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## **Learning in Two Languages: Spanish-English Immersion in U.S. Public Schools**

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**Learning In Two Languages: Spanish-English Immersion in U.S. Public Schools\***

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*A growing group of public schools in the United States is voluntarily adopting policies that regard the enrollment of children whose native language is not English as an advantage, not a liability or a complication. This study focuses specifically on dual-language programs that group native Spanish-speakers in the same classroom with native English-speakers, with the goals of bilingual proficiency, high academic achievement, and cross-cultural awareness. Under what demographic, socioeconomic, and political circumstances will community members and school administrators value bilingualism to this degree? The models developed and tested here incorporate factors that influence the probability of a school district instituting and maintaining one or more Spanish-English dual-language programs. The findings show that school district and parent demographics play the most important role. It is noteworthy that dual-language programs appear to be viable in racially and economically diverse settings.*

*Anyone who has traveled to Europe knows that your people all over Europe are fluent in two and often three languages. I see no reason why our children should not be their equals. Some children already come to school with the ability to speak two languages. We should build on this linguistic base and recognize that our nation will be better for it in the global environment.*

- Former Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley, on California Proposition 227<sup>1</sup>

Although the United States does not have an official language policy, an implicit assimilationist ideology that equates speaking English as one's language of choice with being American has prevailed since the late nineteenth century. Since this belief underlies the way languages are taught in our schools, bilingualism and bilingual education raise issues well beyond communication and pedagogy. Schools are a primary vehicle for the transmission of culture and a sense of national identity. They also serve as the gateway to participation in the political and economic arena. School lan-

guage policy is thus a very powerful mechanism for locating languages and their use within the social structure.

By and large, public schools in the United States have encouraged English monolingualism among their pupils. But since the 1960s, a small but growing number of them have adopted dual-language programs. These programs (also called two-way immersion) are not just another approach to educating limited English proficient (LEP) children. Rather, they embody the pluralist ideal that bilingualism is an important asset to obtain and preserve. Instead of regarding the children of immigrants as a liability with which schools must deal, dual-language programs validate and make use of these children's language skills by placing them in a position to help native English-speakers become bilingual. Language minority pupils from the same language background and English-speaking pupils are grouped together in the same classrooms (ideally with a fifty-fifty balance of both groups) starting in kindergarten or the early primary grades. One or two teachers provide instruction in both languages. Program objectives include academic achievement, bilingual proficiency, biliteracy, and multicultural awareness for all students (Christian 1994).

Under what circumstances will parents and educators value bilingualism enough to see to it that children attain or maintain it? This paper explores the extent to which contextual conditions can help answer this question. I define and test several models of the influence of demographic, economic, and social context on the likelihood that a school district will adopt the dual-language option. The focus is exclusively on Spanish-English programs (over 90 percent of the total). Spanish-speakers are the largest non-English-language group in the United States. More than half the people who generally speak a language other than English at home speak Spanish (Schmidt 2000:70).

### **Dual-Language, Not Bilingual Education**

Dual-language education promotes bilingualism. Somewhat ironically, what is commonly known as 'bilingual education' does not do this. Bilingual education refers to some programs developed under Bilingual Education Act (BEA), Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

of 1965.<sup>2</sup> Originally passed by Congress in 1968, the BEA aimed to improve the poor school performance of immigrant children by providing funds for transitional programs to help children of limited English-speaking ability learn English before transitioning into regular classrooms. These programs often involve instruction in a child's native tongue. Various revisions of the BEA have emphasized different goals: ethnic awareness in the 1970s, English fluency and academic achievement in the 1980s, more freedom for local- and state-level decision-making in the 1990s. Regardless of strategy, however, most the school programs developed to aid limited English-proficient students address a population viewed as needing special attention in order to become like a majority that is English monolingual or prefers to speak English, and they achieve this goal. Thus, Catherine Snow and Kenji Hakuta (1992:390) forcefully argue that by and large, these bilingual education programs help children learn English, but that they do *not* create bilinguals:

Bilingual education in its present form may be one of the greatest misnomers of educational programs. What it fosters is monolingualism; bilingual classrooms are efficient revolving doors between home-language monolingualism and English monolingualism. Were it not for the name, the champion of linguistic homogeneity on American soil could not have found a better friend than transitional bilingual education.

### ***The Campaign Against Bilingual Education***

Although it actually does not promote bilingualism, bilingual education has been under attack since the 1980s. Public discourse on the subject shifted away from educational opportunity and student achievement, instead linking bilingual education with language minority groups' preservation and use of their native languages – a potential threat to national unity. As Thomas Ricento (2000:1) observes:

[M]any Americans, especially in large cities, felt their way of life was under assault. The sounds of Spanish, Korean, Chinese, Arabic, and many other languages were heard with increasing frequency in American towns and cities; the American border in the southwest was too porous; projections of demographic

patterns showed that older immigrant populations were not replacing themselves as quickly as were the newer non-European groups.

Fears such as these contributed to a dramatic rise in Official English activism in the 1980s. The groups U.S. English and English First contend that the potential societal cost (in terms of social and political factionalism) of encouraging the use of languages other than English is too high to bear. U.S. English seeks “to ensure that English continues to serve as an integrating force among our nation’s many ethnic groups and remains a vehicle of opportunity for new Americans” (US English 2001). English First aims to “make English America’s official language; give every child the chance to learn English; [and] eliminate costly and ineffective multilingual policies” (English First 2001).

The Official English movement has made school language policy one of its targets. Transitional bilingual classes are still prominent in many places, but in the 1990s a move away from them gained momentum. The group English for the Children, founded and directed by physicist and Silicon Valley software millionaire Ron Unz, is behind a national crusade to end bilingual education. English for the Children was instrumental in initiating and passing anti-bilingual propositions in California and Arizona. These states have adopted policies that place LEP children in ESL classes for a very limited time, and then transfer them to mainstream classrooms. English for the Children has recently targeted voters in New York, Colorado, and Massachusetts.

Like English First and U.S. English, English for the Children draws support from a diverse constituency.<sup>3</sup> Some parents and educators have raised serious concerns about the length of time (in some cases, eight or more years) that children spend in bilingual programs before they are deemed ready to study alongside native English-speakers (Martinez 1999; Tobar 1999). Others remark that children struggle when they move from bilingual to all-English classes (Alvarado 2001). Increased emphasis and reliance on the outcomes of standardized tests (in English) as measures of school and teacher quality may also encourage school districts to adopt lan-

guage policies that promote a rapid transition to English, but do nothing to maintain or develop native language proficiency.

Interestingly, at the same time that the Official English movement was starting to gain momentum, Congress passed the Education for Economic Security Act of 1982, authorizing federal funding for the improvement of foreign language instruction. That same year, New York passed educational reforms that included foreign language requirements for all students (Freeman 1998:46). In the late 80s and early 90s, four states – New Mexico, Oregon, Rhode Island, and Washington – adopted English Plus resolutions. Although these resolutions are largely symbolic in that they do not require anything in particular of the state government, local governments, schools, or the public in general; they do officially document intent to promote bilingualism.

### *The Dual-Language Option*

The language debate continues, with schools as a major arena. Above (or sometimes in the midst of) the fray, dual-language programs are emerging as a distinctive and increasingly popular option. These programs are achievement-based rather than remedial. Bilingualism biliteracy and academic performance are all primary objectives. Intercultural tolerance and understanding is also a prominent goal. For example, the Chicago Public School District states the goals of developing primary and second language proficiency and literacy, increasing academic achievement, and promoting cross-cultural understanding for all students in dual-language schools or classrooms (CAL 2001). DiLoreto Magnet School in New Britain, Connecticut aims to create a “multicultural, dynamic school environment in which world languages and multicultural studies are celebrated on a daily basis as we move children into the next millennium of a multilingual and multicultural America” (DiLoreto Magnet School Web site 2001). The philosophy of Oyster Bilingual School in Washington D.C. includes statements about “the opportunity to obtain competencies which will help them survive as individuals and as members of society,” “building a culturally pluralistic society,” and “practices and programs which will insure the intellectual,

physical, emotional and aesthetic well-being of all our students” (Freeman 1998:108-109).

Beyond these stated objectives, dual-language programs may be a force for social change that, in time, could exert its influence far beyond the classrooms, schools, or districts where such programs exist. Rebecca Freeman (1998:11) argues that “because dual-language programs in the United States ideally elevate the status of minority languages and speakers of those languages at school, and because these programs expect additive bilingualism for language minority and language majority students and the communities in which they live, schools that promote learning in two languages can be understood as contesting the legitimacy of monolingualism in Standard English as the unquestioned norm in mainstream US schools.” She therefore goes on to assert that dual-language programs “can be read as one part of a larger social identities project that aims to promote social change on the local level by socializing children differently from the way children are socialized in mainstream U.S. educational discourse” (Freeman 1998:27).

By prioritizing bilingualism and biculturalism, the dual-language option offers a striking deviation from mainstream schooling. The circumstances under which dual-language programs are created and maintained are equally unique. These programs are almost never legally mandated. They exist largely due to the efforts of school administrators, teachers, and parents who get them started and make them work.

From 1963-1971 there was only one dual-language school in the country, Coral Way Elementary in Miami. By 1980 there were twenty dual-language programs nationwide. The number had climbed to seventy-three by 1990. Currently we can find dual-language programs in twenty-three states and at least 266 public schools (CAL 2002; McCargo and Christian 1998). What characterizes the school districts that adopt this policy, or allow individual schools within the district to do so? The analysis that follows is a step toward answering this question. It will also suggest conditions under which new programs could be established.

### **Empirical Expectations**

Extant research about the pedagogy of dual-language education, social correlates of bilingualism (and possibly of demand for bilingualism), and bilinguals' labor market outcomes helps define specific empirical expectations that are grounded in a theory of instrumental action. These are discussed below.

#### ***School Characteristics***

In general, large districts are able to offer more specialized programs than small districts. Since dual-language programs combine native Spanish-speakers and native English-speakers, schools can only have them when there are enough children from both groups. I therefore expect that *school population and the proportion of children who come from Spanish-speaking households will be positively related to the likelihood that a district offers two-way immersion.*

A high level of other (non-Spanish) linguistic diversity among LEP students could make it unrealistic to direct resources toward Spanish-English classrooms. Very few districts can offer dual-language programs in more than one non-English language. Usually, districts that serve a linguistically diverse group of LEP students opt for transitional bilingual education, ESL, or both. *I expect to find a negative relationship between the size of a district's 'other language' population and the likelihood of a two-way Spanish-English program.* The degree of racial diversity and interracial contact in a school district might, however, be a positive factor due to dual-language programs' cultural as well as linguistic emphasis. I will explore this possibility.

Even controlling for other factors, schools in which many children come from poor families may be less likely to initiate and maintain dual-language programs because more of their resources are allocated to various social services, and/or because the parents of these children move more frequently than others do – making it impossible to achieve the continuity that is essential to dual-language instruction (Christian et al. 2000; Rago 2001).



For these reasons, *I expect the likelihood of a dual-language program to be lower in districts that serve many poor families.*

### ***Parent Characteristics***

The cultural value of bilingualism, and demand for dual-language programs, could reflect a broader appreciation for the benefits that people from other cultures bring to American society rather than something specific about a community's Hispanic population. This is more likely to be the case in urban areas, and when the level of parent education in a school district is relatively high. College-educated people tend to value (or at least tolerate) racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity more than non-college-educated people do (Farley et al. 1994). Furthermore, these parents are more likely to view bilingualism as a tangible asset for their children (López 1999). They may also be aware of and influenced by research that links bilingualism to cognitive development and high academic achievement.

School administrators concur that educated parents are more likely to seek dual-language education for their children (Helwing 2001; Morrow 2000; Myers 2001; O'Brien 2001). In addition, they note that, while educated parents are generally quite involved in their children's schooling and have the highest expectations in regard to school quality (Bidwell et al. 1997), the parent involvement factor stands alone.<sup>4</sup> Parents who attend school events and parent-teacher conferences and who volunteer at school are much more likely than others to choose the dual-language option (or *any* enrichment program) if it is available to them – regardless of how educated they are (Benitez and Pineda 2001; Hedges 2001; Medina 2001; Morrow 2000; Slater and Castro 2001). Based on the above, I predict that *parent education, and parent involvement will positively influence the probability of finding dual-language programs within a school district.*

### ***Economic and Social Context***

While some bilinguals hold high-paying jobs, and some employers do seek bilinguals at both the low and high ends of the job ladder, there is no evidence for a general pattern of high economic rewards to bilingualism (Chiswick and Miller 1996, 1997, 1999; Pendakur and Pendakur 2002). I thus

expect that *the relative prosperity of bilinguals in a community will not influence the probability that its schools will offer the dual-language option.*

Bilinguals' and/or Hispanics' status could, however, reflect broader reasons to view bilingualism as instrumental in a given setting. For example, Alejandro Portes and Rubén Rumbaut (1996, 2001) show that, for the children of immigrants whose financial resources and human capital are limited, *selective acculturation* yields the most favorable outcomes in terms of their adaptation to life in America and success in American schools. "Selective acculturation takes place when the learning process of both generations is embedded in a co-ethnic community of sufficient size and institutional diversity to slow down the cultural shift and promote partial retention of the parents' home language and norms." This pathway is associated with "a relative lack of intergenerational conflict, the presence of many co-ethnics among children's friends, and the achievement of full bilingualism in the second generation" (Portes and Rumbaut 2001:54). Characteristics of United States society augment, rather than replace, characteristics of the sending society. The outcome is upward mobility combined with bilingualism and biculturalism.

Factors that influence English-speaking Hispanic adults' choice to maintain Spanish-English bilingualism could also be relevant here. For example, my analysis of these (Linton 2002) shows that, while the immediate economic rewards for bilingualism do not significantly factor into the macro-level incentive for bilingualism, the socioeconomic status of bilinguals in one's area does appear to influence language choice. There is a positive relationship between the status of Spanish-speakers and the level of Spanish-English bilingualism among Hispanics in the United States. But will the degree to which Hispanics in an area have *already* selectively acculturated, or have achieved a relatively high level of status and influence (regardless of whether they have retained Spanish or not) be relevant to school policy decisions, or to the language choices that non-Hispanic parents make for their children? Interviews with teachers and administrators who are involved with dual-language programs suggest that the socioeconomic status of Hispanics in a school's area is not a determinant of programs' existence or

success. While influential Hispanics and bilinguals generally support the dual-language option when it is available to them (Gallardo 2001; Hedges 2001), they are not the ones pushing for it (Helwing 2001; Hernandez 2001; Morrow 2000; Myers 2001). I therefore expect that *the relative income, status, or political influence of Hispanics and/or bilinguals a school district serves will not affect the odds that that the district will offer dual-language instruction.*

### ***Political Context***

Laws and resolutions that discourage or encourage the use of languages other than English may also reflect or affect the degree to which people in a particular area value Spanish and Spanish-speakers. Further, they may indirectly influence school administrators' curriculum decisions by providing a public statement regarding linguistic norms and goals in a particular state. Because the rhetoric behind these statutes is inconsistent, and the degree to which they influence what actually goes on in schools is often minimal, their inclusion in this analysis is exploratory – unlinked to predictions derived from theory, others' research, or qualitative findings.

### **Data and Measures**

This inquiry encompasses United States public school districts and the metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) and states that encompass them. The units of analysis are school districts that serve at least 1000 pupils, at least 3 percent of whom come from Spanish-speaking households (N=2233).<sup>5</sup> Data about dual-language programs come from the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL 2001). Data pertaining to the demographics of school districts and the areas they serve come from the National Center for Education Statistics 1990 School District Data Book (SDDDB) (NCES 1994). Measures that reflect the bilinguals' and Hispanics' relative income and status were constructed using the 1990 1-percent PUMS (Ruggles and Sobek 1997). Voting statistics come from the County and City Data Book (1988, 1994), with county-level figures aggregated up to the MSA/PMSA level when necessary. The variable 'Hispanics' political influence' is Wayne Santoro's (1999) index of "Latino institutional resources," a composite measure that encompasses voters and elected officials. Information regarding Official English

laws and English Plus resolutions comes from lists compiled by James Crawford (2000), the organization English First (2001), and Raymond Tatalovich (1995). State-level data on whether or not there is an anti-bilingual education law in force, or under consideration, comes from newspaper reports (e.g., Alvorado 2001; Associated Press 2000, Janofsky 2001). Table 1 provides descriptive statistics for all variables. Here I discuss the variables' relevance in terms of the propositions outlined above, and/or as controls.

### ***Dependent Variable***

The dichotomous dependent variable marks school districts that reported having at least one Spanish-English dual-language program at the start of the 2001-02 school year.

Table 1. Description of Variables for School Districts included in this Study*, 1990 (N=2233)			
	mean	SD	range
<i>Dependent Variable</i>			
dual-language program(s) in existence, 2001	0.04	-	0/1 (1=yes)
<i>Independent Variables</i>			
LNschool population	8.55	1.11	6.91 - 14.18
LNspending on instruction	9.24	1.13	5.77 - 15.24
proportion of children in Spanish-speaking households	0.12	0.14	0.03 - 0.84
proportion of non-white, non-Hispanic children	0.10	0.12	0.00 - 0.80
proportion children in non-Spanish- or English-speaking households	0.07	0.06	0.00 - 0.46
proportion of families that rent rather than own	0.32	0.17	0.01 - 1.00
median income in children's households	\$40,749	\$14,901	\$9,874 - \$129,014
proportion of parents with a BA or higher degree	0.20	0.15	0.00 - 0.90
proportion of mothers not F/T employed	0.54	0.10	0.15 - 0.90
Bilingual Hispanic adults' mean SEI (metro area-level)	1.48	1.26	0.00 - 13.38
Hispanic adults' mean SEI : all adults' SEI (metro area-level)	0.81	0.17	0.00 - 2.27
Hispanics' institutional resources (state-level)	1.11	1.87	-0.92 - 10.85
Official English law passed by referendum	0.24	-	0/1 (1=yes)
proportion of GOP presidential votes high (1984 and 1992 average)	0.25	-	0/1 (1: >54.6%)
English Plus state law or resolution	0.04	-	0/1 (1=yes)
anti-bilingual education law passed or under discussion, 2001	0.36	-	0/1 (1=yes)
*The units of analysis are school districts that serve at least 1000 pupils, at least 3 percent of whom come from Spanish-speaking households.			

### ***Demographic Variables***

#### *School characteristics*

‘School population’ (expressed as its natural logarithm), ‘proportion of children in Spanish-speaking households,’ and this proportion squared are primary contextual conditions. The latter is included in its quadratic form to account for school districts with too many Spanish-speakers to make two-way immersion plausible (Montague 1997).<sup>6</sup>

‘Spending on instruction’ is a control variable, highly correlated to school district size.<sup>7</sup> While it stands to reason that well-funded districts would be advantaged in terms of their ability to initiate special programs, it should be noted that dual-language programs do not cost more than other ways of helping LEP students learn English. Research, planning, and early implementation are often grant-supported, but the extent to which the NCES spending variable encompasses such funding is unclear.

To account for the presence of non-Spanish-speaking LEP students in a district’s schools, I include the proportion of students who speak a language other than Spanish, and whose English is limited. ‘Proportion of non-white, non-Hispanic children’ is another control that reflects racial and ethnic diversity in a school district. The variable ‘renters’ – the proportion of children whose families rent their living quarters – is a proxy for an urban setting. This is a broader indicator of diversity; it captures the possibility that a district that serves a relatively homogeneous population is situated within a diverse metropolis. To test the proposition that districts serving many poor families will be less likely than others to offer dual-language programs, I include the median household income of families in a district.

#### *Parent characteristics*

The previous section discussed several reasons to include parent education in this analysis. This is expressed as the proportion of district’s parents who have a B.A. or higher degree. I also include a rough indicator of the potential for parents to volunteer at school: the proportion of mothers who do not hold a full-time job.<sup>8</sup>

Table 2. Log Odds for Logistic Regression of Dual-Language Programs in School Districts, 2001 (N=2233)						
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
<i>schools and communities</i>						
LNschool population	2.63***		2.59***	2.62***	2.83***	2.83***
LNspending on instruction		2.70***				
proportion children in non-Spanish- or English-speaking households	77.24***	83.34***	549.80***	144.36***	65.57**	160.90***
proportion of children in Spanish-speaking households squared*	0.01	0.002*	0.0002**	0.007	0.04	0.01
proportion of children in Spanish-speaking households*	0.40	0.26				
proportion of non-white, non-Hispanic children	0.18	0.14	0.12	0.08	0.006*	0.007*
proportion of children in non-Spanish- or English-speaking households	33.73***	23.75***	19.09***	26.87***	31.33***	25.67***
proportion of families that rent rather than own	1.00*	1.00*				
median income in children's households						
<i>parents</i>						
proportion of parents with a BA or higher degree			24.73#	18.04**	24.86**	32.36**
proportion of mothers not F/T employed			36.64*	43.64#	15.76	16.25#
<i>bilinguals' and Hispanics' status and influence</i>						
Bilingual Hispanic adults' mean SEI (metro area-level)				0.94	1.00	
Hispanic adults' mean SEI : all adults' SEI (metro area-level)				0.20	0.30	
Hispanics' institutional resources (state-level)				1.07	1.04	

**Table 2. Log Odds for Logistic Regression of Dual-Language Programs in School Districts, 2001 (N=2233) (Continued)**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
<i>political (dis)incentives</i>						
Official English law passed by referendum					0.98	
proportion of GOP presidential votes high (1984 and 1992 average)					0.91	
English Plus state law or resolution					5.17**	5.26***
anti-bilingual education law passed or under discussion, 2001					2.59*	2.74***
-2 log likelihood	605	605	595	591	5.75	5.77
chi-square	212***	212***	221***	226***	241***	239***
# p<0.10 *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001 (two-tailed tests)						

### *Economic and Status Variables*

Are there more dual-language programs in places where bilinguals are better off? While it is by no means a perfect measure of the economic payoff for bilingualism, looking at the mean Duncan SEI score for bilingual Hispanic adults in a given area allows for a rough assessment of the degree to which the current labor market value of bilingualism motivate decisions about school language policy. I test two other measures of Hispanics' status and influence: their mean SEI score relative to that of non-Hispanics (in a metro area), and their political influence (in a state).

### *Political Variables*

Even though public opinion about language policy does not follow party lines, a high level of Republican voting (a county-level measure imputed to MSA/PMSAs) could reflect a social climate that is less favorable towards linguistic diversity. Other relevant political variables are English-Plus ordinances, Official English laws passed via referendum,<sup>9</sup> and the proposal or passage of anti-bilingual education laws.

### **Analysis and Findings**

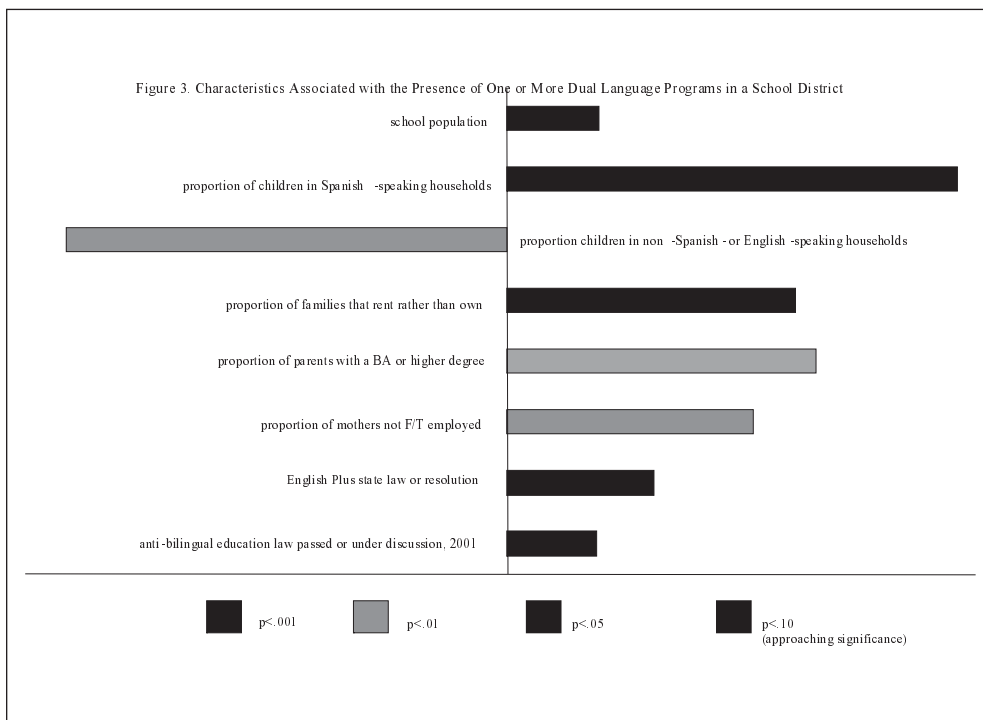
Table 2 reports the results of models that explore, in turn, the degree to which school district and community demographics, parent characteristics, bilinguals' and Hispanics' characteristics, and political factors influence the probability that a school district will offer the dual-language option.

Models 1 and 2 look at characteristics of school districts and the communities they serve. It appears that dual-language programs are more likely to exist in larger districts, urban settings, and where the Spanish-speaking portion of the student population is sizeable, but not overwhelming.<sup>10</sup> Contrary to expectations, median income of the families that a district serves is non-significant, and will be dropped from further models because of its high correlation with parent education. Model 2 incorporates spending on instruction instead of school population, with results very similar to those in Model 1. Further models will use population because it is a more reliable measure.



Model 3 includes parent characteristics. The proportion of parents with a B.A. or higher degree exerts a strong, positive effect on the odds that a school district will offer a dual-language program, as does the proportion of mothers who do not work full time.

Measures of bilinguals and Hispanics' status and influence are added in Model 4. As predicted, none of them are significantly related to the presence of dual-language programs. This indicates that currently observable economic rewards for bilingualism do not significantly influence the decision to adopt the dual-language option, and, as educators report, high-SES (socio-economic status) Hispanics are *not* driving the dual-language movement. Politically active Hispanics' focus on schooling has generally been much broader; its emphasis is on education in general, not on Spanish maintenance (Gold 2001; Valdés 1997).



Model 5 incorporates political variables. Interestingly, state-level English-Plus ordinances are positively related to dual-language programs in the schools, while Official English referenda and high Republican voting are non-significant. Of equal interest is that anti-bilingual education laws and dual-language programs are positively related.

Model 6, summarized in Figure 1, is a final and best-fitting model. It shows that Spanish-English dual-language programs are most likely to exist in relatively large, urban school districts, where there are enough Spanish- and English-speakers to balance the classrooms, and not too many other-language LEP students. Given the above, parent education is relatively high, and parents (at least mothers) are able to spend time at school. State-level English Plus statutes exert a positive effect, as do anti-bilingual education campaigns. The finding that the latter appear to *increase* the probability that districts will offer dual-language programs is partly because forty out of the one hundred dual-language districts included in this study are located in California, where an anti-bilingual education statute is in effect. But simply marking school districts in California adds less to the model. Indeed, California educators report that Proposition 227 had little effect on dual-language programs that were in existence before bilingual education became highly politicized (Camancho 2001; O'Brien 2001; Vaca 2001). Qualitative research in southern California schools does not support the notion that two-way immersion is being used as a way to re-label transitional bilingual programs. While some California administrators saw the dual-language option as a way to comply with Proposition 227 without resorting to English-only schools, this is not a general trend (Linton 2002).

### **Discussion**

Dual-language programs express a general valuation of linguistic, racial, and cultural diversity in terms of seeing bilingualism as important to one's success in a globalizing world. Future-oriented school administrators and/or parents are behind these programs' initiation, but successfully maintaining them successfully requires long-term commitment from school staff *and* parents. In some cases, parents who knew nothing of two-way immersion before their neighborhood school introduced it have become strong support-

ers, learning Spanish or English alongside their children and volunteering in their classrooms (Badillo-Beneyto 2003; Glapa and Martinez 2001).

It is clear that dual-language programs are distinct from other efforts to help LEP students assimilate. Qualitative studies by Juan Guerra (1998) and Robert Jiménez (2001) show that Mexican adults and children in the United States who most highly value bilingualism and biliteracy identify themselves as transnational individuals, i.e., the wave of the future. Portes and Rumbaut's (2001) extensive study of second-generation children yields a similar conclusion:

At present, sending countries are increasingly part of a single global web with the United States at its center. In this new world order where multiple economic, political, and cultural ties bind nations more closely to one another, it is not clear that the rapid extinction of foreign languages is in the interest of individual citizens or of the society as a whole. In an increasingly interdependent global system the presence of pools of citizens able to communicate fluently in English plus another language and to bridge the cultural gap among nations represents an important collective resource. (p. 273)

It should be noted, however, that Portes and Rumbaut's final words are as much a call to action as a summary of their findings and speculations about the future:

In light of the present evidence, there is no second-generation group for which selective acculturation is more necessary than for Mexican Americans. This would entail educational programs that combine learning of English and acculturation with preservation of Spanish and understanding and respect for the parents' culture. (p. 280)

Dual-language programs do exactly this. And the findings reported here show that they can and do exist in at least the urban areas where Mexicans and other recent immigrants from Spanish-speaking countries reside. Magnet-type programs that attract a diverse group of engaged parents are stunning successes, but the dual-language option is also present in poorer districts where administrators and teachers must actively recruit parents into

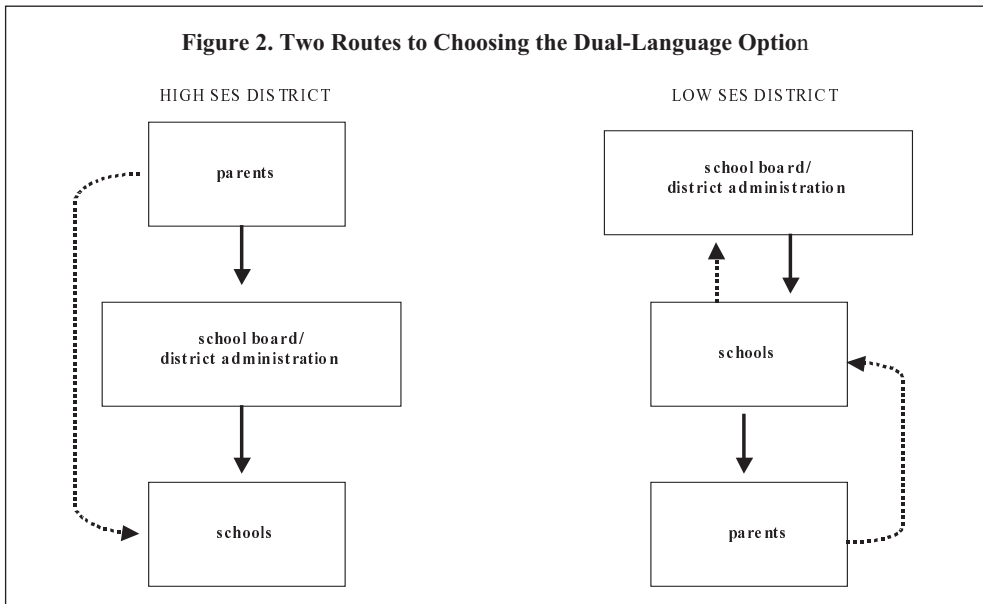
the programs. As Robert Hedges (2001) the principal of a school on the poor side of Long Beach, California reports:

Our largest ethnic groups are Hispanic and African American. We have a lot of African American kids in the immersion program. Generally I see those kids getting along with all kids better than the others do. We have two large residential areas here. One used to be a federal housing project next door; now it's privately owned, and this large condominium place over here that has a lot of kids who are violent and who live in violence. The kids I see in immersion are from those areas. They're much more accepting of other people in general. They get along with a variety of people and play with a variety of people. I think of two kids last year. One was one of our best basketball players on the playground. He got along well with everybody. And another boy who is African American who was one of our highest achievers and just got along with everybody – in the classroom obviously, and then on the playground also. They had friends who were in trouble all the time and they were never in trouble. They tried to help. These kids are more accepting of other cultures and other people.

Freeman's (1998:26, 71) research in a (albeit elite) bilingual school in Washington D.C. suggests what is behind Hedges' observation. She often remarks that there is "much more than language" behind the school's mission. At least in some cases, dual-language programs represent a different way of creating and transmitting social identity, which she defines as "cultural dispositions or preferences that govern an individual's way of believing, thinking, and behaving." Since social identities are constructed through discourse, language-mediated activities shape people's understanding of themselves and their roles in the world. Regardless of one's race or ethnicity, dual-language programs offer students more options than those traditionally available in mainstream United States schools.

This analysis has revealed something about the settings in which dual-language programs are most likely to exist. But from it there is little to be learned about the choice to implement these programs, and why this choice is made. It is not always easy to identify the primary decision-makers. They could be parents, administrators, or others who are able to in-

fluence what goes on in schools. It is safe to assume that parents who involve themselves in school affairs do so in their children’s interests; they are investing in the human capital of their offspring (cf. Brinton 1988). But what of the administrators who actually initiate school programs? Are they responding to parent demand? Are they trying to realize benefits that a dual-language program could bring to their schools (and thus to them), such as increased funding (e.g., at Title VII grant), a magnet-type program, or improved academic rankings? Do they believe that bilingualism and biliteracy will give students a competitive economic advantage and/or prepare them to appreciate and thrive in a multicultural society? Any or all of these aspects could influence school administrators’ decisions. Large-scale quantitative data about school district policy processes, incentive structures for teachers and administrators, or parents’ demand for/response to dual-language programs are not available, but much could be learned about these things via qualitative, comparative research.



For example, my qualitative study of dual-language programs and schools in Chicago and the Los Angeles area helps explain the quantitative finding that the median income of families in a district does not help predict the presence of a dual-language program. I found that while two-way immersion is definitely not just a middle class phenomenon, programs initiation takes place differently in high- and low- SES settings (Linton 2002). This is illustrated in Figure 2. In relatively high-SES schools, parents' demand and efforts were responsible for starting the schools' dual-language programs. In lower SES schools, school and/or district administrators were the ones to initiate two-way immersion. In these places, school administrators educate parents about the program and solicit their participation.

### **Conclusion**

At the end of their discussion of language as it pertains to the assimilation experiences of second generation children in the United States, Portes and Rumbaut (2001:146) remind their readers that "despite the personal and societal advantages of multilingualism, the subtractive version [of immigrants' linguistic assimilation] promoted by U.S. English and other nativist organizations continues to correspond to the reality on the ground. For the foreseeable future, public education and social pressures in American society will continue to extinguish foreign languages at a brisk pace." Similarly, in his comprehensive book on multilingualism and the role of language in society, John Edwards (1994:195) points out that "most 'big' language speakers in most societies remain unconvinced of either the immediate need or the philosophical desirability of officially-supported cultural and linguistic programmes for their small-language neighbours."

Neither of these statements bode well for the spread of dual-language education in the United States. Yet there *is* potential for two-way immersion to expand. This is the case, first of all, because the programs are not just for Spanish-speakers or Hispanics. Second, parents who choose the dual-language option (*especially* the English-speakers) do not consider Spanish to be a "small language." The growth of two-way immersion seems to correspond to a change in the degree to which non-Hispanic Americans value Spanish (Linton 2002). How much and how quickly dual-language pro-

grams will spread is a topic worthy of continued inquiry. Besides program growth and diffusion, and outcomes for the students involved, research should focus on the social impact of two-way immersion programs in the communities where they are located. As noted above, dual-language educators often point out that what they are doing goes beyond language in a communicative sense in that it promotes cross-cultural communication and respect. At the same time they are enhancing the position of Spanish within a larger socioeconomic context. In general, dual-language educators and parents are responding to demographic and economic realities, not trying to promote social change. But the potential for social change in the form of a shift in what it means – linguistically – to be American and/or to assimilate into American society exists within these programs. In the meantime, they offer an opportunity for all students to become bilingual, biliterate, and bicultural within a school system that generally promotes the opposite.

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**Endnotes**

1. U.S. Department of Education (1998)
2. Crawford (1997), Freeman (1998), Schmidt (2000) and Schmidt (1993) summarize the history of the BEA and its revisions.
3. In New York State, Unz commissioned a poll asking whether all public school classes should be taught in English, with non-English-speaking students placed in an intensive one-year English immersion programs instead of transitional bilingual programs. Seventy-nine percent of the 1,411 residents polled said yes. Among New York City residents, 75 percent said yes. In a national poll by the nonpartisan research organization Public Agenda, 75 percent of *foreign-born* parents said that schools' first priority should be to teach English quickly, even if it means that their children fall behind in other subjects (Tierney 1999).
4. This is the case for many other types of special school programs as well; more educated/involved parents will be more likely to seek such programs or to take advantage of them when available. For example, the principal of a dual-language school in Arlington, Virginia characterizes the school's high-SES parents as "always looking for something better" (Myers 2001). Zhou (2002) describes Korean and Chinese parents' community-supported efforts to get their children into the best schools and programs in Los Angeles.
5. Very small districts are excluded because dual-language programs are almost nonexistent in them, and because the data quality for these districts is low. Three percent is the median level of children from Spanish-speaking households in *all* districts that are within MSAs. Nationwide only three dual-language programs exist in districts in which less than 3 percent of the students come from Spanish-speaking homes.
6. The square term is mean-centered. The linear coefficients for 'proportion of children in Spanish-speaking households' are thus interpretable as deviations from the mean.
7. An attempt to calculate per-capita spending revealed inaccuracies in the data, probably due to variation in the way school districts categorizes their



expenditures. Some numbers were too low to be plausible. The current spending variable is logged to mitigate the influence of extreme values on the analysis.

8. The same measure for fathers, as well as a combined measure, was non-significant in earlier models.

9. While there is no evidence that voters in referendum states differ significantly from other voters in terms of their general cultural orientation, it may be that the initiative process allows voters to express their sentiments, e.g., to react against a change in “the prevailing pattern of language usage” (Citrin et al.1990:541). Or, as Frenreis and Tatalovich (1997) conclude, movement entrepreneurs who frame the language issue in patriotic and politically salient terms may enjoy more success in referendum states.

10. There is an inverted bell-shaped relationship between ‘proportion children in Spanish-speaking households’ and the predicted probability that a district will offer dual-language education. It is highest when 10 to 30 percent of a districts’ student population speaks Spanish. This finding corroborates Montague’s (1997) assessment: a balanced population of majority and minority language pupils is crucial to the success of a dual-language program

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