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Overview

How do educational institutions and communities impact the lives of bilingual families? The goal of this book is to provide insights about such an impact on the lives of families negotiating daily educational realities. Decades of research have shown what constitutes optimal educational programs for bilingual learners, yet this study reveals how coercive power was used to limit children's access to a quality education. This slice of local history shows families struggling to obtain an equitable education for their children.

This first chapter provides an overview of the book, the main ideas, and how these relate to the literature. Qualitative research methods were used for data collection and to uncover educational issues of language, culture, and power within the context of the family and the community setting. This study takes place somewhere in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, with pseudonyms safeguarding the identities of the participants and the community leaders. Although generalizations are not possible, it is my hope that this book will help inform the reader about the educational issues faced by bilingual/bicultural families in America.

Local political controversy surrounding bilingual education impacted data collection for this study when the local school board and the school superintendent eliminated a nationally recognized, twenty-year-old bilingual education program. At this point I made a decision to include participant observations at community meetings dealing with bilingual education. I was informed that the language-minority families were organizing themselves for the first time in the history of this community. I felt that the families exhibited wisdom, resilience, and courage in the midst of the political controversy. The voices of the bilingual parents, community leaders, bilingual educators, and, what is more important, the bilingual children rang out loudly but were disregarded and silenced by "more powerful" elements.

It was evident that current educational structures in the Steel Town community have encouraged the disenfranchisement of the less valued and less powerful. Paulo Freire's concept of banking (1985), where students are filled with predetermined knowledge disconnected from daily social realities, comes to mind. These complex relations among the "haves" and the "have-nots" have helped perpetuate an inter-generational policy of silence. The ability to shed light and succeed in situations darkened by oppression show that like the electric star in the city, bilingual families represent a shining light in this community.

Bilingual Education Research

Decades of educational research have shown best practices for teaching language minority to children (Ambert 1991; Au & Jordan 1981; Crawford 1989; Collier 1989; Cummins 1993; Delgado-Gaitan 1990; Erickson 1987; Hakuta 1986; Heath 1983; Krashen 1988; Lucas, Henze, & Donato 1991; Macias 1987; McLaughlin 1984; Mehan, Hubbard & Villanueva 1994; Moll & Diaz 1987; Ogbu 1978; Peal & Lambert 1962; Phillips 1983; Swain 1987; Soto 1993; Spindler & Spindler 1987; Trueba 1987; Trueba, Jacobs, & Kirton 1990, Willig 1985; Wong Fillmore 1991). Demographic trends and major reports document concern about how bilingual children fare in schools and later as adults attempting to contribute to their own success and that of our nation (Aspira's High School Dropout Study Fernandez, et al. 1989; Carrasquillo 1991; Chapa & Valencia 1993; Hodgkinson 1985; Miranda 1991; The Decade of the Hispanic: An Economic Retrospective Miranda & Quiroz 1990; National Commission on Secondary Education for Hispanics 1984; State of Hispanic America 1991; Yzaquirre 1992; U.S. Hispanics: Challenging Issues for the 1990s, Valdivieso & Davis 1989; Olsen 1993). The overriding issue stems from the inability of bilingual children to experience success in school, despite high parental educational expectations. It is the assumption of this book (perhaps a naive one) that schools and communities knowledgeable about research findings in the field will be better equipped to implement programs reflecting best educational practices.

It is not my intent to review all of the literature discussing bilingualism, but rather to underscore findings from bilingual education research that can add to our understanding of what constitutes best teaching practices. The field can be organized around three basic eras in bilingual education: (1) the "bilingual-handicap" era; (2) the "positive findings" era; and (3) the "newly evolving paradigms" era. These three periods help explicate best practices, the historical evolution of research paradigms within the field, and the research climate of the particular historical era.

First, the "bilingual-handicap" era denotes findings based on the notion that bilingualism was considered synonymous with deficiency. With the notable exception of case studies, the initial research viewing childhood bilingualism is responsible for creating what Cummins (1989) refers to as the "myth of the bilingual handicap." A biased philosophy permeated the literature by pointing to bilingual learners' inherent deficiencies and pathologies.

Major reviews (Darcy 1953; Jensen 1962; Weinreich 1953) of this era document not only the flawed research methodology but also the accompanying negative and biased results. Frequently cited in these works is the research conducted by Saer (1923), who failed to match bilingual and monolingual learners on demographic variables; Pintner and Arsenian (1937), who relied on the child's surname as the indication of bilingualism; and Smith (1939), who counted "errors" of second-language learners and then attributed "preschool speech retardation" to the use of

two languages. Cummins (1976) and Peal and Lambert (1962) have shown the serious methodological flaws of the era, including careless sampling procedures, classifying of bilinguals by surname, comparisons of students labeled as “monolingual or bilingual,” and reliance on intelligence testing.

The attitude of this earlier work was captured by Jensen (1962), who reviewed more than two hundred studies relating the disadvantages of childhood bilingualism. Such disadvantages cited in the literature included handicaps in speech development, emotional and intellectual difficulties, impaired originality of thought, handicapped on intelligence tests, loss of self-confidence, schizophrenia, and contempt and hatred toward one’s parents, to name but a few. The advent of the psychometric tradition and the search for the measurement of intelligence also contributed to negative stereotypes of bilingual learners. Goodenough for example, stated, “Those nationality groups whose average intellectual ability is inferior do not readily learn the new language” (1926, 393).

Hakuta (1986) notes that it is important to view this early literature in light of historical debates in our nation over the quality of immigrant groups. There were notable exceptions in the bilingual-handicap era consisting of case studies such as Leopold’s (1939). In general, however, this era viewed bilingualism as an independent variable contributing to both intellectual and emotional ill effects. The problem with the research era of the 1920s through the early 1960s is that in spite of additional contemporary research, it continues to drive existing programs employing subtractive practices. “Subtractive” is a term used by Lambert (1975) to denote deficit strategies that replace one language with another.

The “positive-findings” era was ushered in by Peal and Lambert’s (1962) study of bilingual learners in Montreal. “The picture that emerges . . . is that of a youngster whose wider experiences in two cultures have given him advantages which a monolingual does not enjoy. Intellectually his experiences with two language systems seems to have left him with a mental flexibility, a superiority in concept formation, a more diverse field set of mental abilities”(20). A brighter, more positive view of bilingualism began to emerge as Peal and Lambert responded to previous research by accounting for language proficiency, controlling demographic variables, and documenting findings from previous studies.

The St. Lambert Project, a field study (Lambert & Tucker 1972), was largely responsible for confirming Peal and Lambert’s (1962) findings and led the way for the initiation and replication of controlled experimental conditions by researchers in the United States and other countries. Examples of these studies indicated that:

- (a) children raised bilingually were more attentive to semantic relationships than mono-linguals (Ianco-Worral 1972)
- (b) bilingual children indicated superiority in awareness of linguistic rules and structures (Ben-Zeev 1977)

- (c) bilingual children outperform monolinguals on a variety of measures of metalinguistic awareness (Cummins 1978)
- (d) bilingualism has a positive effect on divergent thinking and creativity (Torrance, Wu, Gowan, & Alliotti 1970)
- (e) bilingualism has positive effects on a variety of cognitive performance measures, such as concept formation (Cummins & Gulutsan 1974; Bain 1974; Liedtke & Nelson 1968)
- (f) there are positive effects of bilingualism on Piagetian conservation and field independence (Duncan & De Avila 1979)
- (g) bilinguals demonstrated an ability to monitor cognitive performance (Bain & Yu 1980)
- (h) there is a significant contribution of second-language proficiency to cognitive measures, including the Raven Progressive Matrices (Hakuta & Diaz 1985)
- (i) learning concepts in the native language will transfer and enhance second-language learning (Cummins 1979)

The experimental studies of the 1970s and early 1980s indicated the advantages of raising children bilingually. These studies documented the enhancing and positive effects of bilingualism on a variety of cognitive performance measures, metalinguistic attributes, divergent thinking, and creativity. These studies also modeled increasing knowledge about optimal quantitative research methodologies, focused on cognitive advantages, and proposed theoretical frameworks that helped guide future bilingual education research.

The era of “newly evolving paradigms” has benefited the field by providing broader conceptual frameworks and interdisciplinary research, particularly among educators and anthropologists. These studies have relied to a greater extent on qualitative methods and have initiated methods for viewing issues of language and culture as related domains. Findings from this era have helped us understand:

- (a) the value of changing classroom interactions so that they are compatible with the home (Au & Jordan 1981)
- (b) how critical analysis of classroom language (teacher–child interactions) can enhance children’s learning (Cazden 1988)
- (c) how communities in the same setting can be both similar and different in their contributions to the home and community language learning environment (Heath 1983)
- (d) the discontinuities experienced by young Papago children entering their first preschool encounter and the accompanying teacher intervention strategies (Macias 1987)
- (e) the effects of teacher assumptions about children’s English language proficiency on the quality of instruction (Moll & Diaz 1985)

- (f) why Native American children have been regarded as “quiet” (Phillips 1983)
- (g) the importance of the distinction between social conversational language skills and the more complex cognitive academic skills (Cummins 1989)
- (h) why the loss of the primary language, especially when it is the only language spoken by parents, can be costly to children, families, and society as a whole (Wong Fillmore 1992)
- (i) the long-term benefits of bilingual education programs on children’s attitudes (Collier 1991)
- (j) how support for native-language instruction afforded young children an opportunity to outperform comparison groups (Krashen 1988)
- (k) how the inclusion of the home language in a developmentally appropriate early childhood setting is beneficial to young children’s growth and development (Paul & Jarvis 1992)
- (l) how families who support the native language at home have “academically successful” young children in school (Soto 1993)
- (m) the benefits of untracking high school programs for Latino/a and African American students’ academic success (Mehan, Hubbard, & Villanueva 1994),
- (n) the elements of six high schools that have promoted the academic achievement of Latino/a- minority students (Lucas, Henze, & Donato 1990).

The field of bilingual education is continuing to evolve, explore, and experiment with research methods, theoretical frameworks, and alternate paradigms (Soto 1992a, b). It is also becoming more evident to scholars that there is a need for social-science research in general to redirect itself from deficit/stereotypical paradigms to exploratory/creative paradigms capable of meeting the needs of minority teachers, learners, and families (Ernst & Statzner 1994).

The studies described in the last era have added a tremendous amount of knowledge and evidence regarding best educational practices. How is it, then, that schools and communities reflect such huge discrepancies between the existing knowledge base and the proliferation of oppressive programs? How can schools reconcile the fact that they are implementing programs that are harming children and families? How has public opinion and the English-only philosophy permeated the school curriculum?

The Politics of Bilingual Education

It is difficult to talk about bilingual education without viewing relevant political issues. James Crawford (1989, 1992) relates the historical and political context of bilingual education in America. He notes that German-language schools prevailed until the twentieth century and that historically significant documents such as the

Articles of Confederation were published in German and French. When the United States entered World War I, however, anti-German sentiment created language restrictions. Several states passed laws banning German speech, with at least 18,000 persons being criminally charged under these laws by 1921 (Crawford 1989). "Soon the fervor for Anglo-conformity spilled over into hostility toward all minority tongues" (24). Public attitudes toward languages changed as English-only speech became associated more and more with patriotism. In spite of the Supreme Court's ruling in *Meyer v. Nebraska* (1923) against restrictive language laws, minority languages have been devalued in the nation. Public schools responded to the climate and the politics of the times by implementing monolingual programs.

The federal government also mandated that Native Americans be taught in English only. The U.S. Senate documented that in the 1850s the Oklahoma Cherokees attained higher literacy levels in English than the white populations in Texas or Arkansas. In 1879, however, Native American children were being separated from their families and sent to militarizing boarding schools. U.S. Representative Ben Nighthorse Campbell from Colorado recounted, "Both my grandparents were forcibly removed from their homes and placed in boarding schools. One of the first English words Indian students learned was 'soap,' because their mouths were constantly being washed out for using their native language" (Crawford 1989, 25).

Mexican American and Asian children have been punished under the guise of English-only speech being patriotic. An early childhood educator and former migrant worker in California recently reported on a commonly accepted practice in the local public school:

When our teacher caught us speaking our language, she would lock us in the closet. Sometimes there would be three of us in that tiny space. It was dark and pretty frightening for us. Sometimes it was even hard to breathe in there. Other teachers punished the Spanish speakers at recess, lunch, or with after school "Spanish detention." (Lopez 1995)

Activities aimed at punishing children for speaking their native language still persist in contemporary America. In Louisiana, for example, children have been asked to kneel for speaking in a language other than English. In Pennsylvania, children have been held back a grade for speaking a language other than English. In California, children are expected to "prove" their national origin.

For Latino/a leaders, the concerted effort to mandate English-only is synonymous with an America that is for whites-only. Raul Yzaguirre of the National Council of La Raza stated, "U.S. English is to Hispanics as the Ku Klux Klan is to Blacks" (Crawford 1992, 149). The founders of the U.S. English-only movement include Dr. John Taton, a Michigan ophthalmologist and population control activist.

The fear of loss of power by Anglos to minorities is expressed in a paper by Dr. Taton:

“Gobernar es poblar” translates “to govern is to populate.” In this society, where the majority rules, does this hold? Will the present majority peaceably hand over its political power to a group that is simply more fertile? Can *homo contraceptivus* compete with *homo progeneriva*? Perhaps this is the first instance in which those with their pants up are going to get caught with their pants down. ... As Whites see their power and control over their lives declining, will they simply go quietly into the night? (Crawford 1989, 57)

In addition to the racist propaganda, there is evidence indicating monetary contributions to the English-only organization by advocates of eugenic sterilization (Crawford 1989). It is hard to believe that proponents of ethnic cleansing could ever exist in America.

The historical context and companion policies have institutionalized repressive language policies impacting the linguistic human rights of children and families. Questions that come to mind include: Why has English-only and monolingualism been associated with patriotism in America? Why are educated Americans less likely to speak a second language than educated Europeans, Canadians, Asians, or Africans? Why has it become increasingly difficult for the State Department to find competent translators and employees knowledgeable in languages and cultures? If researchers and scholars have addressed issues of what constitutes best teaching practices, why are schools so reluctant to implement them?

Cummins (1994) refers to the “new enemy within” as groups and individuals who continue to spread xenophobic perspectives. He compares our nation to the *Titanic* headed for destruction in regard to issues of bilingualism. Isolated programs of excellence are shedding light on best practices, yet these programs appear to be the exception and face tremendous barriers to implementation from agencies and the public at large.

The dissemination of information capable of inciting fear, divisiveness, and a racist agenda has created a climate that devalues bilingualism/biculturalism in this country. Language-minority populations understand the need to communicate in English—so much so that the loss of home languages in America is a concern documented by linguists (Veltman 1983; Wong Fillmore 1992). The advocates of cultural conservatism, the “enemies within,” have also helped devalue bilingualism/biculturalism by advocating a knowledge base that is Anglo-centric and exclusionary.

English-plus alternatives have been long advocated by professional organizations such as the National Association for Bilingual Education, the National Council of Teachers of English, the Modern Language Association, the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, the Linguistic Society of America, and others. The idea that learners will benefit from knowledge that values languages and cultures is supported by the research literature, by global national interests, and by the vision of a well-educated, competitive society.

Benefits of Home Language

Historically, the sociopolitical context of the nation has contributed to crusades to eliminate bilingualism and institutionalize linguistic repression, yet native languages and native cultures are at the heart of the communicative process for families. Intergenerational communication is a vital part of child-rearing patterns that foster young children's social, emotional, and cognitive well-being. When parents, grandparents, and extended family members lovingly impart values, beliefs, and cultural wisdom to children, those children can attain a healthy sense of self.

The loss of language and of intergenerational communication is a concern when reports indicate that as of 1990, 6.3 million children ages five to seventeen do not speak English at home. This figure represents a 38 percent increase over the past decade and indicates that the number of school-age children who do not speak English at home continues to rise (Zelasko 1993). The U.S. Census Bureau data (1991) show that 31.8 million people, or 14 percent of the population, indicated that they spoke a language other than English at home. Spanish speakers represent 54 percent of the language minority-population of this country.

In an article entitled "The Growth of Multilingualism and the Need for Bilingual Education: What Do We Know So Far?" Dorothy Waggoner (1993) documents increasing numbers of home-language speakers between 1980 and 1990 in the United States:

More and more people in the United States speak languages other than English at home. Many languages were previously almost unknown in this country. The changes reflect the extent and character of recent immigration. They also reflect the natural growth of linguistic minority populations. While the number of monolingual English speakers increased by 6 percent in the 1980's, the number of home speakers of languages other than English (HSNELS) increased by 38 percent. The numbers of speakers of some of the Asian languages spoken by recent immigrants more than doubled. However, despite immigration, the majority of HSNELS are native born and natural growth is increasing the numbers of school-age HSNELS disproportionately in comparison with the numbers of school-age majority children. (1993, 1)

Tables presented by Waggoner show a decade of increasing proportions for speakers of Spanish, Asian-Indian languages, Chinese languages, Korean, Thai and Laotian, Vietnamese, Farsi, Filipino languages, Arabic, Armenian, Japanese, Portuguese, and Russian. Decreasing proportions were shown for speakers of American Indian and Alaskan native languages, Czech, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Norwegian, Polish, Serbo-Croatian, Swedish, Ukrainian, and Yiddish. These data help illustrate the dramatic growth of multilingualism in America, as well as needed linguistic preservation. Our society can choose to view

demographic trends through the lens of an oppressor or through the lens that views linguistic human rights and human resource potential.

Affording children and families the gift of home-language preservation has been documented as being beneficial in a variety of ways. Cummins notes that native-language instruction develops pride in one's identity, which in turn has been shown by research to be linked to school achievement (see Cummins 1979 for a review of these studies). Hakuta (1986) indicates that bilingual children have certain advantages that monolingual children do not have, one of the most important being "cognitive flexibility" or divergent thinking. Using children's home language as a medium of instruction is important because: (1) it supplies background knowledge that makes English more comprehensible; (2) it enhances the development of literacy since knowledge is transferred from the home language to the second language; and (3) first-language development has cognitive and practical advantages, and promotes a healthy sense of biculturalism (Krashen 1988).

What is the cost of language loss to families and society? Lily Wong Fillmore (1991), a linguist from the University of California–Berkeley, has studied the effects of early educational programs conducted in English only. She found that these programs result in the loss of the child's native language. In the NABE NO-Cost Study, Fillmore gathered data from families across the nation:

What about the cost to the family and children? When what is lost is the means of communication in a family, the children lose access to all the things that parents can teach them. Where the parents are able to speak English, the loss is not complete. If the parents are willing to switch to English too, they can go on socializing their children in the values, beliefs, and practices that are important to the family and community. When the parents are not able to do so, what is lost is closeness and family unity. That may be too big a price for children to pay for an easier transition from home to school. (Wong Fillmore 1991, 42)

The notion of a home-language gift (maintaining and protecting home languages and cultures) can be viewed as part of a critical analysis of existing educational practices. Since the field of bilingual education research has shown the benefits of native language to both academic school success and the enhancement of family communication (Cummins 1979; Hakuta 1986; Krashen 1988; Wong Fillmore 1991), will it be important for schools and communities to implement programs reflecting these findings? At a time in our history when the nation discusses family values, should family communication and school success be important components of these discussions? Is a family's ability to communicate with their children in the "mother tongue" an important component of linguistic human rights? (Skutnabb-Kangas 1989). Could our nation benefit by viewing issues of language and culture within a linguistic human rights perspective?

Just as a person's gender will determine much of his or her future, so will birth as a child of color in America. Contemporary families face multiple, complex challenges within existing societal contexts with linguistically and culturally diverse families facing additional human rights issues. Can we afford to tolerate the current American social climate that devalues languages and cultures? How long will children and families have to remain in such a state of vulnerability?

Latino Families

Latino/as comprise the fastest-growing ethnic minority population in the United States. The 1990 Census showed a 50 percent increase in population growth for Latino/as compared to 9 percent for the total population. The Census figures indicate that there are 22.4 million Latino/as who comprise 9 percent of the nation's population. Mexican Americans constitute 60 percent of the Latino population while Puerto Ricans make up 12 percent (of the mainland Latino population), other Hispanics, 22 percent, and Cuban Americans, 5 percent. The age distribution for Latino/as indicates a median age of 26 compared to a non-Latino median age of 33.5. While demographers predict that the nation's youth (newborns to seventeen years of age) will increase by 17 percent Latino youth are expected to triple (Chapa & Valencia 1993). What does our nation need to know about Latino families?

For one, issues of language and culture have been an integral part of the history of Latino families in the United States. The history of linguistic and cultural preservation by Spanish-speaking families predates the arrival of English speakers to America. At the end of the Mexican-American War, for example, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo gave Spanish coequal status with English as the language of government in California and other territories ceded to the United States:

Echoing the words of the Louisiana Purchase, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo provided that the new Spanish-speaking citizens of the United States "shall be maintained and protected in the free enjoyment of their liberty and property, and secured in the free exercise of their religion without restriction." For the Mexicans and, as events would show, for sympathetic *norteamericanos*, these promises implied some recognition of the Spanish language; its special role in the Southwest and its speakers' need for reasonable accommodations from their government. This did not mean official bilingualism—a strict equality of the two languages—but rather the equal protection of Spanish speakers under U.S. law, that is, unrestricted access to legislatures, courthouses, and schools regardless of their English-speaking ability. These were concessions comparable to what Louisianans had won. (Crawford 1992, 63)

The pre-Mexican-American War Spanish-speaking families of the Southwest were not recently arrived immigrants, but families who had been conquered and

promised equal protection under the law. The monolingual Spanish-speaking families of Puerto Rico also predated English-speaking colonizers and have historically sought to protect their home language in their own land. Crawford notes that, by 1909,

607 out of Puerto Rico's 678 grade schools had been anglicized—an amazing feat at a time when English was spoken by only 3.6 percent of Puerto Ricans. While Spanish was retained as a subject, English became the basic medium of instruction. In practice this meant that children spent much of their time parroting a language they had no occasion to use outside of class, while other subjects were generally neglected. Predictably, most students left school before completing the third grade. . . . By 1913 the legislature was demanding the reinstatement of Spanish, but U.S. officials blocked the change. . . . The mandatory English policy would affect three generations of schoolchildren before it was finally scrapped, an acknowledged failure, in 1949. (P. 50)

It is evident that Latino families have tried to play by the rules in an effort to attain the American Dream. Latino families have worked hard and have contributed to the prosperity of the nation, yet the National Council of La Raza notes that:

- (a) in spite of possessing typical American values such as loyalty to family, religious faith, a strong work ethic, and patriotism, Latino/as continue to be viewed negatively in public opinion polls and the media
- (b) Latino/a children are three times more likely to be poor, even with a working, full-time, year-round parent
- (c) Latino males have the highest labor force participation rate, yet are more likely to be among the working poor
- (d) Latino/as have the lowest levels of educational attainment with only 50 percent completing high school (compared to 80 percent for non-Latinos), while one out of ten attains a college degree
- (e) Latino/a children are underrepresented in preschool programs and other programs designed to help at-risk students (Yzaguirre 1992)

The economic restructuring of our nation has hit mainland Puerto Rican families especially hard since cities suffering the greatest industrial losses were also cities with the largest Puerto Rican population (Newark, New York, Chicago, Philadelphia). Data show that Puerto Rican families have the highest poverty rates in the nation at nearly 40 percent. It is alarming to note that one out of every two (56.7%) Puerto Rican children lives in poverty (Miranda 1991; National Puerto Rican Coalition 1992). Elizabeth Weiser Ramirez of *Aspira* notes:

Statistics show Latino men and women are well represented in the work force, but they generally receive low wages. People are working full time, year round, but they

cannot sustain their families. A low number of Latinos have high levels of education, and the gap is increasing between wages for a person with a college degree and a high school degree. (Gomez 1993)

In Steel Town, more than 40 percent of the population growth in the past decade came from racial-/ethnic-minority families (Partnership for Community Health 1993). The Governor's Advisory Commission on Latino Affairs indicated concern about the recurrent issues impacting Latino/a students residing in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; for example:

- (a) Latino/as have one of the highest dropout rates in the Commonwealth
- (b) Latino/a students have a high rate of suspension, expulsion, and retention
- (c) there is an overrepresentation of Latino/a students in some areas of special education and an underrepresentation in gifted programs
- (d) there is a disproportionate number of Latino/a students tracked into lower academic/remedial courses
- (e) there is a lack of evaluation data to substantiate the effectiveness of bilingual programs
- (f) there are insufficient numbers of bilingual programs to serve the needs of limited English proficient students (Sanchez-Cintron 1993)

The data and reports describing how Latino families are faring in the Steel Town community and the Commonwealth mirror the kind of patterns documented and observed throughout the nation. It is evident that continued concern about how Latino/a children are faring in schools and communities is warranted. These trends make a case for the continued need to explore how current educational practices impact family systems. In addition, there is an urgent need for creating an educational revolution with empowering agendas that will benefit families and children who have consistently contributed to the fabric of our nation.

Methodological Approaches

The purpose of this book is to illustrate the nature of education for Latino/a learners in Steel Town through the use of ethnographic interviews and participant observations. Evidence about the nature of education was documented from three sources: a pilot study group of informants living in Steel Town, the "success stories" interviews with professional families living in Steel Town and providing leadership to the community, and documentation of events leading to the dismantling of a bilingual education program.

I became interested in collaborating with bilingual families as a result of both professional and personal experiences. I personally experienced what I can best describe as "two worlds of childhood," one in a rural Puerto Rican community and

one in an urban mainland setting. This set the stage for early comparisons between life as an islander and life as a Newyorican. As a bilingual child I felt the tension and the contrast between two cultures. My roles as a mother, teacher, and grandmother have also helped shape personal, first hand knowledge about the “two worlds of childhood.” All of these experiences have no doubt influenced much of my thinking and have led to an enthusiasm and passion for research that will allow “outsiders” to gain an understanding of the realities faced by Latino families and children in America.

My previous research with Puerto Rican families focused on the family's contribution to children's school achievement (Soto 1986–93). This book, however, departs from previous, mainly quantitative work in my attempt to search for alternate research paradigms, nondeficit perspectives (Soto 1992a, 1992b), and collaborative ties with families. The search for broader perspectives with in-depth descriptions has led me to pursue knowledge from the field of anthropology and from colleagues who have implemented qualitative research designs. This document in no way reflects my colleagues' perspectives but my own modest attempts to pursue “newly evolving bilingual research paradigms” capable of integrating a collaborative voice on behalf of bilingual families and children.

The present study viewing bilingual families and schooling is in many ways a labor of love, attempting to afford players a voice in the educational agendas of policy makers and educators. Anderson (1989) notes that reflexivity in critical ethnography involves a dialectical relationship among the researcher's constructs, the informants' constructs, the research data, the researcher's ideological biases, and structural and historical forces. These complex relations can be understood within a framework of daily family and community interactions as the researcher searches for significance, interprets data, and disseminates information. The ability and willingness of researchers (educators) to self reflect is critical in the evolving field of multicultural research (Soto 1992a). This type of activity places researchers in a state of vulnerability yet has potential for initiating alternative and experimental research paradigms.

The need to disseminate information about how schools impact bilingual children and bilingual families inspired the conceptual framework of this study. The initial research design was intended to comprise ethnographic interviews only but was broadened to include participant observations based on evolving events in the community. The Spencer Foundation provided a small grant for data collection and analysis. Ethnographic interviews (Spradley 1979, 1980) were conducted within the community context with a pilot sample of bilingual families first, and later with bilingual, educated professional families. The pilot sample was comprised of mothers of young children with low levels of education. I refer to the educated professional families as the “success stories” in this book, although all bilingual families can be thought of as “success stories” in light of their determination and ability to survive, often in hostile environments. Persons with these success stories have attained their professional educational goals, are upwardly mobile by their socioeconomic achievement, and contribute time, expertise, and money to the Steel Town community.

I used the developmental sequence suggested by Spradley for the interviews, while my data analyses followed the grounded theory procedures recommended by Strauss and Corbin (1990). My use of the grounded theory procedures revealed categories—(language, culture, power)—and the common themes shared by the informants. My data collection was influenced by the local school district's decision to eliminate a twenty-year-old, award-winning bilingual education program.

When bilingual education became a controversy in the community, I included participant observations (Spradley 1980) to help explain how bilingual families have sought a quality education for their children in Steel Town. I received additional inspiration for this study from Patty Lather's reference (1986) to catalytic validity or "the degree which the research process re-orient, focuses, and energizes participants in what Freire terms 'conscientization'" (1970, 67).

Researchers working and living in community settings may find Lather's reference to catalytic validity an important area for further consideration. Is it important to draw lines in the sand among our multiple roles? Are there ethical guidelines that can help to supersede historical roles of researchers as oppressors? Should we ensure that communities benefit from our presence, or is our primary goal to "tell the story"? I struggled with these questions and found myself leaning toward an objective stance as a "storyteller," if you will. When community members asked me for information and knowledge about the field, I readily availed myself but felt that they owned any decision making regarding avenues that needed to be pursued.

Ultimately, qualitative research methods afforded me an opportunity to gain the bilingual family's perspective and to engage in participant–researcher collaboration. Pilot families were asked to share their views about how schools impact their children's education. The mutual areas of participant–researcher concern assisted with data collection and included tape-recorded interviews with the pilot set of families and later in the homes of educated professionals. In addition, I conducted participant observations at community meetings, gathered documents disseminated by the school district, and analyzed one calendar year of newspaper accounts reporting the bilingual controversy in Steel Town. A "snowballing" effect occurred when the initial pilot interviewees nominated educated, professional bilingual families who were respected by the Latino community. "You know who you should talk to about this. . . . Why don't you interview . . . ?" The element of respect/*respeto* appeared important to the families who nominated subsequent families for interviews.

The interrelationship of experiences, perceptions, and perspectives of bilingual families interacting with schools within the context of Steel Town comprise this historical account. This study found that power continues to limit children's access to a quality education, in spite of documentation by bilingual education research about what constitute optimal programs for language-minority children. Lisa Delpit (1993) describes aspects of power and suggests that an "appropriate education of poor children and children of color can only be devised in consultation with adults who share

their culture” (138). The fundamental issue, Delpit maintains, is whose voice gets to be heard. The bilingual families in this study were not a part of a consultation process prior to the implementation of decisions affecting Latino/a children in Steel Town such as busing and programmatic decisions. The educated participant-informants consciously perceived the distinctions between oppressed and oppressors. They described their frustrations and past experiences with schools and disclosed events that were obviously painful to recall.

What is it like for bilingual families living in Steel Town? Chapter 2 describes the community context, including the history of Steel Town and how Latino families were recruited to the area as migrant workers and temporary laborers for the steel industry’s coke ovens. Close to ten thousand Latino families still reside in Steel Town, with their children comprising 25 percent of the school population.

Chapter 3 presents the ethnographic interviews with educated professional Latino families. Excerpts of the interviews depict the voices of the participants and recurrent themes in language, culture, and power.

Chapter 4 explores the early schooling of bilingual children in Steel Town. This chapter shows how disparate are current educational practices with the research knowledge base. Examples of families’ interactions with schools devaluing children’s native language and culture are provided.

Chapter 5 shows salient events leading to the dismantling of a twenty-year-old, award-winning bilingual education program. The bilingual program in Steel Town was recognized by the Office of Education as a national program of excellence. The bilingual controversy that ensued shows interactions between families struggling for quality programs and the school officials who charted a course of systematic oppression.

Chapter 6 includes the analysis of one calendar year of local newspaper accounts that helped explain how the bilingual program became a political controversy in Steel Town. The push for English-only was apparent in the media, local stores, and the city council ordinances of nearby Post Town.

Chapter 7 explores the issues of language, culture, and power along with a theoretical framework that initiates discussion about the complex relations limiting language-minority children’s access to a quality education.

The epilogue includes an update of the lives of the players in this study. Their lives have been impacted by the bilingual controversy and have continued to evolve.

The appendixes include information relating to the dismantling of the bilingual program in Steel Town: first, the initial study submitted by the school district’s Bilingual Committee, entitled “Bilingual Program Recommendations”; second, the school superintendent’s response to the latter report; and third, the school district’s current program, entitled “A Ticket for Tomorrow.”

The data gathered for this study reveal the complexities of power issues in the Steel Town community and its schools. This is but a small contribution revealing the

uniqueness of the bilingual experience in America. How were families and children limited in their search for a quality education in Steel Town? The interviews with families, participant observations at community meetings, and portrayals in the media help document the inequities bilingual children face in America. Since one community is the focus of this study, generalizations to other settings and historical contexts may be limited. This book builds on the work of colleagues who have valiantly expressed needed truths so that future exploratory work could be pursued. The collaborative desire of educators in the field of bilingual education has been to ultimately afford knowledge about what constitutes quality educational programs for bilingual children. I only hope this research will in some small way become useful to communities hoping to focus on the educational needs of bilingual children.