that they speak with the teacher or Principal. Another mother wrote that they would go to the teacher or office. The office might indicate the help of the Spanish-speaking secretary or the Principal. The responses show that the parents do feel like they are able to communicate with school staff in the case of a behavior or academic situation involving their child. At HSCS, six women responded that they would speak directly with the teacher and the director of the school, Mrs. Gonzalez. The other two parents stated that they would speak with the teachers directly; one also said that she would speak with her sons to try to find a solution.

Overall, a majority of the parents surveyed were satisfied with the efforts of the school to provide them with information. Twelve out of thirteen parents wrote that they felt they received all of the information regarding their child’s education. At Armstrong Elementary, only one parent remarked that they only felt that “a veces” (sometimes) they receive all the information. The mother from Guanajuanto praised Armstrong and said that “todo esta bien” (everything is good) in regards to their communication. One of the bilingual parents suggested that the school provide “information in Spanish and Spanish translators because some parents don’t speak English”, although she personally felt that she received all the information. Also, one parent proposed that the school translate the major points into
Spanish and “que se haga la ceremonia bajo la sombra” (that the ceremony is in the shade). The parents surveyed demonstrated that they feel that they receive all the information necessary at Armstrong regardless of language barriers.

Additionally, I asked if there was anything that HSCS could do to help the parents to access more information. Two of the parents stated that they were always informed and one said that everything was good so far. The mother from Mexico City, D.F., said that she wanted to be called on the phone. The other two parents who responded wanted the school to invest in computer programs that allowed them complete access of the information. “Tal vez que tuvieran un programa en la computadora donde yo pudiera checar su progreso” (Maybe that they had a program on the computer where I could check their progress), she wrote. This shows that some of the parents are interested in HSCS investing resources into the development of technology used for academic progress reports.

Teachers were less likely to view technology as a method of contact because of a possible miscommunication. At HSCS, Miss Rivera explained that face-to-face communication is important so that she can see parents’ reaction. Mrs. Williams stated that many of Armstrong’s parents do not have a computer so she felt that email wasn’t a good option. A potential issue for communication through text or email is that not all families have access to cellphones, the Internet, or computers. As previously discussed in the literature review chapter, the “digital divide” refers to the disparities in access to Internet and computers (Fleming 2012). Low-income parents and Latinos are less likely to purchase new technologies (Becker 2000). Despite these obstacles, there was some support at HSCS for the use of digital technologies for parent-teacher communication. Mr. Parker, for example, relies on text messages because it allows parents to contact him at their own convenience.

Mr. Parker: Um, I’m actually really good with texts. And so it’s very instant, it’s very quick, all of the parents have my cell-phone, all the kids have my cell-phone. So if there’s a question ‘bout a field trip, homework, or if it’s a question about anything at all, you just have to text me. And because email is good but I don’t check my email at every single moment of every single day, right. I always have my phone, I’ll get those texts a lot faster. So that’s by far the best way (personal communication, April 25, 2013).

While a small number of the parents and teachers saw technology as a way to communicate, many teachers relied on traditional methods, such as written letters or flyers. Teachers at HSCS create forms in both languages to accommodate Spanish and English
speaking parents. In my interview with Miss Sanchez, she discussed her creation of a progress report in both English and Spanish for her kindergarten class (see Figure 1).

Miss Sanchez: I do it in writing because unfortunately there is always a lot of questions with this age and then I have students in here that I’m trying to speak to them. It’s harder so I do it through a progress report every week and if they have more questions specific questions, I tell them to wait until the end of class, and then we do it after-school. Or appointments.

Annika: So when you create those, you create them in the language that you already know that parent speaks?

Miss Sanchez: Yes.

Annika: You do the English ones just in English?

Miss Sanchez: No I actually created it a form. It’s totally bilingual. And if I have any specific comments for a particular student, I will have it in English. (personal communication, June 4, 2013)

Flyers are successful alternative ways to communicate even with language barriers. While conducting research at Armstrong Elementary, I saw bilingual flyers available in the school’s office. The flyers contained information regarding monthly events and parent-teacher conferences. During my interview with Miss Costa, she said she doesn’t have one preferred method but tends to use flyers to communicate with parents and sends them out in English and Spanish.

The SDUSD translators provide assistance for Miss Costa during parent-teacher meetings and the individualized education program (IEP) in Spanish. Miss Costa needs a translator to communicate with a majority of her parents, though she stated that she has “some speakers who are African but they have never asked for a translator from the district, you know, in their home language” (personal communication, May 24, 2013). It was unclear if the African parents are able to understand enough English to not need additional assistance.

In addition to district translators, Miss Costa asks for assistance from Armstrong’s English language support teacher and the office secretary for simple translations. She also asks Mrs. Williams to help with quick notes or reminders. Occasionally, a bilingual child “will do a quick translation as long as it’s not a major concern where I’m worried about academics or behavior” (personal communication, May 24, 2013). Miss Costa made it clear
Figure 1. Spanish/English progress report from Miss Sanchez.

that she only uses a district translator for serious matters and uses alternative methods for everyday communication, such as handouts.

Miss Costa’s experiences with district translators falls in line with SDUSD’s policy. According to SDUSD’s Translation and Community Services Manager, the district has two
translation units; one dedicated to the translation of IEPs and one for general translations. There are three full-time Spanish translators, one full-time Vietnamese translator, and one half-time Cambodian translator (personal communication, July 20, 2015). In addition, there are hourly translators employed in Arabic, Somali, and Tagalog. The district sends an interpreter based on the California Education Code, section 48985: “If 15 percent or more of the pupils enrolled in a public school that provides instruction in kindergarten or any grades 1 to 12, inclusive, speak a single primary language other than English, as determined by the census data submitted to the department pursuant to Section 52164 in the preceding year, all notices, reports, statements or records sent to the parent or guardian of any such pupil by the school or school district shall, in addition to being written in English, be written in the primary language, and may be responded to either in English or the primary language”. In case of emergency, and if the district’s department has the language needed, an interpreter is sent to the school site.

For parent teacher conferences, the Manager stated, “the schools utilize their own resources” (personal communication, July 20, 2015). She specified this was because the school district was large and they “would never be able to cover all the needs of each school” (personal communication, July 20, 2015). While I was conducting participant-observation at Armstrong Elementary, I did not observe any occasion in which a district translator was sent to the school. I did witness the smaller number Spanish-speaking staff, in particular the office secretary and Mrs. Williams, assist in translations for Spanish-speaking parents.

While flyers may appeal to Spanish-speaking parents and monolingual English teachers, Mrs. Williams prefers face-to-face communication with parents. Spanish is Mrs. Williams’ second language and she learned Spanish in college and from her friends. As a non-native speaker, there are dialectical differences and slang words that are foreign to Mrs. Williams.

Mrs. Williams: “There has been some years where I can’t communicate with them in either language because their Spanish is broken and it’s also not formal like mine is. I learned the formal way and they have all these slangs and I don’t know what they are saying sometimes so it’s really hard and they have no English so it’s just like, I don’t know. It’s awful. I don’t like it. So I, what I do is try to communicate with the child and then they will talk to the parent. Yeah, and in other languages it’s really hard to because I’ve had kids from Ethiopia and other
countries and I don’t speak their language. And that’s really hard. (personal communication, June 5, 2013)

Cultural differences can also play a role in creating complications that impede successful relationships between parents and teachers. Mrs. Williams discussed cultural differences between Mexican parents and American parents during the interview. She was aware that Mexican immigrants “don’t always look you in the eye. And they look to the side, and that’s not disrespectful, that’s respectful in their culture” (personal communication, June 5, 2013). As a sign of respect, some Mexicans and Mexican-Americans believe that you should not look at a person directly in the eye as “a sign of respect or deference” (Sue 1990:426). In addition, Mrs. Williams pointed out that many Mexicans consider grandparents, aunts and uncles, and cousins as part of their immediate family. Schools must take into consideration these cultural traditions when trying to encourage parental involvement.

At traditional public schools, language barriers may create additional obstacles, however, Mrs. Williams and Miss Costa employ techniques that allow them to have successful connections with the Spanish-speaking parents and families at Armstrong. By creating a welcoming environment, hosting “Family Wednesday”, and encouraging volunteerism, Miss Costa has overcome many of the obstacles that impede immigrant parent-teacher relationships. Mrs. Williams’ skills allow her to assist other teachers communicate with Spanish-speaking parents and understand cultural differences.

Overall, both schools make efforts to include families, encourage parental involvement, and communicate with Spanish-speaking parents. Teachers at HSCS and Armstrong discussed parents’ involvement with activities, such as making copies, handing out snack, or chaperoning fieldtrips. Spanish-speaking parents at both schools are asked to participate regardless of their education or language abilities. Almost all of the surveyed parents stated that they felt informed and aware of their child’s academic performance. A majority of the parents and teachers expressed a preference for flyers and face-to-face communication as effective methods of communicating with Spanish-speaking parents, rather than technological advancements.
ACADEMIC NETWORKING

As previously discussed in the literature review, social networking in education, otherwise known as academic networking, is an emerging research topic that addresses the potential for advancements in technology to be adapted for schools. Academic networking could provide schools with an interactive means of communicating with parents and the community (Childers 2011; Davis 2010). For the purpose of this thesis, I wanted to investigate the usage of academic networking by the teachers, Spanish-speaking parents, and students. I asked them if they maintained a personal account on networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter and if they were aware of HSCS’s Facebook or SDUSD’s Facebook. In addition, I wanted to determine if Spanish-speaking parents actually used either Facebook page for information about their child’s school or education.

The SDUSD and HSCS are currently represented in two locations on the Internet, through a regular domain dedicated to their information and through social networking pages on Facebook. As a traditional public school, Armstrong is overseen by the district and does not have an individual social-networking account. Armstrong does have an individual page dedicated to the school on the SDUSD’s domain, which contains information about the staff and current events. SDUSD maintains both a Spanish and an English version of their social-networking page. Although HSCS is a bilingual charter school, the information on Facebook is only available in English.

Many of HSCS’s teachers use technology in the classroom. During my classroom participant-observation, I witnessed teachers using online Brainpop! videos, and Google documents on class computers, and the video game Just Dance! as part of teacher created curriculum or a reward for good behavior. While these are successful examples of incorporated technology at HSCS, there seems to be some disconnect with academic networking in particular. Most of the teachers had not seen the school’s Facebook website and the parents demonstrated a low level of engagement through survey responses. The fourth grade students also were unaware of HSCS’s Facebook website.

At HSCS, only one of the four teachers that I interviewed had actually seen the Facebook. In fact, most of them didn’t even know that it existed. Two of the four teachers did not use any social media websites themselves, personally or professionally. I also found out that the entire Facebook website was technically blocked through the school’s Internet
security feature. The teachers spoke briefly about their interactions with other teachers and parents on social media and some ideas of the ways in which it could be used to benefit the classroom.

Mr. Parker did not have a Facebook website, nor did he know that HSCS currently had a Facebook page. However, he did believe that academic networking websites could be helpful for communicating with parents. When speaking about his preferred form of communication with parents, Mr. Parker told me that he liked text messaging better. Communication through text message has become popular in certain school districts around the country, including New York and Virginia (Fleming 2012). In his opinion, social networking could be a quick way to schedule conferences or ask for materials for the classroom. He elaborates:

Mr. Parker: Over the summer, I – actually our hope is to get some sort of – almost like a Facebook or Twitter or something where I can text out parent conferences next week. Schedule your parent conferences. Or progress reports going home on Friday, you know? Or whatever. We need more pencils. We need more snacks. Whatever it is, you know award ceremony so that it’s just like boom! I sent it out and it’s done. And you know, all the parents have cellphones. Almost all. There’s like one parent who I think doesn’t. But everyone has cellphones, everyone has access to everything and so that would be just a very easy way. So, we started with the Middle School – doing that. Um, and then this year in the fourth grade, they didn’t have anything established. And so this first year was like let’s just re-get things back on track. And then next year, we’ll be having something like that. Whether it’s Twitter or something. (personal communication, April 25, 2013)

While not all the families at HSCS have access to computers or the Internet, it is clear that some of them do because Miss Lopez commented that students and teachers try to add her on Facebook. As discussed in the literature review, the decision to “friend” a student could cost a teacher their job (Childers 2011). During her interview, Miss Lopez told me that she considers her profile to be “very private” (personal communication, April 30, 2013). When students try to find her or ask her about her online profile, she avoids the conversation or denies their request. She has also received friend requests from parents and she has had to make personal judgments on whether or not to add them. She said, “Um, some parents, depending on who they are, I’ve accepted and the relationship I’ve been able to form with them. Other parents, I’m not as close with them, I’ve just kinda..pretend like I didn’t see it. Yeah” (personal communication, April 30, 2013). Since Facebook is a personal website,
Miss Lopez has the freedom to choose whether or not she wants to accept requests from parents.

In regards to HSCS’s Facebook website, Miss Lopez was the only teacher who was aware that it existed. She recalled that it had pictures of students, but that the pictures were outdated. She did not know who created the Facebook page, but stated that it should be maintained a bit more. She assumed that whoever created the Facebook page must have been one of the rarer staff members or parents who are an English speaker, which is why it isn’t in Spanish. When I first asked her why the Facebook was in English, she said that it wasn’t something that she noticed but confirmed that it was. When I asked her if the Facebook page could be used to communicate with parents, she was skeptical.

Miss Lopez: I think that they could. But I don’t think that … last time I checked, there aren’t a ton of parents that are on it anyways, I don’t think it has more than 200 likes. You know? So it’s not like there are a ton of parents on it. Um, and I also don’t- I think it makes it a little less serious. So, if it’s like- if I send home a note with my kids, “We need kleenex for our classroom, our kids have runny noses, it’s flu season”. I’m more likely to get something there. Whereas, I think if I posted it on Facebook, someone would scan it and be like, all right. You know? (personal communication, April 30, 2013)

At the time this thesis chapter was written, there were 265 “likes” for the HSCS Facebook page, which is not far off from Miss Lopez’s estimate. The fact that HSCS’s Facebook is only in English also makes it unfriendly to Spanish-speaking parents. There is a lack of engagement between parents and academic networking at this time on HSCS’s Facebook. This is also demonstrated by the almost all of the interviewed teachers being unaware of its existence as well. If the majority of parents and teachers are not using it, then it is probably not a digital technology that would serve HSCS.

The data from my surveys with Spanish-speaking parents at HSCS showed that while many of them are on Facebook, most are not using HSCS’s Facebook webpage. Of the eight parents surveyed, two said that they use Facebook and four said that they “a veces” (sometimes) use it. There were two parents who stated that they did not use Facebook at all. Only one parent marked that they used HSCS’s Facebook and six said that they did not. On surveys I created for HSCS, social networking was given as an option as how parents receive information. None of the parents indicated that they used academic networking, however, three marked that they used the Internet.
The Spanish-speaking parents at Armstrong displayed similarities in their responses regarding their use of social networking. Out of the five parents surveyed, two stated that they regularly use Facebook. Two women said that they “a veces” use Facebook, and the last parent marked that they did not use any social networking. Four Armstrong parents stated that they were aware of SDUSD’s Facebook, however, not one of the parents stated that they used the website in Spanish. Additionally, there is an obvious difference in the number of “likes” for the two SDUSD pages, as the English page has over 5,000 “likes” and the Spanish has 150.

The teachers at Armstrong also demonstrated a disinterest in academic networking. During the interview with Miss Costa, she stated that she did not use any social-networking websites such as Facebook or Twitter. She was unaware of SDSUD’s Facebook website in Spanish and in English. Similarly, Mrs. Williams did not use any academic networking websites. Mrs. Williams believes that many of her students’ parents are without access to the Internet and computers. As discussed in the literature review, problems of access are major issues for low-income and immigrant families (Becker 2000; Fleming 2012). The “digital divide” may impact Latino/a families and their engagement or awareness of school-based social networking.

During my interviews with fourth graders at HSCS, I found that only one out of five had their own personal Facebook website. Manuel, Alejandra, Diana, and Maria all stated that they did not use Facebook. Manuel said his parents did not use Facebook and he was not aware of, nor had ever seen HSCS’s Facebook. Alejandra and Diana also stated that their parents had Facebook websites but that they had never seen HSCS’s Facebook. Both girls were unaware that HSCS even had a Facebook website. Maria said that her mom did not use Facebook, however, she remembered searching for the Facebook and that “it has pictures of the entire school” (personal communication, May 14, 2013).

Juan was the only student who said they had their own Facebook, although he prefers to use his brother’s instead. When his brother forgets to log out, Juan uses the opportunity to “hack it and use it all” (personal communication, May 7, 2013). Juan’s parents both have a Facebook as well. Juan stated he had never personally seen HSCS’s Facebook, but that he knew it existed because of his brother. While most of the students completely ignored social media, Juan was interested because of his siblings’ interest. The fourth grade students’
parents did use social-networking websites; however, it was unclear if they were aware of HSCS’s Facebook website.

My interviews with teachers demonstrated that academic networking is not currently a viable way to reach out to parents at HSCS or Armstrong Elementary. Spanish-speaking parents at HSCS are unlikely to use the Facebook page because it is only available in English and is not regularly updated. SDUSD’s Spanish Facebook page doesn’t provide specific information about the individual schools and has not been as successful as their English Facebook page, based on user activity. The survey responses from Spanish-speaking parents at both schools indicated that some parents rely on the Internet for information, but that is more likely to be the domain webpage, rather than the Facebook site.

Based on these results, it seems that there is lack of engagement for academic networking at Armstrong Elementary and HSCS. Most of the parents were aware of SDUSD’s or HSCS’s Facebook, but do not want to use it. While academic networking may not currently be an appropriate method for improved communication between school staff and Spanish-speaking parents, there are other alternative techniques that have been successful. More research is needed to determine if academic networking is a lasting option for parent-teacher communication.

**ADVICE FOR MONOLINGUAL PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS**

Parental involvement is an integral contributing factor to a student’s academic success (Becker and Epstein 1982; Eccles and Harold 1996). Language barriers and cultural differences have been shown to create difficulties in developing parent-teacher communication and negatively impact parental-involvement (De Gaetano 2007; Delgado-Gaitan 1994; Henderson and Berla 1997; Lopez et al. 2001; Turney and Kao 2009). Research has suggested that school staff develop parent-teacher relationships to understand the experience of immigrants and binational parents, including Mexican-American families (De Gaetano 2007; Lopez et al. 2001). Methods such as creating a welcoming environment, using cultural projects, or emphasizing open communication have been shown to connect teachers with Spanish-speaking or immigrant parents (De Gaetano 2007; Lopez et al. 2001). The data
I collected at HSCS and Armstrong Elementary exemplified successful strategies for engagement with Spanish-speaking parents in the San Diego area.

While I was able to identify two teachers at Armstrong Elementary who use successful techniques, there are additional issues related to language that must be addressed. The school only has three Spanish-speaking staff members and exclusively uses district translators to assist with limited English-speaking parents in cases of emergency and special education students. As previously discussed, SDUSD has a limited number of full-time Spanish translators, who are not regularly utilized during parent-teacher conferences because of the substantial number of Spanish-speaking parents in the district. The district encourages schools to utilize their own resources. This can put unnecessary stress and demands on the small number of bilingual staff members who provide translation services for monolingual teachers. Since the passage of Proposition 227 and NCLBA, there is more pressure placed on bilingual teachers to help address issues related to language barriers in the public school system.

During my interviews I asked teachers about their recommendations for monolingual English teachers within the public school system. Mrs. Williams and the bilingual teachers at HSCS offered valuable advice about working with Spanish-speaking parents. Their suggestions give insight into some of the ways in which teachers can create relationships without necessarily becoming competent Spanish speakers. That being said, learning Spanish is arguably the easiest way to deal with language and cultural barriers. Mrs. Williams suggested that teachers start with a beginning class in Spanish.

Mrs. Williams: I think my biggest thing would be to take a beginning class, just to help you understand a few of the words, so you don’t feel so out of it. But, I mean, they are so open, they open their arms to you, no matter what. They are really nice people. I have never had a Hispanic person in my classroom that I don’t love. I love all my kids but they are really outgoing and they are very nice. But I would advise you to do that but if you love kids, if you love teaching, then you are going to be just fine. Because you can overcome, you really can. And there is always people in school that will help you. And the parents appreciate anything that you do to help them. You know, so I just love it. (personal communication, June 5, 2013)

As a bilingual teacher at HSCS, Mr. Parker believes that the burden of language should fall onto the teachers. During the interview, Mr. Parker explained that the expectation of teaching parents English is “unrealistic” (personal communication, April 25, 2013). He
stated that teachers would have to teach a new group of parents every year in their spare time, which is not a reasonable endeavor. Instead, he suggested that monolingual English teachers enroll in community college classes, buy Rosetta Stone, or travel.

Mr. Parker: Go travel somewhere, Costa Rica, Prague. Um, you could find a parent who, you know, like a parent whose learning English, you’re learning Spanish, and get together. And alright, half an hour in English, half an hour in Spanish. I’m going to write, you’re going to write, half an hour and then we’ll switch and correct them. Or whatever it is. But I think- and I um if you’re going to be, it depends on where you work, but I think for most of California, if you look, the demographics are changing, and if you’re looking for a future in California, I think you need to be bilingual and bilingual English and Spanish. Better than English and French. But that you do need to be, again, it’s on you. And so if your parent doesn’t speak, you’re working in a place where a majority of the parents don’t speak your language, I mean, if your working with a bunch of Cambodian parents, right, you should probably take some- learn some Cambodian. Right? Learn some things. Not just the “Hi, Thank you” things like that, but really like, you know, the more you can communicate with them, the more comfortable they are going to feel and the more just communication you going to be able to have. (personal communication, April 25, 2013)

Mr. Parker places the responsibility of learning a second language on the teacher but also suggests that the teacher work with a parent. Through this method, both parties are able to gain valuable knowledge from each other and work together in order to gain fluency. This method is a form of reciprocal exchange that allows both the teacher and parent to be a mentor in their dominate language. The power dynamics are equal and therefore can break down barriers traditionally associated with cultural differences or prestige. Additionally, Mr. Parker brings up a key point about California’s demographics, which demonstrates the predominance of Latinos. Spanish is much more than a heritage language of many immigrants; it is also one of the fastest growing languages in the world and second most spoken language in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau 2011). Though Spanish is widely spoken, there are still teachers who do not invest in learning a second language.

A pitfall of language barriers is when a monolingual English teacher doesn’t have the resources available to communicate with a Spanish-speaking parent. The process of scheduling district translators in advance can create gaps in translation services. In his interview, Mr. Parker spoke about his experiences watching teachers use kids as translators. In his example, the child omitted their mistakes during translation, leaving the parent and the
teacher none the wiser. Another teacher at HSCS, Miss Rivera, also worried about the impact that using a child as a translator can have.

Miss Rivera: One thing I would not say is to use your child as a translator. I think that’s a horrible burden to put on the children. I mean not horrible, but it’s not the most effective way of communicating if there’s a problem with that child, you don’t want that child to have to be telling their parent, you know, translating. It just it makes me very sad to see that when there is no other form of communication. If there’s, I suppose, ideally you’d want the person to help to find a translator at school. That’s not always available but you’d always like another adult who is... who understands the challenges of education, teaching, being in a classroom, understands it from the child's point of view as well who can be there and advocate for the family and to, you know, help the teacher make sure that the child is, or the parent- that the family is understanding what the situation is and how they can work together to solve that. So, you know, I don’t know if there’s another way besides that - having an adult translator. That’s the... absolutely. (personal communication, April 23, 2013)

An additional teacher at HSCS spoke about the significance of understanding the experience of Spanish-speaking parents. Miss Lopez suggested that schools should make the effort to create bilingual flyers and hold meetings in both languages. She had witnessed a predominately Latino/a school hold meetings in English and believed that the school should have taken the time to translate for Spanish-speaking parents so that they could clearly understand. She recommended that teachers learn about the culture of their students and try their best to be immersed in it. On a daily basis, this could mean acknowledging the value of being bicultural and bilingual.

Miss Lopez: You know, and make them feel confident in the fact that, “Wow. You speak Spanish, that’s beautiful, I’m so glad you can do that!” You know? Valuing it instead of “You need to learn English right now!” You know, there are definitely things like cognates that they could use. I’m trying to think of something... We are talking about fractions, do I think that an English-only teacher could say “fraccion” and look that up at lunch? Yes. So there are definitely things that can be done. (personal communication, April 30, 2013)

The teachers that I interviewed offered their best advice for public school teachers who primarily work with Spanish-speaking Latino/a families. By showing care, partnering with other parents, and valuing biculturalism, monolingual English teachers can connect with Latino/a parents and students. Some of the teachers warned against using a child as a translator because it can place an unfair burden on them. Additionally, creating a welcoming environment and encouraging parental involvement in the classroom can positively impact
parent-teacher relationships. Monolingual English teachers have many alternative methods at their disposal to form relationships with Spanish-speaking parents and they should take advantage of these recommendations.

**CONCLUSION**

The effects of Proposition 227, coupled with the No Child Left Behind Act, severely crippled bilingual education in California. It removed full-time bilingual teacher positions, reallocated the resources, and recreated a sink or swim approach through intensive English-only instruction (Montaño et al. 2005). The expectation for immigrant children to acculturate quickly and abandon their heritage language has detrimental consequences (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2008). It can alienate binational children and weaken immigrant community cohesion (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2008). While the effects of the Proposition 227 continue to impede bilingual education, many teachers and Spanish-speaking parents have found alternative ways of assisting ELL students and maintaining relationships.

Mrs. Gonzalez’s goal of quality education for the children in El Cajon became a reality in August 2005 when HSCS opened. The bilingual charter school has been recognized as “a California Distinguished School” and continues to attract parents to enroll their children. More than 800 children are on the waiting list and Mrs. Gonzalez worries about accommodating more and more students every day. The administration plans on opening up a high school, so the students can continue their bilingual education during 9th through 12th grade. Mrs. Gonzalez and her team have excelled at creating an elementary school and middle school because she “always say[s] people are the ones, people makes things happen. Not programs. Not ideas. Not dreams. It’s people. So, I think have the right people”, Mrs. Gonzalez said (personal communication, May 30, 2013). HSCS is a remarkable public school that strives to offer parents and students something better than what traditional schools can give to the families of El Cajon.

Armstrong Elementary and HSCS have different approaches to working with Latino/a families; however, I did observe trends in some of their practices. At both schools, the teachers placed an emphasis on creating relationships with families and showing that they care about students in order to build trust. Armstrong’s “Family Wednesday” and HSCS’S “Math Nights” represent engaging events that are designed to foster parent-teacher
communication and encourage parental involvement in the classroom. Overall, Spanish-speaking parents expressed their satisfaction with each school’s methods of communication. Armstrong parents preferred flyers, while HSCS parents and teachers favored face-to-face communication. This difference is related to language and represents the contrasting experiences of Spanish-speaking parents at traditional verses bilingual schools.

One of the most important services that HSCS offers is its valuation of Spanish. Children and families are often surrounded by overt and unconscious messages that Spanish is not valued from the greater society and their local communities. HSCS strives to show to the children that Spanish is a language of knowledge, professionalism, and the public sphere. Spanish is also valuable in the familial private sphere and in the workplace. By emphasizing the marketability and usefulness of Spanish, the teachers and staff at HSCS are able to strengthen the positive aspects of bilingualism.

The participants from HSCS and Armstrong Elementary each demonstrated a lack of engagement with academic networking. Data collected from the surveys at Armstrong showed that Spanish-speaking parents used the Internet but not academic networking websites for information about their child’s education. The Spanish-speaking parents indicated that they were aware of SDUSD’s Facebook website, but did not use it. The two Armstrong teachers, Miss Costa and Mrs. Williams, also explained that they did not rely upon social media to communicate with parents. Similar results were seen at HSCS, as Spanish-speaking parents did not use the Facebook website, but did rely on HSCS’s homepage for information. Based on these results, academic networking may not be a favored technique for connecting with Spanish-speaking parents about their children’s education in the San Diego area.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In this conclusory chapter, I will connect the two schools’ pedagogies to the larger discussion on bilingual education in the United States of America. I will review the main themes discussed in Chapters 4, as part of the overall comparison drawn between HSCS and Armstrong Elementary. I will examine my research’s contribution to the literature, including the importance of giving agency to the experiences and consciousness of elementary students. Finally, I will provide implications for further research and analyze the limitations of my thesis research.

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH

Bilingual education is a controversial topic in the United States because it is intimately tied to the process of acculturation for immigrants. Beginning with the influx of German settlers, America has a historical fear of “the Other” and their influence (Crawford 2000). This disproportionate fear has suppressed the German language, incarcerated Japanese and Japanese-Americans, and nearly destroyed Native American languages and tribes. In the Southwest, “Hispanophobia” generated racist polices that segregated Latinos, particularly Mexican-Americans, into grossly inferior schools (Field 2011). The history of bilingual education in this country has shown that its funding is unstable and fluctuates with public opinion.

In California, where over 38% of the documented population identifies as Latino/a (U.S. Census Bureau 2012a), the passage of Proposition 227 and the NCLB Act has crippled bilingual education. Proposition 227 superseded the Bilingual Education Act and mandated statewide English-only curriculum (Montaño et al. 2005). The legislation’s heavy emphasis on English immersion has had lasting effects for immigrant children whose total assimilation is seen as optimal. President George W. Bush’s NCLB Act removed the word “bilingual”
from federal legislation regarding education (Field 2011). It also negatively impacted the number of teachers of color who enroll in BCLAD programs, which are designed to assist instructors in creating bicultural-binational curriculum (Montaño et al. 2005). Policy regarding bilingual education changed dramatically in California during the late 1990s and early 2000s.

The two elementary schools that I collected data from represent two different types of public schools in California. HSCS is a bilingual charter school that operates a facility from the CVUSD. On the other hand, Armstrong Elementary is a traditional public school in the SDUSD. Based on demographics, a majority of the parents from both schools are Latino/a and many of those are Spanish-speaking. The schools use different strategies to communicate with Spanish-speaking parents and to connect with families. HSCS’s employment of bilingual teachers allows almost all of the staff to communicate with Spanish and English speaking parents. Armstrong Elementary, restricted by regulations from California Proposition 227, operates with minimal bilingual resources and has a limited number of Spanish-speaking staff.

These obvious differences can create obstacles in the way of parent-teacher communication and parental involvement, at a traditional public school. Armstrong is fortunate to have retained their former bilingual teacher, Mrs. Williams, who is willing to assist many of her colleagues. Her relationship with the community kept her at the school despite the many changes she faced during her 22 years of teaching. Her skills as a bilingual teacher are beneficial to monolingual English teachers, Spanish-speaking parents, and immigrant children. She provides an immeasurable amount of support through written and verbal translations. The school recently recognized her hard work by giving her the “Teacher of the Year” award. Mrs. Williams is an example of a dedicated teacher who has committed herself to a community.

The other teacher I interviewed at Armstrong Elementary has also shown herself to be just as loyal to the school’s students and families. Miss Costa uses successful strategies that allow her to establish relationships with immigrant parents from Latin America and Africa despite language barriers. She invites parents to volunteer in her classroom and encourages them to participate in events on campus. Miss Costa greets and thanks parents for their efforts in English, so they feel that she acknowledges them. Furthermore, she demonstrates
her care for her students and does her best to incorporate Latin American heritage activities into the curriculum.

Caring was a significant theme in my research at both Armstrong and HSCS. All of the teachers that I interviewed spoke about the importance of showing parents that they cared about their children in order to establish trust. Often times, parents needed to see that their child’s teacher was sensitive to the needs of the student, before they would be willing to become involved in the school. Caring is also a necessary component for students to trust their teachers. The teachers discussed ways to strengthen relationships with students: by offering hugs, inquiring about students’ feelings, and supporting students through difficult times. HSCS’s policy regarding home visits helps install the parents’ and students’ confidence in teachers before the school year begins. Their unique methods of connecting with families allow the bilingual charter school to be part of the community in El Cajon.

Mrs. Gonzalez’s commitment to quality education for her children and other immigrant children inspired the parents in El Cajon to create a bilingual school for their community. She led a grassroots campaign to address the difficulties faced by Latino/a parents in San Diego’s public school system. Mrs. Gonzalez and the parents’ organization successfully fought the effects of Proposition 227 and maintained the bilingual resources at a neighborhood school. This action was no small feat, and demonstrates the power of grassroots organizations to impact local policy for the betterment of the community.

HSCS opened in 2005 as the first 90-10 (Spanish-English) dual-language community-based charter school in the county. It has expanded to include a Middle School and has plans to include a High School. As a charter school, it faces additional challenges in finding facilities to rent in order to grow as an institution (CCSA 2013e). During my interview with Mrs. Gonzalez, she expressed her deep concern about the 800 plus children on HSCS’s waiting list and the difficulties that HSCS graduates face at traditional public high schools. She stated that she will not rest until the quality education of those children can be secured.

HSCS’s successful bilingual model has inspired the CVUSD to establish their own dual-language schools. The CVUSD (2014) currently has three dual-language programs available, one of which follows the 90-10 ratio. The programs were designed “to help excel in the modern world” (CVUSD 2014). Whether or not these schools will invest in quality bilingual teachers and maintain small student to teacher ratios, remains to be seen. It is clear,
however, that the pedagogy of HSCS is challenging the status-quo of public education. The dual-language model is intended to produce global citizens as graduates, who have cultural and language skills that are advantageous in a competitive job market.

The disposition of teachers and administrators that I interviewed at both schools impacted the experiences of parents and students. My data suggests that the idea of caring and feeling included by teachers makes a difference for Latino/a students and families. It is important for schools to be committed to community engagement and supportive of teachers. At HSCS, care is part of the school culture and the staff creates a nurturing environment. Armstrong Elementary reaches out to families with their Wednesday night events. Mrs. Williams and Ms. Costa demonstrate that there are traditional schoolteachers who put in extra effort to make Spanish-speaking families feel welcome.

The research that I conducted on bilingual students, families, and schools in the San Diego area showed me the progress that is currently being made to benefit Latinos/as. HSCS is a successful charter school because it was built from a grassroots parents’ organization and has continued to value the education of children, above all else. The school hires dedicated bilingual teachers who use home visits, cultural activities, and caring to foster relationships with families. Likewise, Armstrong Elementary teachers also use cultural activities and affection to build trust with parents. Language barriers may impact parent-teacher communication, but there are many ways that teachers can form relationships with Spanish-speaking parents.

**Contributions to the Literature**

Research on education is heavily focused on academic performance, rather than the relationship between teachers, parents, and students. This quantitative focus is due to the NCLB Act that mandates federal funding for education based on test schools and performance. While quantitative instruments provide empirical data about students’ academic success, they often fail to capture the lived experience of children in schools. I employed qualitative methods in order document the first-hand accounts of 4th grade students at HSCS. The five students that I interviewed vocalized their understanding of their identity, education, and translation.
All of the students affirmed the many benefits of bilingualism, including helping others, better job opportunities, and a connection with their family and heritage. The students were also in agreement that there are no drawbacks to being bilingual. One student in particular, Diana, articulated the deep and necessary connection of language to heritage. Diana believed it was a privilege for bicultural children to help their parents with translation. At ten years old, she demonstrates the ability for elementary aged children to express their awareness and comprehension of issues related to identity, heritage, and bilingual education. It is important to note that the relative value students give to Spanish and English changes in various ways throughout their school years and beyond (see Hakuta and D’Andrea 1992).

The framework of subjectivity informed many aspects of how I approached this project. In her essay on subjectivity, Luhrmann stress the importance of the study of emotions. She states, “whether we are anthropologists or not, we use the word subjectivity to refer to the way the subject thinks and feels – but above all to the way to the subject feels, often about what he or she thinks. To sort out the social part of emotion helps us to sort out the shared inner life anthropologists seek to understand” (Luhrmann 2006:349). Luhrmann argues that through an emphasis on the multifaceted aspects of emotions, one can better understand subjective experiences of others. The framework of subjectivity informed how I designed my research questions and interacted with respondents. In my interviews, I tried to elicit responses that would reflect the emotional experience of the participants. I asked questions about their thoughts or feelings about bilingual education and everyday life. The theoretical application of subjectivity allowed me to better understand the context and experience of parents, teachers, and students in elementary school settings.

Subjectivity theory helped me recognize the deeply political nature of bilingual education and bilingual students. Prior to this project, I was not aware of the degree to which institutional racism was prevalent against Mexicans in California’s public schools during the mid-1900s. By understanding the history of Spanish bilingual education, I was better able to appreciate the grassroots struggle of Mrs. Gonzalez and the parents’ organization in El Cajon. According to Luhrmann (2006), “if subjectivity is the emotional experience of a political subject, then to articulate the psychological structure of the emotion only gives us more evidence to argue that power is inscribed upon our bodies and that moral judgment is a visceral act” (359). Mrs. Gonzalez and her team had a difficult journey to establish a
bilingual charter school. The administrators, teachers, parents, and students at HSCS are engaged in a political struggle for the right to quality bilingual education. Each of their emotional experience is unique and I attempted to give “voice” to some of their feelings and thoughts in this thesis.

Biehl et al. (2007) discuss the theoretical and practical implications of subjectivity in their edited volume. The authors contend, “subjectivity is the means of shaping sensibility. It is fear and optimism, anger and forgiveness, lamentation and pragmatism, chaos and order” (Biehl et al. 2007:14). In this sense, subjectivity provides the space for respondents to express their feelings and thoughts regarding their circumstances, their contradictions, as well as their vulnerabilities. While interviewing Miss Costa, I wanted to understand why she had chosen not to learn Spanish, despite working for over sixteen years with predominately Spanish-speaking parents. Miss Costa explained that she communicated with Spanish-dominant parents in other ways, such as acknowledging their presence and non-verbal communication. Her ability to work with Spanish-speaking parents was physically demonstrated during the interview when a Spanish-dominant parent, who volunteered as an assistant, helped to prepare the classroom. I may have originally viewed her lack of Spanish as a large obstacle in her ability to communicate with parents, however, Miss Costa had already negotiated that barrier in her own way.

Bhabha’s theory of hybridity refers to the construction of culture and identity within postcolonial contexts. He describes his concept of the “Third Space” as “the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the inbetween space – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture” (Bhabha 1994:56). These theoretical concepts, hybridity and the Third Space, have been useful in my conceptualization of the 4th grader’s role as the cultural or language broker for their parents. Four out of five of the students I interviewed discussed how they translated and mediated for their family members. Although many of the children’s translating experiences happened at stores or their neighborhoods, some of the fourth graders were put into complicated positions by translating for family members at job sites. These examples, particular Juan’s involvement with translation for his father and aunt, demonstrate the complex implications of their hybrid identity. The fourth graders are still in the process of forming their multifaceted cultural identities and the bilingual charter school may be an important influence on their understanding of selfhood.
My findings regarding parental involvement illustrate the positive impact of Delgado-Gaitan’s strategies for Mexican-American parents. Delgado-Gaitan stresses the importance of communication and the creation of an inviting environment for parents. At both HSCS and Armstrong, I observed efforts made by the teachers I interviewed to make parents feel welcome at the school site. Events like Armstrong’s “Family Wednesday” and HSCS’s “Math Nights” provide opportunities for families to be involved in specific activities on campus. These are successful examples of teachers and administrators reaching out to families for parental involvement. Additionally, the large parents’ organization at HSCS, with over 100 volunteers, exemplifies the eagerness of Spanish-speaking parents to participate in their children’s school. The lack of language barriers arguably makes it much easier for HSCS parents to participate, however, the school staff does make additional efforts to reach out and thank parents for their support.

In addition to the subjectivity of participants, I wanted to determine the awareness and utilization of academic networking by Spanish-speaking parents and elementary school teachers. Based on the data collected for this research, academic networking is not currently a feasible option for improving communication between Spanish-speaking parents and teachers. Almost all of the thirteen parents surveyed stated that they did not use Facebook for information about their child’s education. Additionally, many of the teachers interviewed commented that they didn’t see Facebook as a responsible option for communication.

As discussed in Chapter 2, a paradigm shift may be necessary for academic networking to become successful (Childers 2011). Parents and teachers view social-networking as private and therefore do not want to connect their personal and professional lives. A renaming of the concept of social networking in education to “academic networking” may improve interest (Childers 2011). Obstacles, such as the “Digital Divide”, can impact the accessibility of parents to computers and the Internet (Fleming 2012). My research showed that some Spanish-speaking parents in the San Diego area are using social networking websites, although they are unlikely to use the schools’ Facebook pages for information. When a school’s academic networking websites are out of date and not known even to the staff, it is doubtful that social media could be used as an alternative means of communication to promote parental involvement.
In order for “academic networking” to be more feasible for low-income families, school districts need to come up with innovative solutions to help parents. Houston’s “parent super centers” are an example of how to make computers accessible to student’s guardians. School staff could also provide training for parents on how to use academic networking as a way to communicate outside of school hours. It may not be possible for all schools and districts to offer free access to computers or the Internet, however, they should determine if there is a need to bridge the “digital divide”. If many families lack access to these technologies, then school districts can pursue alternative ways to get parents involved.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND LIMITATIONS**

This research project included teachers, Spanish-speaking parents, and bilingual students in order to triangulate results and understand the dynamics at two different types of public elementary schools. In this section, I will discuss the limitations of my research and offer my informal suggestions for future projects about bilingual education and parent-teacher-student communication. Gatekeepers and the policies regarding conducting research with children at public elementary schools restricted this research project. My primary suggestion would be for beginning researchers to thoroughly investigate the procedures necessary to conduct research in public schools before conceptualizing projects. In my case, unexpected changes occurred when dealing with authorities in temporary positions and additional time was needed to obtain permission. Adapting to research constraints in the field is a skill that I have acquired and I would recommend that beginning researchers prepare for changes while doing groundwork.

My thesis research was limited in comparison between HSCS and Armstrong as a result of limitations on access, interest by potential participants, and a political climate that challenges bilingualism, teacher competence, and the safety of children. It was originally my goal to interview students at Armstrong Elementary to compare with the students at HSCS. This would have shed light on to the experiences of 4th grade students in a traditional public school where there are language barriers between limited-English speaking parents and teachers. The students may or may not have been asked to translate in the educational setting, which can be viewed as an unfair burden as discussed previously in this chapter. Further
research on the experience and subjective position of bilingual elementary school students is needed.

The inclusion of HSCS as the second school changed this project’s focus to charter schools. California, in particular, has the highest number of charter schools in the country (CCSA 2013g). The impact of charter schools on the public education system needs to be chronicled as it continues to evolve. In the wake of environmental devastation, places such as New Orleans have turned to charter schools to replace traditional public schools (Mullins 2014). Many school districts are watching the progress of New Orleans, for deciding whether or not to adopt the charter school format. Some researchers, such as Michelle Salazar Perez and Gaile S. Cannella (2011), argue that the increasing number of charter schools in Post-Katrina New Orleans represents an attempt to privatize the school system and benefit from Naomi Klein’s concept of “disaster capitalism”. Disaster capitalism refers to the notion that disastrous events are predictable and “strategically devised to allow for corporate profiteering at the time of disaster and during the recovery efforts that follow” (Perez and Canella 2011:53). As for San Diego, school districts are embracing the dual-language format in traditional schools to compete with successful charter schools, like HSCS.

The differences in the teachers’ pedagogy is unlikely related to the training and education that they received because all of the teachers attended either San Diego State University or a University of California school. I believe that the teacher’s lived experience played the biggest role in their support, or lack thereof, of bilingual education. Many of the teachers grew up in Southern California and were part of Spanish-speaking neighborhoods, which influenced their decision to give back to the Latino/a community. More research is needed to understand why certain teachers are more likely to embrace bilingual pedagogies. Additionally, it is important to note that my selection of participants was biased because I chose to interview particular teachers and students based on advice from other school staff members. Teachers who did not have a deep connection to their students may not have wanted to participate because of a lack of care. Furthermore, there may be personal reasons, such as their ability to learn multiple languages, and institutional reasons, such as rewards and disincentives for engaging in bilingual approaches, which prevented teachers from participating in a project on bilingual education. My research sample size was limited and should be considered in the context of the two San Diego schools.
EPilogue

Throughout this research project, I relied heavily on ethnographic methods such as interviews, open-ended surveys, and participant-observation. I conducted research over a four month period from March 2013 to June 2013 with twenty-five participants at two different public schools in the San Diego area, including: seven elementary teachers, five 4th grade students, and thirteen Spanish-speaking parents. I used qualitative instruments to understand communication and the relationships between parents, teachers, and students. Themes such as caring, Latin American heritage, and the value of bilingualism emerged from data collection and analysis.

At HSCS and Armstrong Elementary, I spoke with teachers and parents who were dedicated to helping students achieve their goals. Both schools want to produce students who are critical thinkers and global citizens. HSCS’s concept of global citizen has to do with providing an education that includes technological, cultural, and language skills. The bilingual students I met at HSCS embraced their bicultural heritage and wanted to give back to their community. The student responses demonstrate that Mrs. González’s vision has been realized in many ways. The academic success of HSCS has also inspired the CVUSD to invest in dual-language schools that are designed to give students the bilingual language and cultural skills necessary to excel in a modern world as global citizens.

Throughout this thesis, I have discussed how Spanish is not like other heritage languages in California. This is because of the large number of Spanish-dominant speakers currently living in California, as well as the proximity and historical connection to Mexico. If schools are dedicated to helping produce “global citizens”, they must consider the importance of bilingual instruction. Bilingual speakers are arguably more marketable because they can communicate with people in two languages and they understand multiple cultural ideologies. Many public schools in California offer second-language instruction options during middle school and high school. There is a significant difference in the level of comprehension produced between dual-language instruction programs and a single elective class. I believe that Spanish/English bilingual education should be an option for parents and children to choose in California because of the many advantages that it provides. Despite the current anti-Mexican political climate and lingering anti-bilingualism attitudes, SDUSD has recently opened more two-way bilingual immersion and biliteracy programs at schools. This
expansion shows they have recognized the positive effects of bilingual education. Time will tell if these dual-immersion programs are as successful as HSCS, and if the programs will be able to produce students who are linguistically and culturally competent in two idioms.

This thesis project has impacted my own personal understanding of the education system. I was moved by the openness of the teachers and administrators, to allow me to interview them about their occupation and their experiences working with bilingual students and limited-English speaking parents. The Spanish-speaking parents who I surveyed were extremely gracious in letting me address my questions regarding communication, academic networking, and comfort level at the school. The 4th grade students left me speechless as they offered their insights and awareness of their unique school environment.

Prior to this project, I was grossly unaware of the injustices that Mexican and Mexican-American students faced in California regarding the right to education. Despite my lifelong schooling in California, the legal cases in Orange County and Lemon Grove were never included as part of the curriculum. The silencing of history is why the “Latino Threat Narrative” continues to exist and can be reworked for new generations. It is important to understand the unique role that grassroots organizations, like HSCS’s, play in the development of alternative educational institutions, such as charter schools. Mrs. Gonzalez’ mission to provide quality bilingual education for the children of El Cajon is admirable considering the many challenges that face immigrant children and marginalized communities. Research has shown that heritage language preservation decreases over generations, particularly for the third-plus immigrant generation (Alba et al. 2002; Chavez 2008; Telles and Ortiz 2008). A majority of third-plus generation Latinos in Orange County “used all or mostly English at home” and “bilingualism at home persisted but dropped to less than 10 percent (7.6 percent)” (Chavez 2008:57). If the United States is interested in creating “global citizens”, who are competitive in a globalized market, it will be necessary to be bilingual. Bilingual education, particularly in border states, should be viewed as an advantageous strategy by policy-makers, educators, and administrators. Overall, my thesis research changed my perception of public schools and instilled the importance of quality bilingual education.
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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS

1. What is your name?
2. What grade are you in? How old are you?
3. When did you start at HSCS?
4. Who is your teacher?
5. What types of things do you like to study or do in school?
   a. What is your favorite subject?
   b. What is your favorite thing to play during recess?
   c. What is your least favorite subject?
6. What types of things do you like to do at home?
7. What language(s) do your parents speak at home?
8. What language(s) do you speak at home?
9. Can you speak Spanish? Can you write/read in Spanish?
10. If yes: How did you learn Spanish?
    a. Do you speak Spanish with your family?
       i. If yes, who in your family?
11. Do your friends speak Spanish?
12. Is it important to you that your friends speak Spanish? English?
13. Which language do you like to speak most? Or are they the same?
14. Do your parents speak any language besides Spanish?
15. Do you ever translate things for your parents?
    a. How often do you translate for your parents?
    b. What types of things do you translate?
    c. Does anyone else in your family help your parents with translation?
16. Do you like to translate for your parents?
17. What kinds of problems would your parents have because they don’t speak English?
18. When/Where do you translate the most for your parents?
19. How old were you when you started doing this for them?
20. If someone asked you: Are you Mexicano/a? American? How would you answer?
21. Could you describe a typical day for you when you are with your parents/family?
    a. During the week
    b. During the weekend
    c. Holiday
22. When your teacher needs to talk to your parents, what do they do?
   a. Does your teacher speak Spanish?
   b. Do they have someone else translate?
   c. Do you translate for them or do they have someone else do it?
23. Have your parents had any problems talking to your school?
24. Do you use Facebook, Twitter, or Myspace?
25. Do your parents use them? Which ones?
26. Have you ever seen the Facebook page for the school or school district?
27. What do you want to do when you grow up?
28. Do you think you will use Spanish when you grow up?
29. Do you think you will always speak Spanish? English?
30. Okay, so if I were to ask you, what is one good thing about speaking two languages, what would you say?
31. What is one bad thing about speaking two languages?
32. Is there anything that you might not have thought about before that occurred to you during this interview?
33. Is there anything else you think I should know about kids translating for their parents?
34. Is there anything you would like to ask me?
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

1. What is your name?
2. What grade do you teach?
3. How long have you been teaching at this elementary school?
4. What school did you attend for your undergrad/graduate studies/certification?
5. What subject(s) is your favorite to teach?
6. Why did you decide to become a teacher?
7. What languages do you speak?
8. How many of your students are bilingual? What does bilingual mean to you?
9. How did you become aware of their bilingualism?
10. What is your preferred method of communication with parents?
11. Approximately, how many students with Spanish-speaking parents do you have?
12. If you need to communicate with a parent that doesn’t speak English, what do you do?
   a. Does someone else help you translate? If so, who?
   b. Did you learn Spanish to help your career or the community you serve?
13. Are there any experiences working with non-English or limited-English speaking parents that stand out to you?
14. Do you incorporate any Mexican-American cultural aspects into your teaching?
15. Have you had any challenges working with bilingual children or Spanish-speaking children? If so, how did you learn to deal with them?
16. Could you describe the most important lessons you learned as a teacher?
17. What helps you to manage the stress of being a teacher?
18. Have any outside resources been helpful?
19. Do you use any social-networking websites, such as Facebook or Twitter?
20. If yes, have you seen your school’s or district’s Facebook website?
21. Do you believe this could be used a tool for communicating with limited-English speaking parents?
22. Do you believe parental involvement to be a contributing factor to a student’s academic success?
23. What do you think are the most important aspects to student academic success? How did you discover them? How has your experience before at another school affected how you handle parents/students?
24. Do you encourage parental involvement, if so: what do you do? School activities?
   Parental conference? Volunteering in the classroom?
25. Is there anything that you might not have thought about before that occurred to you
during this interview?
26. Is there anything else you think I should know to understand communication between
parents/teachers better?
27. Is there anything you would like to ask me?
APPENDIX C

SURVEY QUESTIONS FOR SPANISH-SPEAKING ARMSTRONG PARENTS

1. Etnicidad o lugar de nacimiento:
2. Edad:
3. Número telefónico
4. ¿Cuántos hijos tiene?:
5. Nombre y edad/ grado de sus hijos:
6. ¿Cómo recibe información de la escuela? (Marque todas las que correspondan)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cartas</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hablar con maestros</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La red (internet)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facebook/sitos de comunicación social</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hablar con otro pariente</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hablar con su(s) hijo(s)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Otra forma: (explique)

7. ¿Cuál lengua habla, ud.? (Marque casillas)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Español</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ingles</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lengua/idioma indígena:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otra:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. ¿Utiliza las redes sociales? (Facebook) Sí A veces No
9. ¿Sabe ud. que el distrito de la escuela tiene una pagina de Red? Sí No
10. ¿Usa la página del Distrito en Facebook en Español? Sí A veces No
11. Cuando usted tiene un problema relacionado con la educación de sus hijos, ¿qué hace?
12. ¿Habla con el maestro de su hijo en Inglés o Español?
13. ¿Qué pudiera hacer la escuela para facilitarle progreso escolar del acceso a información sobre la educación su hijo/a?
14. ¿Siente que reciba toda la información para los parientes de la escuela? Sí
    No
    Si no, ¿porque?
15. ¿Hay algo más que le gustaría compartir?
APPENDIX D

SURVEY QUESTIONS FOR SPANISH-SPEAKING HSCS PARENTS

1. Etnicidad o lugar de nacimiento
2. Edad
3. Número telefónico
4. ¿Cuántos hijos tiene?:
5. Nombre y edad/grado de sus hijos:
6. ¿Cómo recibe información de la escuela? (Marque todas las que correspondan)
   - Cartas
   - Hablar con maestros
   - La red (internet)
   - Facebook/sitos de comunicación social
   - Hablar con otro pariente
   - Hablar con su(s) hijo(s)
   - Otra forma: (explique)

7. ¿Cual lengua habla, ud.? (Marque casillas)
   - Español
   - Ingles
   - Lengua/idioma indígena:

8. ¿Usa sitios de comunicación social? (Facebook)  Si  A veces  No
9. ¿Usa HSCS página de facebook?  Sí  No
10. Cuando usted tiene un problema relacionado con la educación de sus hijos, ¿qué hace?
11. ¿Habla con el maestro de su hijo en Inglés o Español?
12. ¿Qué pudiera hacer la escuela para facilitarle progreso escolar del acceso a información sobre la educación su hijo/a?
13. ¿Sienta que reciba toda la información para los parientes de la escuela?
   Si   No
   Si no, ¿porque?
14. ¿Fue su hijo en una escuela pública antes HSCS? Si es así, ¿Cómo se siente sobre esa experiencia?
15. ¿Por qué decidió inscribir a su hijo/hija en HSCS?
16. ¿Hay algo más que le gustaría compartir?