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Privatizing Spanish? An Idea Revisited

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Abstract

In this paper, I examine an early writing by Richard Ruiz, "*The Empowerment of Language-Minority Students*" (Ruiz, 1997). , I revisit its thesis and retraced its argument in light of past experiences and more current developments related to language, culture, "voice," and minority student empowerment. I also reflect on the "privatization" strategy that Ruiz offered for consideration, which for me had raised many questions when I first read it, as it still does today. I surmise that his words reflected angst over emerging political debates over the control and use of public resources for bilingual education and multicultural approaches were certain to pose additional challenges for students' voice and agency, without which student empowerment would be pushed further out of reach.

Key words: Bilingual Education; Multicultural education; Mexican American Studies

Privatizing Spanish? An Idea Revisited

As a graduate research assistant in anthropology at the University of Arizona, I worked on several research projects that focused on the anthropology of education. It was at this time that I first came across a chapter written by Richard Ruiz, “*The Empowerment of Language-Minority Students*” (Ruiz, 1997). I was unfamiliar with his work until then. But as curiosity about my own education growing up developed into scholarly work (O’Leary, 1999), I read the Ruiz piece with great interest. What most impressed me about it was the way he laid out familiar injustices that language-minority students such as myself had experienced. However, at the same time I wrestled with an idea he introduced in this chapter—the “power of privatization” for language maintenance (Ruiz 1997, p. 325). For this tribute to Dr. Ruiz, I returned to this writing that piqued my imagination. Here, I revisit this thesis, and found it to still resonate with me personally in many ways coming from a language-minority background. I retraced its argument in light of more current developments related to language, culture, “voice,” and minority student empowerment. I also reflected on the “privatization” strategy that Ruiz offered for consideration, which for me had raised many questions. For those who knew him and his quirky sense of humor, the first question would be, was this another whimsical ploy? Regardless, I’ve come to realize that there more to his words. There is a hint of strain and frustration behind them, likely over the relentless attacks on bilingual education that by the 1990s had gained momentum. Perhaps he foresaw what we know now: that political debates over the control and use of public resources were certain to pose additional challenges for students’ voice and agency, without which student empowerment would be pushed further out of reach.

Language, power, and voice

In his chapter, Ruiz (1997) examined the relationship between language and power as it related to language-minority populations in the American Southwest. He argued that through the suppression of language, a cultural resource, language minority populations had been denied the necessary political “voice” to protect their rights to advance economically. He made the distinction that while language is the means by which one communicated, “voice” is the means by which one’s words are heard, and have influence. Without voice, he argued, Spanish-speaking language-minority populations in the American Southwest have been denied the means by which they could share power with the dominant Anglo population. In this way, language minority populations were subordinated and relegated to low social status.

Language suppression operated in several ways. Ruiz (1997) starts by pointing out that colonialism was largely responsible for language suppression, which impinged on the educational achievement of minority-language students. Ruiz did not go into detail to explain the role of colonialism in this regard, but scholars of Mexican American and Chicano history would not have trouble recognizing the reference to colonialization of Mexican Americans by Anglo American populations. Known as “internal colonialism,”ⁱ this over-arching framework for analysis is thoroughly discussed in the first chapter of the anthology in which the Ruiz chapter appears (Barrera, 1997). Barrera explains that internal colonial operates much like classic colonialism. It involves the subjugation of ethnic/racial groups (the colonized), by the colonizers who are advantaged economically in doing so. Economic advantage is attained by procuring raw materials, access to markets, and the control and exploitation of labor. This last was achieved after Mexican-Americans were systematically expropriated of their land and became wage laborers. Internal colonialism differs from the classic in that there is no clear geographic separation between the colonizing power and the colonized (such as between Spain and New Spain, between England and India), and that the subordinated populations to large degree are intermingled with the colonizers. Using this framework for understanding relations of power between primarily Spanish-speaking populations in the American Southwest and the dominant English speaking populations, language minority populations were unable to influence matters that could ultimately transform their disadvantaged condition Ruiz (1997).

Language suppression was also formally institutionalized through Americanization schools, where students were expected to unlearn their bad habits by ridding themselves of their language and customs (Moll & Ruiz 2002ⁱⁱ, p. 364; Ruiz, 1997, p. 320). Informally, Spanish speaking students were simply made to feel that they didn’t belong (Ruiz, 1997). To this point, Gándara and Contreras (2009) explain that in an attempt to protect themselves from this stigmatization, students will disengage themselves from academic activities, resulting in poor academic performance. Suppression was also achieved through school segregation, whereby Spanish-speaking or Spanish-surnamed students were prevented from attending the same schools as their English-speaking peers.

However, there were other examples of language suppression that I myself had experienced. In the 1960s, there was no bilingual education where I went to school, a small rural

town in Arizona.ⁱⁱⁱ I started kindergarten as a monolingual Spanish speaker. My mother had emigrated from Mexico, so my maternal language was Spanish. Spanish was what we spoke at home—the “private space” where we were free to act out our cultural and language loyalty (Ruiz, 1997). However, it was inevitable that the private sphere would eventually intersect with the public sphere, primarily through public education (Garcia, 2001). Even more inevitable was that these spheres would bring on pressure to assimilate, to Americanize, and to “unlearn” Spanish to avoid being stigmatized (Garcia, 2001). Any awareness that my language might be a problem came one morning when my father took me to school. He was hurried and tense. He was usually at work at this time, which is why I knew the day was extraordinary. Something had drawn him to the school and straight to the superintendent’s office with me in tow. The issue: I was to be “held back” (i.e. to repeat a grade) because I did not speak English.

My dad challenged this decision and the account of how this event played out would be retold many times. We went to see the school superintendent, Mr. Cisloughi. Himself a son of Italian immigrants, Mr. Cisloughi told my father that because I did not speak English, I would need to repeat kindergarten. To this, my father inquired: “This is a school, isn’t it?” The superintendent replied, “Well, yes...” To which my father responded, “So teach her!” With this, I was not held back.

Although my father was an unlearned man, but he may have known by some other means, or instinctively suspected that there would be long-term consequences of being held back. To be sure, in Texas, Sánchez (1966) had documented that it was common for Spanish-speaking students to repeat grades during the early education years, resulting in their humiliation and frustration. Thus discouraged, students would eventually rebel or drop out of school altogether.

Then there was the potential for damage to a child’s self-esteem that came with the public condemnation when caught speaking Spanish in school. For many of my generation, corporal punishment (usually executed by swats on the buttocks by a teacher or school principle using a large wooden paddle) was the consequence for this infraction. I grew up witnessing this punishment doled out on classmates who were caught speaking Spanish, and barely escaped it myself. In an attempt to spare their children potential physical injury, humiliation, or being the object of a degrading spectacle in front of others, the parents of many of my friends internalized the suppression of language and stopped speaking Spanish to their children. For this reason, many of my generation reached adulthood not knowing Spanish. There were immediate and obvious consequences of this as Christine Marin (1999, p. 88) described:

My parents and their friend spoke both English and Spanish with each other, and they could read and write in both languages. But throughout their lives, as children in school and as adults in the workplace, my parents were victims of the wrath of Anglo racism and prejudice against Mexicans and Mexican Americans. They certainly didn’t want their children to experience this kind of negative and discriminatory treatment from Anglos, so they insisted that I learn English well. They were afraid that if I spoke Spanish, I would experience their shame of being poor Mexicans.

In this way many Mexican American children were divested from one of their most important resources: their language (Moll & Ruiz, 2002). However, the eclipse was not complete. In my case, as I suspect in many others, we continued to communicate in Spanish. In my case, it was primarily because my mother spoke only Spanish. On this point, Ruiz cites the work of Kjolseth^{iv} who had stressed how key the role of parents was in maintaining an ethnic language. It was in this domestic, “private” domain where families could maintain control and act out hope that their cultural resource would be preserved for succeeding generations.

Writing about this around the time I was growing up in the 1960s, Sánchez (1966) explained that Spanish-speaking populations in the American Southwest had succeeded in preserving their language not because of a consciously concerted effort to retain an element of cultural pride, not because the dominant Anglo population recognized the value of preserving Spanish through supportive programs, and not because of a wise policy maker somewhere who had come to appreciate the value of language as a cultural resource. He notes that the Spanish language minority populations in the American Southwest were stubborn in relinquishing their language due to negative reasons: because they were a neglected and “*forgotten people*” (Sanchez, 1940). Writing much later, Ruiz asserted that because there was no expectation that they would ever be fully accepted outside their communities, Mexican communities in the Southwest turned to each other for mutual support. Their reliance on their cultural institutions provided for the long-term language maintenance in the Southwest. In short, although the repression of the minority language was a bad thing, this allowed Spanish to survive and even thrive—which was a good thing. Thus, I was a living example of how language could be maintained privately *because* it was repressed.

When Sánchez was writing about language-minority students in the American Southwest in 1966, there were four million of them living in Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico and Texas (Sánchez, 1966). These language minority students were the descendants of those left on the U.S. side of the border after the last treaty between Mexico and United States was signed in 1854^v establishing the boundary between these two countries as it exists today. Immigrants from Mexico would continue to settle in the vast area that once had been Mexico. Newer immigrants would join networks of kin, proceed to search for economic opportunities, and to build communities. In understanding the prevalence of Spanish among these populations, Gonzalez (2005) argued that for language-minority children in the American Southwest where Spanish was under attack, Spanish was the language of resistance (Gonzalez, 2005). Gonzalez did not deny that it was also the language of family, home, safety, and comfort. However, she also asserted that for bilingual children where English is the dominant language, Spanish evoked meaning and the emotional intelligence necessary for dealing with the contentious history that characterized the struggle between the United States and Mexico over the land that these populations now called home.

Ruiz lies within a rich genealogy of scholarly work concerned with the challenges of educational attainment of minority-language students. Scholars writing about the minority-language student experience were key to shaping the notion that educational systems were to

blame for the alienation that led to their failure. Sánchez (1966) was one of the first scholars to insist that the educational system—not their language and culture—was to blame for the lack of educational progress for Mexican American children. Octavio Romano-V was another scholar who pointed out how educational institutions were guilty of marginalizing the cultural Other, then blaming it for its failure to integrate into U.S. society (Romano-V., 1969). These early works among many others were pivotal for later generations of Chicano and Chicanas as they endeavored to re-build and re-envision their culture and language in positive ways.

However, in by the 1980s, a political shift towards greater conservatism was sweeping the country (Ruiz, 1997). Orfield (1996) traces this political trend to administration of Republican President Ronald Reagan when the campaign against school desegregation gained traction. During the time of the Presidents Reagan and George H. Bush, 60 percent of all federal judges with conservative ideological leanings were also appointed, thereby ensuring that challenges to progressive approaches to schooling were upheld. Resnik (2009) contextualizes this conservative trend within increased globalization and neoliberal economic strategies, primarily led by the United States. The brand of conservatism articulated a disregard and even contempt for multiculturalism even as entrepreneurial interests in markets outside U.S. borders increased (Resnik, 2009). Multiculturalism was seen as counter to national unity, and as a vehicle for exacerbating racial divide and social conflict.^{vi} As Ruiz (1997) noted, such ideologies provided the rationale to reduce funding and eventually further suppress bilingual education programs. And, while a logical response to the dismantling of progressive change was to increase political pressure to maintain the programs, Ruiz (1997, p. 325) suggested an alternative:

I believe another strategy is advisable if language maintenance and authentic empowerment are the aims. This strategy is to be more conservative than the conservatives by developing the power of privatization.

In other words, to maintain one's language, it should be kept as a private activity, where it could flourish unfettered by the constraints imposed by public institutions such as schools. Although this position justified the withdrawal of support for students who would most stand to benefit from bilingual education, the assumption was that within the privacy of home and family life, language as a potential source of empowerment for language-minority populations would be maintained and protected, and the rewards for this linguistic and cultural autonomy would supposedly not be far behind.

Another notable scholar who articulated a similar perspective was Richard Rodriguez (1982). Rodriguez also grew up in a Spanish speaking home and had been immersed in school not knowing more than 50 words in English. In *Hunger for Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez* (Rodriguez, 1982), Rodriguez argued that Spanish was a private language, inherently and rightfully part of a family's "intimate life" (p. 10). When Rodriguez's book had come out, it was harshly criticized by proponents of bilingual education. Rodriguez was staunchly against bilingual education, contending that it only served to postpone the learning of the language of *public* society: English. In contrast to Spanish, English communicated belonging to a *public* society. Whereas Spanish represented "extreme alienation" for him growing up, English

provided him a “public identity,” and the means by which words were directed at a general audience—meant to be understood by many others (p. 18).

Indeed, Rodriguez identifies the importance of public representation. According to Seligman (1993, p. 73), the public arena is where society contemplates its existence as a juridical community, and constructs a vision of itself. The process is one of mutual recognition between the particular and the social. Civil society operates within the public arena, and as a place of exchange, it is also an instrument of Reason. As such, if the private is to remain divorced from the public’s vision of itself and all of what this entails—including notions of equality and belonging—the tensions between the public and private realms are perpetuated, and Reason is undermined. Moreover, a failure of representation has real and negative consequences for the particular because an “exaggerated privacy and the loss of a shared public life” weakens human agency and will (p. 79).

Since Ruiz’ writing, Spanish as a medium of communication in the United States has continued to be revitalized through immigration, primarily from Mexico. A 2014 Pew Research study reports that immigrants are still having an impact in the classroom, with seven in ten school-aged children making up the total of U.S. k-12 population (Krogstad & Fry, 2014). At the same time, bilingual education as a mean by which these students achieve an education has been undermined by cuts to school budgets (Pomerantz & Huguet, 2013). Thus today, the boyhood experiences of Richard Rodriguez continues to be multiplied by millions. In Arizona alone, Maricopa County has become one of the fastest growing counties in the United States, largely due to immigration. U.S. Census data show that in 2014, 26% of Arizona’s population spoke a language other than English, and 30.5 % of its residents (about two million) was Hispanic or Latino. Children of immigrants continue to enroll in schools, and the cycle of learning English and unlearning Spanish starts each day of every year, erasing any gains made towards greater English proficiency attained by the previous generation of English language learners (Krogstad, Stepler, & Lopez, 2015). These students thus continue to experience similar conditions referred to by early scholars writing in the 1960s and 1970s. Consequently, the voice needed to advocate for better learning conditions is weakened. What was not so clear is how the privatization of language would work within the longer process of student empowerment, such as the one that led to increased bilingual and multicultural programs in the first place.

Student Empowerment through the lens of Movement Politics

In the 1960s, minority populations long denied the power to challenge conditions that set them up for educational failure for generations found themselves on the cusp of important political and social change. These ethnic and other minority groups, including blacks, Native Americans, and feminists would organize and demand change in what is known as the U.S. Civil Rights period (Reuben, 1998). They agitated for voting rights, cultural rights, and educational reforms, including a more inclusive multicultural approach to public education to make it more accessible and culturally relevant to racialized, ethnic, and linguistic minority students (Tanemura Morelli & Spencer, 2000). Seligman (1993, p. 76) contends that the demonstrations

were also attempts to reconstitute the public sphere by making private matters, public concerns. Examples of this includes women's struggle for reproductive rights and freedoms, and the Gay rights movement. In this way, the public-private dichotomy were blurred (Seligman 1993).

Significant progress in bilingual education was made during this period of progressive change (Keller & Van Hooft 1982). For Mexican American populations, the major civil rights issue was fundamentally one of language instruction, and language was at the heart of school segregation (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was passed in 1965, the same year that the Voting Rights Act was passed. Title VII of ESEA provided funding for the education of children whose dominant language was not English. In 1967 the Bilingual Education Act was passed, which included a mandate for developing university programs for preparing teachers and administrators to work in the field of bilingual education. Numerous challenges to these federal mandates were periodically challenged—the so called “bilingual wars” (Gándara & Contreras, 2009, p. 123), but for the most part they were rejected. For example, in one of the first of these challenges, *Serna v Portales Municipal Schools*, in 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the school district's failure to adopt programs for Spanish-speaking children was a violation of equal protection clause of the U.S. Constitution. *Lau v Nichols*, which established the criterion for obligatory bilingual programs at the national level was challenged in 1974. However, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against San Francisco school system for failing to comply with the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964, which bans discrimination based "on the ground of race, color, or national origin" (Keller & Van Hooft, 1982).

The groundswell of Mexican American voices were also part of this social movement that led to the establishment of multicultural programs. They self-identified as Chicanos and Chicanas, and the movement during the 1970s was referred to in Spanish as “*El Movimiento*.” El Movimiento helped frame demands that eventually brought about the establishment of Chicano Studies and Mexican American Studies throughout U.S. colleges and universities (Muñoz, 1989; Rosen, 1973). The curricula developed for these programs were used to develop critical pedagogies for instruction (Pizarro, 1998), with which they could empower students (Camarota & Romero, 2009). As a result, the culture and language previously relegated to the private sphere intersected with the public sphere via robust student civic engagement, and ultimately, with educational institutions (Rhoads & Martínez, 1988). Chicano/a and Mexican American studies programs today provide scholars the academic infrastructures to advance their study of the structural issues affecting Mexican-origin communities, such as unequal access to educational and economic opportunities, institutional neglect, and political disenfranchisement (Soldatenko, 2011; Pizarro, 1998). In this way, generations of students were eventually exposed to valuable critical histories of resistance in classrooms (Gonzalez, 2001; Hurtado, 2005). The empowerment achieved in the 1960s-1970s was clearly achieved by very public engagement and interaction that challenged the public-private dichotomy by bringing issues of language and culture into public spaces of learning and understanding. With the boundaries dividing the private from the public so blurred, empowerment followed. On this point, Ruiz (1997, p. 322) affirmed:

Empowerment comes when schools are inclusionary, when their pedagogy encourages critical independent thinking, and when they aim to find and build on a child's strengths rather than identify weaknesses.

Forced Retrenchment in Arizona

For many years, multicultural education would have resounding impact on the nature of language-minority students in many parts of the United States. The number of bilingual education and multicultural programs grew even as critics raised concerns over how multicultural educational approaches were diluting American identity and values through "Hispanization" (Huntington, 2004).

Arizona, however, proved challenging for implementing the progressive change that could empower language-minority students. Arizona's hostility towards minority-language students is well documented (Echeverría, 2014). Many of the laws in the state, both proposed and passed, have been related to education, and marked tensions with its increasing Spanish language populations. For example, in 1992, a class-action law suit in behalf of English Language Learner (ELL) students in the state was brought against the State Board of Education and Tom Horne, Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction (Gándara, 2012). The suit alleged that the state undermined student success in Nogales, Arizona through its arbitrary method of funding the English learning programs that were vital to student success. Although the ruling was in support of Nogales's bilingual students, for over 20 years, the state entered a series of injunctions to avoid complying with the decision. Then, in 2000, a federal district court in Arizona ruled against the state, and held it in contempt for violating the Equal Educational Opportunity Act, after which the state appealed to the conservative-leaning U.S. Supreme Court. This court, in a 5-4 decision, ruled in favor of the state in 2009. In the meantime, a proposition to make English the Official Language in Arizona moved through the legislature. It was vetoed by Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano in May, 2005, but voters passed an initiative in 2006 declaring English as the state's official language.

Increased immigration coincided with reductions in bilingual education programs elsewhere in the nation. These reductions came at a time when Hispanic K-12 enrollment in the nation was growing (Pomerantz and Huguet, 2013). In 2008, children with at least one immigrant parent were the fastest growing segment of the United States under the age of 15, representing 22% of all US children (Mather, 2009). The already-economically disadvantaged language minority students stand to lose with changes in education policies resulting in greater pressures for them to assimilate by learning English even as assimilationist approaches have been sharply criticized. Pomerantz and Huguet (2013) point out that economic mobility can be achieved even if students are allowed to continue to use their native language to learn, and that in fact, in today's globalized economy, multilingual speakers are more advantaged.

Adult English language learners in Arizona were also negatively impacted by both political and funding trends. In 2006, Arizona Prop 300 was passed, imposing new restrictions based on legal status for enrolling and attending the state's adult education programs. Adult education was targeted because it appeared that Spanish-speaking undocumented immigrants

comprised the bulk of those who took English classes. Prop 300 also curtailed undocumented immigrant students' access to institutions of higher learning by requiring proof of legal residency to qualify for in-state tuition and state-funded financial aid. Thus, just when English became the state's official language, the Arizona state legislature placed additional obstacles to learning English. There were also the incidents of k-12 teacher re-assignment and dismissal due to their so-called "faulty English" (Leeman, 2012, p 146). The incidents followed the application of a little known provision in the *No Child Left Behind Act* to evaluate teacher performance in the classroom. The re-assignments and dismissals became a subject of a Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Education investigation into alleged illegal discrimination in Arizona.

Then, in 2010, minority students in Arizona suffered yet another blow when Arizona HB-2281 was passed. The law aimed to eliminate the Mexican American Studies program in the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD), alleging that it was seditious (O'Leary, Romero, Cabrera, & Rascon, 2012). This program had, in fact, proved to advance academic success of students (Cabrera 2012). In spite of this, in May of 2010, the legislative bill banning Mexican American Studies curricula specific to TUSD was signed into law by Republican Governor Jan Brewer. The development of this bill has been traced to TUSD student demonstrations over Congress' failure to reform immigration law (O'Leary, et al., 2012). TUSD student unrest had drawn the attention of Arizona legislators, the outcome of which was Arizona House Bill 2281. At stake were the strides towards greater educational equity of ethnic-minority student, largely of Mexican origin, fought for and achieved during the Civil Rights Era. Keeping the Mexican American Studies program would mean losing 10% of the total TUSD operating budget. This forced TUSD to concede and to end the programs that had been proven to benefit all students, even though there was no evidence that the schools had been in violation of the law (Cabrera, 2012). Ultimately, the law brought an end to the Mexican American Studies program in TUSD.

Ruiz (1997, 2008) provides an illuminating case study to understand the demise of bilingual and multicultural education programs in Arizona. He describes the great public support for German-speaking communities in the Midwest during the mid -19th century, during the "heyday" of publically funded bilingual education in the United States (Ruiz, 2008, p.651). At the peak of this period, as much as 70% of all students in the so-called "German Triangle" (St. Louis-Milwaukee-Cincinnati) were taking German classes. This support reflected the "high status" of these populations (Ruiz, 2008). However, support for speaking German waned during WWI as public opinion against Germany grew. States passed anti-foreign language laws and funding to support German language programs were withdrawn. In the end, German communities in the Midwest lost their language. Two lessons are to be learned here. First is that once a minority-language group becomes dependent on the state for public support of its language and cultural programs—in essence, relinquishing its control over its own resources—it risks losing them altogether. However, this lesson has limited applicability for understanding the dependence of Spanish-speaking populations on public schools to keep Spanish alive. Spanish continues to be infused through immigration and it has an active and meaningful role for communicating and exchange. It does not depend on public support for it to exist. Secondly, we

learn that when the status of a language group is high, it may receive support for its instruction. Conversely, when the status of the language group is low, support can be withdrawn. This second lesson has greater relevance for understanding the elimination of Arizona's bilingual education and Mexican American Studies programs.

Because immigration and immigrant antecedents is a defining part of being Chicano/Latino (Garcia 2011), and because policies have tended to be shaped by "political expediency and pandering to anti-immigrant sentiment (Gándara & Contreras, 2009, p. 121), bilingual education programs in Arizona and Mexican American Studies programs in TUSD have been relegated to "low status." In both cases, the state—traditionally in control of the content and purpose of schooling—used funding power to an ideological agenda. The lack of state support for these programs, in spite of the known benefits they provided to minority students, paralleled the withholding of public support of language programs in German Triangle after the status of German plunged, as per the politics of that era. Moll and Ruiz (2002) observe that public support for Spanish bilingual education program flourished for Cuban populations in Dade County, Florida. This was commensurate with the politics of U.S.-Cuban relations and the "high status" accorded to Cuban fleeing a communist regime. There has also been little problem with the public funding for languages considered necessary for national security, namely Chinese and Arabic (Pomerantz & Huguet, 2013). Through the use of public funding for certain language programs, the state articulates a societal value, creating high status for some languages or linguistic groups, or demote their status based on historically contextualized thinking. In so doing, however, inequality is systematically perpetuated.

Structuring Inequality and Opportunity through Language Programs

Pomerantz and Huguet's (2013) examination of trends in funding bilingual education demonstrate that although Spanish is the most studied language in the United States, bilingual education of English language learners (those whose native language is Spanish) is the program most likely to suffer from cuts in educational funding. English language learners are more likely to be primary grade children of immigrant parents, or immigrant children. In the United States, 90% of all primary school children attend public schools (Pomerantz and Huguet 2013). For Spanish language heritage students who are high English language functioning but are more likely to be students who identify with Latino culture and language, have also suffered budgetary reductions in programs that could benefit them (Pomerantz and Huguet 2013). However, SLE is more likely to be offered in schools that are predominately populated by students from affluent communities. In such schools, public funding of language programs is made possible by the collection of higher property taxes. These more affluent areas also enjoy a greater level of autonomy over curriculum. In the end, students who could benefit from bilingual education programs to help them enter the public sphere and to advance academically, are not likely to have them. Heritage language (likely Latino) students who already have a mastery of English, are also less likely to acquire the language of their ancestors that would make them more marketable in today's global economy. In these two contexts, Spanish continues to be the

language of poverty and highly stigmatized (Pomerantz and Huguet 2013). As such, these programs are less valued. However, students in schools that are endowed with funds to provide SLE, are more likely to acquire Spanish as a second language, improving their academic preparedness and increasing opportunities for economic and social advancement. In sum, where SLE is part of the curriculum, it is because it is perceived as having value. Presumably, the value in learning Spanish is related to a competency that will bring economic opportunity and advancement. In other words, Spanish (once it has been disassociated from native speakers of Spanish) has an exchange value. As something of value, it has come under the control of those who are positioned to economically gain from it. The history of Spanish-speaking peoples in the American Southwest, a history that includes their colonization, provides historical context for understanding how language, as a resource, has been expropriated for the economic advantage of others. For example, shortly after the lands that were once Mexico were annexed to the United States, Mexican Americans were expropriated from another valuable resource needed to maintain their cultural and economic autonomy: their land (Bowman, 2015; Menchaca, 1995). Of this history, Chavez (1984, p. 43) writes that soon after the American Southwest came under the control of the United States government in 1848,^{vii} there was a rapid influx of Anglos looking to settle in the new territory. Through a quagmire of litigation that required that land grant titles be verified in a new language, English, Mexican Americans soon lost their economic base, and with this loss, the prestige that land ownership had provided them, was also lost.

The Private-Public nature of Language

The word choice, “privatization,” to characterize how language might be maintained and used for economic and cultural self-determination poses some problems. First it is problematic because it seems to endorse an economic philosophy that has worked to undermine government efforts to improve conditions of marginalized populations. Those advocating for privatization have increasingly sought to withdrawal the state from its role in producing and maintaining benefits that improve the welfare of the greater public and transferring these activities to the private sector (Resnik, 2009). At the heart of this philosophy is the assumption that the public funding of certain social benefits is wasteful and expensive for taxpayers. A recent example of this came with the federal No Child Left Behind Act that determined second language instruction in public schools was non-essential. Consequently, the funding of bilingual education was dealt a blow for the educational advancement Spanish language minority students (Pomerantz & Huguet, 2013).

Secondly, to suggest a strategy of privatization appears to accept self-effacement, the “extreme alienation” described by Rodriguez (1982). To accept privatization is to deny the “public identity” (Rodriguez, 1982, p. 18) needed to achieve representation and belonging in the public sphere that might lead to Reason and equality (Seligman, 1993). At the same time, to learn English at the expense of a child’s vernacular, essentially removing it from her repertoire of the community, should not require effacement. As Keller (1982, p. 77) notes, effacement would be akin to the obliteration of that group’s social identity, and tantamount to cultural genocide.

Third, the language of privatization is also unfortunate because in some contexts it summons racist overtones. Hohle (2012) found that in the American South, the language of privatization was used to garner support for the public financing of private school systems as a way to sabotage school desegregation orders after the *Brown v. Board of Education*. This type of privatization has been achieved through a number of plans, including the use of school voucher plans, magnet and charter school systems, or tax credit programs (Pomerantz & Huguet, 2013). The rapid increase in the public financing of private schools have raised concerns from scholars who have pointed out their potential for exacerbating segregation and discrimination (Saporito & Sohoni, 2006). Saporito and Sohoni (2006) point out that white students are more likely to attend private schools when the number of nonwhites move into their neighborhoods. White students are also more likely to attend magnet schools when the number of nonwhites in their school catchment areas increase.

However, while the term and concept of “privatization” is problematic in these aforementioned ways, there is precedent for considering if the privatizing of language is at all possible. Whether a language can be owned so that it can be privatized has been the subject of inquiry in law and legal studies (Hutton, 2010). If language is a central part of the inheritance of a group, it can be considered the collective property of the group, and therefore, its ownership is recognized by law. This has been the case of some indigenous groups in the United States, Canada, and Australia. As far as it is possible, language much like any valuable resource, can be owned, and “privatized” in order to legally protect it from abuse (much like intellectual property or creative works of some indigenous groups), or to protect it from “language death.”

However, in a liberal view of language ownership, it would be wrong to enclose a language when it serves a public good. In this way, language can be considered as simultaneously private and public. As a public resource, there can be no monopoly over it. It cannot be owned or controlled by the state, “nor by any corporate or collective body group or set of individuals” (Hutton, 2010, p. 640). Yet, with respect to the public control of language (through the power to suppress, fund, or not fund language instruction), language use has been a means by which minority groups in the American Southwest have been economically disadvantaged, even as economy became ripe with opportunities for Spanish speakers. Forced to abandon their language to avoid stigmatization, many were denied the economic opportunity for advancement. About this experience, and as a heritage language student, Christine Marin (1993, p. 91) provides some testimony:

Unfortunately, my father’s pay didn’t stretch far enough to pay for a college education...It was ultimately up to us to somehow find the money to stay in school and continue our education. [A friend] helped me get a job as a salesgirl at Jay’s Credit Clothing. Most of the customers were African Americans, Mexicans Mexican American and some Anglos. ...Mexican American sales women were paid a small weekly salary but earned most of their money through sales commissions. Making these sales was very competitive, and I didn’t do so well. I couldn’t speak Spanish well enough to assist Spanish speaking customers,...which let me frustrated and

embarrassed. One of the senior Mexican-American sales women...noticed how desperately I struggled with the language. She often gave me her own sales....She taught me another lesson about the power of language: bilingualism paid well—. Fortunately, today there is less fear among Latino families about language maintenance. According to a Pew Research report, Hispanics want future U.S. Hispanic generations to speak Spanish. 75% of Hispanics believed it is very important or somewhat important (20%) for future generations of Hispanics in the U.S. to be able to speak Spanish (Taylor, Lopez & Velasco 2014).

Reclaiming Spanish as Language of Empowerment: the Global Perspective

Going forward, I am encouraged by a point brought up by Ruiz (1997, p. 324) who in citing Henry Giroux^{viii} suggested that rather than to continue to think about Spanish as a ‘language of resistance,’ we should think about it as the ‘language of possibility.’ This idea has never been as clear as it is today.

In writing about the New Latino Generation, Garcia (2011, p 24), points out the tremendous demographic shift in the United States, arguing that this shift will increasingly become aligned with “vast new international economic changes, commonly referred to as globalization.” Already, this new Latino Generation is globally connected through immigration, but with new technologies of communication, suppression of language will soon be a nonevent:

Latinos of today’s generation not only know more about what is transpiring in other countries and cultures can communicate with their peers in these locations. It also means that internally, Latinos, more so than in the past are in touch with themselves throughout the country. This globalized means of communication tempers any sense of isolation and provincialism Garcia (2011, p 25).

It bears worth repeating that Spanish is the most taught language in the United States. Even more impressive is that Spanish is the second most widely spoken languages in the world today—more so than English by about 100 million people.

And behind Spanish language education is a growing economy. There are instructors getting paid, publishing firms are selling text books, translators being paid, and commercial language learning products being produced. Proficiency in a second language is still required for most university degrees in institutions of higher education, generating additional tuition dollars, and individuals are advancing their careers because they have acquired this language. Grant money is being awarded to researchers investigating Latino health and educational disparities, where research methods necessitate Spanish language proficiency and facilitate collaboration with international partners and institutions (O’Leary & Sanchez, 2013). Therefore, although it has been devaluated politically, as a reactionary repudiation of the right to be different (and more particular, Mexican), outside this particular majoritarian discourse, speaking Spanish is recognized as making economic sense.

We are all currently living with increased diversity. The new Latino Generation has come to embrace it and are reaping the rewards of multicultural programs initiated in the 1960s

(Chavez 2011). This is not to deny the challenges ahead. Access to formal education continues to hold the promise of a healthier, and more productive life even as it becomes increasingly being curtailed by economic and social factors. Economic factors include poverty and the increased cost of education. This will result in less preparedness for higher education, and tuition increases make it even more challenging for resource-strapped families. Projections indicate that unless steps are taken to avert it, the number of children and youth in poverty will triple by 2026, and almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of these will be nonwhite, with more than half Latino. These very students will grow to nearly 45 million in 2026, or, nearly 70 percent of our nation's school enrollment in 10 years (Garcia, 2001).

Important social factors stem from Latinos living with increased hostility. Research shows that there has been very little change in the perception of Latinos by the dominant majority Anglo population in the last three decades (Garcia, 2001). However, greater participation in the growing field of Spanish language mass media may provide the opportunity to reclaim Spanish as medium of communication and cultural identity and pride, and provide relief of the conditions that have for too long perpetuated structural inequality. Garcia (2011) predicts that the New Latino Generation will be increasingly involved with Spanish mass media. Indeed, national news media outlets (as opposed to local) have added seven since 2009, with seven outlets as of 2013.^{ix} Over time, these will undoubtedly provide Latinos a greater "voice" (Garcia, 2011) for influencing public attitudes, and for making a political difference.

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ⁱ For a current analysis of this theoretical perspective, see Bowman (2015)

ⁱⁱ Some of the ideas in Ruiz' 1997 article can be found in a later work, co-authored with colleague Luis Moll (Moll & Ruiz, 2002)

ⁱⁱⁱ Although there had been many bilingual programs throughout the United States by the 1960s, the only Spanish language bilingual program of note were the ones established for children of Cuban refugees, after the fall of the Batista regime in that country. By the mid-1960s, some of the first bilingual programs for Spanish speaking students in the American Southwest were established in Texas (in 1964), which were followed by more programs in New Mexico (in 1965), Arizona, California, and New Jersey (in 1966) (Keller & Van Hooft, 1982).

^{iv} Kjolseth, R. (1982) Bilingual education programs in the United States: For assimilation or pluralism in P.R. Turner (ed.), *Bilingualism in the southwest* (2nd. Ed., rev., pp.3-28) Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

^v The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was ratified in 1848, was followed by the Gadsden Purchase signed in 1954.

^{vi} Huntington (2009) squarely laid the blame for America's social fragmentation and unrest on the proponents of multicultural education.

^{vii} The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo signed in 1848, ceded nearly a third of Mexico to the United States. The treaty guaranteed that Mexican nationals wishing to stay on the U.S. side of the border after annexation, were entitled to

U.S. citizenship and numerous other protections, including the right to keep their lands. Even when titles to land could be authenticated and produced by their rightful owners, these were seldom respected (Menchaca, 1995)

^{viii} Giroux, H.A. (1986). Radical Pedagogy and the Politics of Student Voice. *Interchange*, 17, 48-69.

^{ix} Estrella (Spanish), Fox News Latino, HuffPost Latino Voices, Noticias Mundo Fox (Spanish), NBC Latino, CNN Latino (Spanish), Fusion (Guskin & Anderson, 2014).