

to provide models by which tribes can follow to successfully utilize tourism as a form of economic and community development.

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English only in Valle Verdeⁱ

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This paper examines the unequal racial formations derived from English-only policies in a northern Colorado school district. For historical background, the formation and dissolution of bilingual education at the national, state, and local levels is presented. In the analysis, I first utilize Michael Omi and Howard Winant's multiple paradigm approach to examine the interrelated concepts of nation, ethnicity, and class in accordance with race formation. Second, I use Charles Mills' epistemological assertions to examine formal and informal relationships between signatories, beneficiaries, and the marginalized Other to expose racial undertones associated with English-only policies.ⁱⁱ And last, I pull from the works of Virginia Dominguez to examine the ways in which local, state, and federal governing bodies uphold racial disenfranchisement. When viewed through the lens of race formation theory, it is clear that educational policies at the national, state and local levels are often implemented to maintain a hierarchical social order.

Methods

I interviewed four Valle Verde community members, all of whom are represented by pseudonyms. I started with an informal interview in 2010 with an elementary education teacher who had taught in Valle Verde for over twenty years. She, identified as Kelli Andersen

in this study, provided me with over 600 pages of material including school board minutes, documents from her service among multiple committees, newspaper clippings, bilingual education articles, and several books. This material was loaned to me for a three-month period and was used to guide and direct my archival investigation of both national and local shifts in policy.

Several weeks later I set up another informal meeting with Kelli Andersen and three other people whom she identified as plausible interview participants. For over an hour we sat around a table and they shared experiential information on the history and demise of bilingual-bicultural education in Valle Verde. One Mexican American lady, identified as Margaret Sanchez, served as the Bilingual Unit Director for the Colorado Department of Education from 1977-1981 until the English Language Proficiency Act (ELPA) replaced the bilingual legislation. She later became the principal at Torrez Elementary, continuing the bilingual-bicultural program for fifteen years until 1998 when she retired. Similar to Mrs. Andersen, Ms. Sanchez also provided me with many archival documents.

Equally influential in providing information was a lady identified as Sandra Ramirez, a second generation Mexican American who was born in Valle Verde and has taught there for thirty-five years. She will

retire in 2011. In addition, Jorge Villarreal, a second generation Mexican American born and raised in Valle Verde, provided me with information from the viewpoint of a former community liaison, counselor, teacher and continual advocate for equity and justice. In May of 2011, the five of us met together one last time to edit this manuscript and to discuss future applications of this research. It is the intense documentation and meticulous organization of these individuals, as well as their willingness to share, with precise detail, historical and present events that have provided the momentum and authenticity of this research.

National inequity

“To separate them [colored children] from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely to ever be undone.”¹

The 1954 ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education* established criterion which became the basis for bilingual education policy during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. However, policies resulting in race-based exclusion continue despite the monumental and unprecedented *Brown v. Board of Education* verdict which concluded, “[I]t is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms.”¹ Contentious debates abound and many remain unresolved as children today, just as in the past, are marginalized in American school systems.

While Chief Justice Warren’s vernacular within *Brown v. Board of Education* created judicial momentum for bilingual education, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which stated, “Grants will be made for operation of institutes to train school staff, for support of specialized personnel, and for local in service training programs to meet problems occasioned by desegregation,” provided financial momentum by mandating funds toward educational programs.² Furthermore, provisions from the Office of Education supported such educational programs. However, the Director of the Bureau of the Budget, Kermit Gordon’s supplemental appropriations statement for the Civil Rights Act empowered local school districts despite federally mandated desegregation. His statement read: “The Office of Education will provide technical assistance upon request of local schools and will prepare a report on the availability of equal educational opportunities in public educational institutions in the United States.”² Thus, as of 1965, school districts were given the executive power to decide whether assistance was needed to desegregate the classroom, unless the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) utilized authorization under Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to ensure localities were properly desegregating.²

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) was passed shortly after the Civil Rights Act “to strengthen and improve educational quality and educational opportunities in the Nation’s elementary and secondary schools.”³ The ESEA mandated financial assistance to low income schools and “authorize[d] a 5-year program for making grants for... vitally needed educational services not available in a sufficient quantity and quality.”³ However, the quality and opportunities of education for English Learners was not an explicit concern within legislation until the 1968 Bicultural Education Act (BEA) was passed as Title VII of the 1965 ESEA. The BEA was enacted to address inequities involving the “millions of children of limited English-speaking ability due to the fact that they come from environments where the dominant language is other than English, or where a language other than English is commonly used.”⁴ Despite the educational reforms mandated through previous policies since *Brown v.*

Board of Education, according to the BEA, “little headway ha[d] been made on solving this problem [aforementioned] and that there is an urgent need for comprehensive and cooperative action now on the local, State, and Federal levels for new programs to assist these children.”⁴ Accordingly, Section 703(c) of the BEA authorized programs which included native language instruction, bilingual and bicultural programs including appropriate history and cultural programs, and efforts to hire and retain bilingual and biculturally sensitive faculty.⁴ Yet despite congressional rhetoric emphasizing the advancement of “children whose primary language is not English, and whose cultural heritage needs to be understood and appreciated both by themselves and by their fellow American citizens,” the administration remained fiscally conservative.⁴ The House Report concerning the BEA stated, “The President did not include additional funds for bilingual education in his budget . . . as would be authorized by this bill. This is the worst possible time, in our judgment, to add spending authorizations unless they are absolutely necessary.”⁴ The House Report concluded, “While we oppose enactment of this particular bill for reasons other than the importance of the subject matter, we urge the Commissioner [of Education] to promote the accomplishment of the purposes of this legislation,” dismissing federal responsibility for perpetuating equity within school systems.⁴ This conclusion and the lack of monetary appropriations followed the House’s scrutiny of the Commissioner of Education’s incompetency and inability to promote bilingual-bicultural education with the preexisting budget and legislation.⁴

Despite disregard by some representatives, the BEA provided the authority under Title VII of the ESEA “for local educational agencies to plan and conduct bilingual and bicultural education programs,” ignoring the reality of racially discriminatory, local educational agencies across the nation—agencies which would not accept the funds to further advance their students and successfully integrate their school system.⁴ However, Title VII money was offered “for school districts to create experimental and demonstration programs designed to better meet the educational needs of students who come to school speaking languages other than English.”⁵ Local school agencies hampering bilingual-bicultural implementation, however, were not reprimanded until the mid 1970s during California’s *Lau v. Nichols* case. The case regarded “[t]he failure of a San Francisco school system to provide English language instruction to approximately 1,800 students of Chinese ancestry who do not speak English, or to provide them with other adequate instructional procedures.”⁶ The U.S. Court of Appeals ruled that California imposed standards which promoted inequality “by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum,” which, “effectively foreclosed [students who do not understand English] from any meaningful education.”⁶ In continuing, the Court stated that “those who do not understand English are certain to find their classroom wholly incomprehensible and in no way meaningful,” which implied that equal access to facilities did not create equal treatment and equal educational opportunity.^{6,7} Without learning in their native tongues, students were denied education—the “foundation of good citizenship,” as defined by *Brown v. Board of Education*.¹ Such denial of education was a structural tool utilized to prohibit access to U.S. citizenship or at least a method to marginalize non-English speakers. In conclusion, the Court declared the San Francisco school system in violation of Section 601 in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which reads, “No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin be excluded in the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”⁶ Accordingly, the Court barred discrimination among students on account of race or national origin.⁷

Using statehoods to cover educational inequities

When *Lau v. Nichols* brought inequitable barriers perpetuated by racist state policies to the national forefront, states reexamined education policies to access remedies for inequitable education—remedies which were not outlined in the *Lau v. Nichols* decision. Though the Office of Civil Rights published the *Lau Remedies* in 1975 and consequently the *Lau Regulations*, enforcement at the state and local levels proved difficult.⁸ However, in 1975 Colorado passed the Bilingual and Bicultural Education Act (BBEA) to mandate bilingual programs in Colorado schools enrolling at least twenty English Language Learners (ELL) speaking one common language.⁵ The comprehensive bilingual law, according to the former Bilingual Unit Director for the Colorado Department of Education, provided the structure for “a strong diagnostic prescriptive English language development component, the use of the native language to reinforce basic skill subject matter, cultural relevance, self concept enhancement and parental involvement.”⁹ In addition the program took “place within the context of an integrated classroom based on voluntary participation.”⁹ However, despite the monumental gains of the BBEA, after a shift in political parties during the mid-1970s, English proficiency advocates and racist litigators stifled the momentum of educational equity in Colorado.

During the late 1970s, school districts utilizing Title VII funding in accordance with the BEA and the BBEA were dismayed at the changing tides within legislation. Legislation was circulating through the State which would derail the equity and progress which the BEA and BBEA had mandated. In 1977, Attorney General and republican from Fort Collins, Colorado, Duane Woodard spoke to the state legislature: “The Bilingual-Bicultural Act is relatively new as an educational program in the State of Colorado and its provisions are deeply appreciated by the Hispanic people from whom it has special meaning. These people comprise a significant minority of the population of the State of Colorado.”¹⁰ Recognition of Hispanics in Colorado and their validity during political reform was important to many progressive politicians, dedicated school teachers, and active community members of both the dominant and marginalized societies. However, Woodard’s constructive cynicism and morality struck the legislative floor and fell on deaf ears as he spoke: “We the Majority always seem to have the correct perceptions and answers, even on programs that more fully impact on another language and culture.”¹⁰ After explaining the importance of Hispanics in American history and culture, Woodard humbly concluded, “Is it any wonder that these people appreciate what the bilingual-bicultural program offers? A respect for their heritage and a better chance in tomorrow’s English dominated society.”¹⁰ With a legislative body comprised of discriminatory policy makers, Woodard faced ostracism and was not reelected. His career exemplifies the political downturn of officials who defy the status quo among society’s power holders.

Despite the Colorado State government’s declining attention toward minority education during the late 1970s, English Language Learners benefited from bilingual programs during that time. In February of 1981, the Bilingual Unit Director for the Colorado Department of Education reported an executive summary of Colorado School Districts to the U.S. Secretary of Education. “[T]he excellent results obtained are a result of state and Title VII support of Bilingual Bicultural Education,” she wrote.⁹ However, the English Language Proficiency bill (S.B. 462) was enacted in 1981, despite dissenting letters from both school board superintendants across Colorado and state school board representatives, concerned community members, state legislators and a comprehensive study funded by the Department of Education reporting the effectiveness of bilingual programs.^{iii,11} The act eliminated the inclusive and highly effective bilingual-bicultural

education programs and initiated a “program of intensive English language instruction over a period of 2 school years for students with deficiency in the English language.”¹¹ State Representative and Education Committee member Laura DeHerrera (D-Denver) denounced the bill which “was assigned to the House Committee on Finance,” and completely by-passed the Education Committee to expedite its passage and for fear that “the bill would be substantially amended by members on the Education Committee.”¹² DeHerrera explained the immense progress achieved by Bilingual Education. She then cited data of Colorado’s 21% minority population and added that over 50% of minorities comprised the dropout rate.¹² She continued explaining that “[t]he test scores of all the children who have participated in these programs have shown significant gains.”¹² In conclusion, DeHerrera openly pondered the discriminatory legislature: “We are facing a regressive turning point. And it is strange moves such as S.B. 462 that makes one wonder whether the legislature wants the dropout rates to go down.”¹² In addition, as Welner and Escamilla from the Education and the Public Interest Center recalled, “The ELPA program allowed school districts in Colorado to choose which type of instructional programs they felt were in the best interests of second language learners,” further strengthening localities against past national education policy.⁵ English-only sentiment had infiltrated Colorado school districts through the venue of discriminatory political discourse and legislation.

Valle Verde

National and state education policies concerning non-English speaking students and English Language Learners have racially shaped local school systems and communities. Luis Torrez Elementary School in Valle Verde, a rural town in northern Colorado, has experienced an educational roller coaster as policies have been shaped and reshaped for decades. Though racist sentiment is prevalent among some of the locals, events are consistently held throughout Valle Verde which meet the needs of both English and non-English speakers. Regardless of race and ethnicity, cooperation and engagement is necessary to orchestrate events such as fairs, art shows, family nights and meet-and-greets. However, English-only education policy has created stringent divides in the school system and community.

Torrez Elementary School once provided a model of multilingualism after which regions throughout the area admired and modeled their programs. Bilingual education began in the district during 1972 when Valle Verde became one of the first Colorado districts to receive Title VII (BEA) money. In the beginning, one class in each grade was monolingually taught. According to the school principal at that time, the majority of parents preferred their children be enrolled in integrated bilingual classrooms.¹³ Teachers endorsed with English as a Second Language (ESL) were well versed in cognitive learning approaches for native speakers which included cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) and basic interpersonal conversation skills (BICS), recalled Mrs. Andersen, a teacher who has spent over twenty years with the district.¹⁴ According to Mrs. Andersen, “Students needed to learn in their native language. We couldn’t just skip over their cognitive learning for five to seven years. So we provided instruction in their native language. If it was English, it was English, if it was Spanish it was Spanish.”¹⁴ Students, whether native English or native Spanish speakers, along with their parents, mapped out a preferential course that would lead the student toward dual language proficiency, meeting the foreign language standard for high school graduation in the district.¹⁵ In the late 1990s when curriculum was finally mandated toward English-only, Mrs. Andersen explained that students were taught subject matter in English. However, students were not cognitively developed in accordance with the English lan-

guage. Therefore, by seventh grade some native Spanish speakers were linguistically fluent in English but could not understand the content.¹⁴ This is still a problem today.

Despite the national and state discourse of English proficiency in lieu of bilingual-bicultural education, the Valle Verde School District, with a high degree of native Spanish speakers, respected the multi-ethnic complexity within the district and promoted English proficiency through a multilingual program. One school pamphlet in the late 1990s was subtitled, "A School with Multi-language Program Choices."¹⁶ Spanish speakers and English speakers remained integrated through the Two Language Program (TLP), the English Enrichment (EE) "for parents who wish their children to be taught in English with no second language instruction," or the English-Spanish Enrichment (ESE) "for English speaking children who also wish to learn to speak Spanish."¹⁶ The multi-language programs suited a diverse population as curriculum was tailored to suit individual developmental and cognitive needs while promoting a bilingual-bicultural atmosphere. Ms. Ramirez, a teacher born in Valle Verde has taught in the area for thirty-five years. She recollected, "My classroom, of course it's not bilingual anymore due to mandates, but before we had the culture in the classrooms. We had English decorations but we had Spanish too... We taught the culture too and we did finger plays, we did songs, we did music, we did plays, but we did them bilingually."¹⁷

During the 1990s, numerous studies supported dual language programs such as the integrated programs at Torrez. Virginia Collier, Professor Emerita of Bilingual/Multicultural/ESL Education at George Mason University, conducted numerous studies and found that "language majority students taught through a minority language for part of the school day may experience an initial lag in [native language] skills . . . which usually disappears by the middle grades of elementary school."¹⁸ She then added, ". . . in many cases bilingually schooled students demonstrate superior academic performance by the end of elementary school."¹⁸ In addition, Wayne Thomas, Professor Emeritus of Program Evaluation and Research Methodology at Virginia Tech., and Collier, in a longitudinal study funded by the U.S. Department of Education, found that "Native-English speakers in two-way bilingual immersion programs maintained their English, added a second language to their knowledge base, and achieved well above the 50th percentile in all subject areas on norm-reference tests in English."¹⁹ They concluded, "These bilingually schooled students equaled or outperformed their comparison groups being schooled monolingually, on all measures."¹⁹ Two-way developmental bilingual education, the method once performed at Torrez, resulted in greater student progress from grades three to eleven than did any other program. All ESL approaches, such as the one currently used at Torrez due to local and state mandates, had significantly fewer positive results.²⁰

Despite the progress made at Torrez Elementary, political currents changed in the local, state, and national arenas. At one point in the late 1990s a plan was proposed to segregate Torrez. Ms. Ramirez recollected:

There was one year when we still had bilingual, but they wanted to move all the bilingual classrooms over to the other end, including kindergarten. . . . What is that going to show having all the Spanish speaking students in one area? They wanted to call it the Español Calle. . . . They wanted to throw us way over there where the dumpsters are.¹⁷

During her recollection, Mr. Villarreal, a former community liaison, counselor and lifelong Valle Verde community member inter-

rupted, "Across the tracks," the school board proposed segregating the school just as the community was segregated by the train tracks.²¹ Fortunately the community banded together and the segregationist idea was short lived. However, racist momentum was building.

Mrs. Andersen who served on the Council of Curricular Achievement remembers struggling to maintain bilingual education and the district standard of graduating with foreign language competency by speaking at school board meetings and to the local community.¹⁴ With two of her children having graduated as bilingual and one who became an aerospace engineer, she experienced the benefits of bilingual education.¹⁴ However, despite gains in maintaining the dual language requirements, the national No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, along with state level Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) testing, hampered the momentum built by the Council of Curricular Achievement, concerned parents and staff, and community members. Ms. Sanchez remembers the positive momentum until CSAP was mandated and the superintendent told her, "We don't have time to wait for the kids to learn English, we've got to get them into English right now," insinuating that integrated bilingual programs would be relinquished in favor of English proficiency programs.¹³ During 2004 a new superintendent was initiated for Valle Verde. Ms. Ramirez recalled a meeting between teachers and Superintendent Watson:

One of the kindergarten teachers said, "Well [Ms. Ramirez] who's been here a number of years, her belief and her philosophy is that students need to learn in their dominant language first and when they're ready to make that transition into English, then they'll move into English." And [Superintendent Watson] said, "Well I said English only," and I just stood quiet and they kept talking and talking. . . . [T]hen finally I did raise my hand and I did tell him. I said, "As a Masters student who took many classes, I learned [students] are supposed to learn in their dominant language first and then when they're ready they make that transition into English." . . . [H]e said, "I said ENGLISH ONLY." . . . So I just kind of stood back and said, "I'm not saying anything anymore."¹⁷

Several days later a teacher asked Ms. Ramirez, "How come you never say anything at these meetings?" Ms. Ramirez replied, "For what? He shut me down completely. . . . So I didn't say anything because he wasn't willing to hear."¹⁷ Ms. Ramirez along with countless staff and community members were being alienated by institutional discrimination.

Mr. Watson "came in with his agenda," according to Ms. Sanchez, who is stalwartly dedicated to bilingual-bicultural education and has held numerous education administrative positions at the local and state levels.¹³ She remembered at his "very first meeting of county administrators he stood up in front of the whole assembly and said, '[Valle Verde] has a dirty little secret. That secret is that a student can enter kindergarten speaking Spanish and graduate still speaking Spanish.'¹³ Within minutes, Ms. Sanchez recalled Valle Verde's assistant superintendent received three different phone calls from superintendents who asked astonishingly, "Do you know what the man you just hired said?"¹³ Though Mr. Watson's webpage boasts of the district's dedication toward "data-driven decision making processes," his English-only policies continue in 2011 despite the empirical data upholding bilingual, bicultural and multi-language programs.²²

Racial formation analysis

When consequences are viewed through the lens of race formation theory, it is clear that educational policies at the national, state and local levels are often implemented to maintain a hierarchical social order. In their book *Racial Formations in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, Michael Omi and Howard Winant employ multiple paradigms to examine race formation and the interrelated concepts of nation, ethnicity, and class.²³ They state, “None of these paradigms stand alone. There is necessarily overlap among them.”²³ Omi and Winant continue, “Though none of the three paradigms can grasp the nettle of race, each is able to develop certain fascinating insights into racial phenomenon.”²³ When used in conjunction, however, the multiple paradigm approach strengthens the dissection of race formation, uncovering entangled relationships between oppressive policies, legislators and the Other.

“In the nation-based paradigm,” according to Omi and Winant, “racial dynamics are understood as products of colonialism and, therefore, as outcomes of relationships which are global and epochal in character.”²³ This approach uncovers oppression throughout the globe as the exploitation of marginalized communities by institutionally oppressive regimes.²³ A nation-based approach analyzes race through the geography and territoriality of people groups.²³ Therefore, historically derived ethnic enclaves and marginalized areas in the U.S. can be understood as resultants of core/periphery relationships, whereby marginalized or peripheral segments of society are viewed by the dominant or core society as in need of paternalistic intervention and are also often ostracized. Likewise, the success of core expansion is predicated on the appropriation of resources from peripheral societies.²⁴ Accordingly, a considerable amount of Hispanics in present day Colorado were descendants of Mexicans and indigenous First Nation peoples who lived in the area before it was U.S. acquired territory. Many of them inhabited the migrant worker camps of Colorado and specifically camps in Valle Verde.¹⁴ Consequently, national, state and local hegemonic powers assumed control over ethnic enclaves in the region to maintain the status quo. Therefore, Hispanics as workers in the fields surrounding Valle Verde are one thing (a representation of wealth appropriation by the core) while Hispanics with bilingual education and political representation are another (a representation of wealth dispersal across racial and class boundaries).

The status quo is maintained through the political and socioeconomic domination by “racial separation and white supremacy.”²³ When examined through a nation-based lens, policies are uncovered as institutions necessary to strengthen superstructural control over marginalized communities. In this way, assimilative English-only policies hamper cultural continuity of the marginalized Other and reinforce the existing racial superstructure. The necessity of such policies to perpetuate superstructural control was demonstrated by the ostracism of Attorney General Duane Woodard who never passed a bill and was not reelected after his speech to the legislature in which he asked, “Is it really fair to continue to treat Hispanic peoples as second-class citizens? . . . Spanish language and culture was dominant . . . in the Southwest United States for better than a century before the first contact with English speaking Americans ever occurred.”¹⁰

Though nation-based approaches examine the hegemonic implications among people groups, according to Omi and Winant, an ethnicity-based approach is needed to examine the “dynamics of incorporation” among an enclave or group of people.²³ “Ethnicity theory,” they state, “is therefore concerned with questions of group identity; with the resolutions of tensions between the twin pressures of assimilation (dissolution with group identity) and cultural pluralism (preserva-

tion of group identity). . .”²³ Legal, political and social institutions are structured to discourage unity among and within ethnic minority groups through policies which encourage assimilation to the dominant culture. Institutions, then, enforce assimilation and the adoption of values that are often foreign and contradictory to the values of ethnic minorities. Therefore, discriminating against culturally relevant festivities such as the use of piñatas, practices such as communicating in the native tongue, and bilingual-bicultural finger plays and songs creates dissolution of group identity and a void within Mexican heritage preservation. By implementing English-only policies, the Valle Verde administration decreased ethnic pride and self-esteem among Spanish-speaking children. Ms. Ramirez lamented, “I would get kids [the following year] and say, ‘Hi María,’ and she’d say, ‘That’s not my name, my name’s Mary.”¹⁷

Degraded esteem and confusion within the hearts and minds of children creates barriers within the family and community. Community strife occurs as individuals and families venture different avenues of assimilation toward the dominant culture. Omi and Winant examine “the prospects for political integration via normal political channels” within ethnicity-based approaches.¹⁷ However, “normal political channels” are not easily accessible when institutions seek to marginalize the Other within communities. Nevertheless, political representation is necessary to preserve group identity and to protect disempowered groups from racist political maneuvers such as English-only policies. To obtain their voice within Valle Verde, families utilized different mechanisms, including the opposite poles of cultural dissolution and heritage preservation. “There was mixed emotions from the people from Mexico coming here,” Mr. Villarreal recalled.²¹ “Some would get here and tell their kids, ‘Don’t speak any Spanish anymore because we’re all English’ . . . And the other ones, they thought like the bilingual program, the goal is to learn English and keep your native language. I saw a lot of changes like that [but] a lot of them felt powerless.”²¹

Although institutions demand assimilation by the Other, the relinquishment of traditional values and acceptance of dominant norms by the Other does not guarantee political representation of disenfranchised groups. According to Omi and Winant, an ethnicity-based approach uncovers the oppressive ploys of minimizing political representation of ethnic minorities. These ploys are utilized to distribute “resources which [are] not only economic, but also political and cultural” toward already enfranchised groups. Simultaneously, the politically enfranchised, neoconservative regimes responsible for these ploys hoard appropriated resources to maintain the established hierarchy.²³

Not only do neoconservative regimes utilize an ethnicity-based agenda to exclude minority groups from politics, they also employ racist sentiment.²³ According to the “boot-straps model,” the level of achievement obtained by an ethnic group is directly correlated with the effort put forth by members of that ethnic group. Omi and Winant opine, “. . . the concrete sociopolitical dynamics within which racial phenomena operate in the U.S. - are ignored in this approach.”²³ Therefore Hispanics failing in U.S. schools are perceived as victims of Chicano values not victims of an inadequate school system.²³ As George Frederickson uncovers, “Scapegoating the available and vulnerable Other [is] one way of dealing with the bitterness and frustration resulting from the failure of nationalist projects” such as the U.S. public school system.²⁵ Racist sentiment emphasizes ethnic assimilation for minority groups to succeed in the dominant society and ignores the negative socio-cultural, economic and psychological effects of the “boot-straps model.” Meanwhile, blame for the socioeconomic underachievement ascribed to ethnic minorities is placed on the val-

ues of ethnic minorities.²⁵

While neoconservatives attribute underachievement to the retention of traditional values by ethnic minorities, Omi and Winant utilize a market-based, class paradigm to examine the “social allocation of advantage and disadvantage, winners and losers, and the origins and structure of discrimination.”²⁵ Understanding the complexities of class within a given physical or ethnic space uncovers the inequitable access to resources such as education, political representation and economic security. Inequitable access to culturally appropriate education including bilingual-bicultural integrated classrooms and fundamental learning in a child’s primary language further disadvantages English Language Learners.²⁶ Neoclassical economists prescribe words such as ‘free’ or ‘equal’ to the market economy, proposing that resources are available to all and that any inequalities arising from economic interactions should be addressed by political institutions.²⁷ Yet currently, bilingual schools are often in areas with higher household incomes, such as Harris Bilingual Immersion School in Fort Collins. Though the parents and staff of both Harris Bilingual and Torrez Elementary vehemently opposed the Colorado Amendment 31 proposal during 2002 which sought to strictly enforce English-only policies, Harris Bilingual remains bilingual, while the programs that once enriched the hallways of Torrez are a part of history. A class-based approach, as proposed by Omi and Winant, uncovers unequal opportunities within the market economy as a result of institutional and socioeconomic maintenance of the status quo.

Whereas a market-based approach examines the inequitable allocation of resources according to class, Mills, in *The Racial Contract*, correlates inequitable resource allocation to race. The classic “social contract” associates political, moral and epistemological assertions as necessary to shape society. Mills, however, examines political, moral and epistemological assertions as the basis of race formation.²⁸ According to Mills, “the purpose of the [Racial] Contract is always the differential privileging of the whites as a group with respect to the nonwhites as a group, the exploitation of their bodies, land, and resources, and the denial of equal socioeconomic opportunities to them.”²⁸ Thus the privileges of colonial white hegemony were obtained and power was asserted by the exploitation of labor among nonwhite peoples and the appropriation of nonwhite land and resources.

Currently, a colonial mindset is perpetuated through the “racial contract,” which Mills describes as a “set of formal or informal agreements or meta-agreements” which exist both sociopolitically and epistemologically to uphold the structure of white rule.²⁸ This is still the case for Hispanics, migrant workers, and brown-skinned people born within the U.S. borders and south of the U.S.-Mexican border. U.S. constituents admire the hardworking capabilities and necessary presence of people within the U.S. global agricultural sector, yet continually deny workers the right to expedient residency or citizenship. Mr. Villarreal correlated English-only discrimination at Valle Verde with that of the Jim Crow era: “This even goes back further into the 40s and 50s, the prejudices . . . It was like going back to the black people, ‘Sit in the back of the bus’ . . . There was a lot of that stuff way back then and some of that stuff still is.”²¹ Though people dedicated to equity and social justice acknowledge this mindset as racist, a color-coded hierarchy renders whites as beneficiaries of “the racial contract.”²⁸ Due to the privileges associated with skin color, whites or people with lighter skin tones can often navigate social, political and economic barriers that are unavoidable to nonwhites. So despite white reluctance toward participating in racist actions or actively perpetuating racist epistemology, whites still benefit from the system more so than darker skinned people.²⁸ Concurrently, whites blatantly subscribing to racist policy and ideologies are signatories of the “racial contract.”²⁸

Signatories strengthen the sociopolitical and epistemological institutions which favor white rule and empowerment while simultaneously disenfranchising and disempowering the Other.

As Mills correlates privilege with race, signatories strategically use racial divisions to maximize profit and productivity toward the upper tiers of society. Consequently, these divisions, often in the realm of labor, perpetuate socioeconomic immobility and political disenfranchisement of the Other.²⁸ This vicious cycle, prevalent between white and Hispanic populations, can be scrutinized using the “racial contract.” In this way socioeconomic immobility and political disenfranchisement can be examined as results of English-only policies and other policies related to marginalizing the Other. Ms. Sanchez remembers the overtly racist mentality within Valle Verde during her first year in the district when Superintendent William Singer, the namesake of Singer Elementary, the other elementary school in the town, stated, “[T]he school board only encouraged [Hispanics] to go to school ‘til the 8th grade because they are needed to work in the fields.”¹³ Additionally, Mr. Villarreal added there were many families that sent their children to work solely so the family could survive.²¹ With such economic disparities and emphasis on survival, political and social representation was difficult for Hispanic populations. Thirty years later the elements of survival have changed, yet extreme inequality and impoverishment of Hispanics within the community are still resultants of marginalization by local, state and federal political systems. Furthermore, socioeconomic immobility and political disenfranchisement limit the opportunities for marginalized groups to contest discriminatory educational policy changes, continuing the cycle of marginalization.

Though Omi and Winant’s multiple paradigm approach provides a framework for understanding racial formation, Dominguez, in *White by Definition: Social Classification in Creole Louisiana*, suggests that the differing privileges between racial categories is maintained by evolving discriminatory political institutions.^{23,29} Dominguez refers to “the continuous historical pattern of determining race by man-made law rather than by processes of nature.”²⁹ Thus laws have passed at local, state and federal levels to uphold racial inequities at particular points in history. Utilizing an archival approach to examine policy change in accordance with social movements’ regime changes provides insight into the oppressive nature of legislative powers. Accordingly, English-only policy in school systems can be examined as attempts to stifle movements of tradition, ethnic solidarity, ethnic pride and equality of the Other while maintaining the status quo of the dominant society. According to Dominguez, historical patterns of legislative changes are often “considered too manipulative to be true.” Therefore, an archival approach, such as the one outlined in this paper, is necessary to examine the historical and political contexts of racially motivated policies. Concurrently, beneficiaries are often unaware of the racist implications of legislative changes.²⁸ As such, policies are often uncontested by beneficiaries or the Other, yet another ploy utilized to maintain the whitened power structure.²⁸

Conclusion

Using Omi and Winant’s multiple paradigm approach to examine race formation is critical in understanding the socioeconomic and political impacts of English-only policies on national and local scales. Mills’ *Racial Contract* further explains the appropriation of socioeconomic and political resources on the basis of race, marginalizing the racial Other and minimizing the voice of marginalized communities during dissentious political maneuvering. Finally, Dominguez provides an explanation for the continual restructuring of legal institutions to maintain the status quo of dominant society. Together these frameworks expose the unequal racial formations derived from and

perpetuated by English-only policies in Valle Verde.

Beneficiaries of the system and those oppressed by the system must work in tandem to contest racially motivated policies and the unequal formations created by policy implementation. This cooperation leads to local gains, such as the prevention of the Español Calle in Valle Verde during the 1990s, as well as state and national gains such as the successful defeat of Ron Unz's 2003 Colorado anti-bilingual initiative "English for the Children." Currently, Valle Verde is a town with high levels of integration between the Hispanic and English-speaking populations. However, the local, state, and federal power structures are comprised of predominantly non-Hispanics who, according to historical and present policy, uphold the self edifying structure at the cost of human individuals. At the national level, the current administration has denounced neoclassical economics more so than any other administration in the past thirty years, due to the inability to examine inequity and social injustices within a neoclassical framework.³⁰ Accordingly, the Obama administration and the U.S. Department of Education issued "A Blue Print for Reform: The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act" in March 2010. In the blue print introduction, President Obama wrote, "A world-class education is also a moral imperative – the key to securing a more equal, fair, and just society."³¹ He continued, "We will not be able to keep the American promise of equal opportunity if we fail to provide a world-class education to every child."³¹ Utilizing resources to remain politically active and to maintain civil rights proponents within the national legislature further weakens racial ploys of disenfranchisement and social inequities directed toward marginalized communities. Currently, segments of the Valle Verde population are working adamantly to achieve equal representation on local school boards, fire departments and other local governing bodies, but this has been an arduous task due to the historically white-washed hierarchy in the region. Beneficiaries then, along with their marginalized friends and neighbors, must work integrally at all levels, regardless of skin tone and linguistic differences, to ensure future equal opportunities within the U.S. education system.

Notes

¹All locations, names, occupations and other identifiers associated with the four informants in this study have been altered to protect the community patriots who have dedicated decades of service to school districts across Colorado and to Hispanic/Latino communities. Despite the many defeats they have experienced competing against the local, state and federal structures for equity in the Colorado school system, many still teach and mobilize today, hopeful for future triumphs.

²I use the term Other to encompass people groups whose histories are, in the words of Charles Mills, "focused on issues of conquest, imperialism, colonialism, white settlement, land rights, race and racism, Jim Crow, reparations, apartheid, cultural authenticity, national identity, indigenismo, Afrocentrism, etc." In particular, this paper uses the term Other to indicate linguistically, politically, and racially marginalized people in Valle Verde.

³The community dissent was expressed by personal communication with Margaret Sanchez as well as her personal archive of dissenting letters from various Colorado school districts.

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