

Bilingual education for all in Rhode Island: Assuring the inclusion of minoritized language

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Abstract

This paper explores the policies and ideologies affecting language education in Rhode Island, where as a result of a State Language Roadmap, groups are working at the grassroots level toward the implementation of dual language immersion in all public school districts. The author points out that while the push from business for multilingual employees, with a focus on the languages of economically powerful nations, could risk the further marginalization of minoritized languages, it could alternatively be leveraged to support minoritized languages equitably and make bilingualism and biliteracy the norm for all students. Using the critical race theory (CRT) as a lens along with Valdez, Delavan, and Freire's (2014) global human capital and equity/heritage frameworks, this argument is contextualized by focusing on the case of Guatemalans and Cambodians in Rhode Island.

By focusing on the children's emergent bilingualism and making bilingualism the norm, the field of language education would be able to move to the center of all educational endeavors for all children. – García (2009, p. 4)

In the twenty-year period from 1990 to 2010 there was a 47% increase in Rhode Island's (RI's) population of foreign-born residents (Rhode Island Division of Planning, 2014; U.S. Census Bureau, 2003). This sharp increase makes the need for creating spaces to promote and foster linguistic and cultural diversity, and in García's words to make "bilingualism the norm," all the more critical (2009, p. 4). In 2010, over 20% of Rhode Islanders spoke languages other than English at home, the most prevalent languages being

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Spanish or Spanish Creole (109,008), Portuguese or Portuguese Creole (31,006), French or French Creole (19,229), Chinese¹ (6,960), Italian (6,354), and Khmer (3,721). Nearly a quarter (22%) of all school-aged RI children resided in homes in which languages other than English were spoken (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), yet opportunities for students to develop a home language and English in school simultaneously are limited. With the launch and continued implementation of the *Rhode Island Roadmap to Language Excellence* (Papa, Berka, & Brownell, 2012), a strategic plan for language education to meet the needs of business and government, there is hope for making bilingualism the norm in RI.

As a result of the *Roadmap*, groups are working at the grassroots level to increase awareness about the benefits of multilingualism with the goal to expand dual language education to all public school districts. Dual language immersion programs are on the rise nationwide, most notably in Utah since the passage of Senate Bill 41 in 2008, which funded the implementation of such programs (Leite, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition, 2015). Since the efforts in both Utah and Rhode Island are driven by the linguistic needs of business and government, minoritized languages² may be at risk of further loss due to the lack of emphasis on these languages by employers.

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In their analysis of the shift in media discourse in the Utah case, Valdez, Delavan, and Freire (2014) named this a shift from an equity/heritage (EH) framework to a global human capital (GHC) framework, which in Ruiz's (1984) terms would be a shift from a language as right to a language as resource discourse. Rhode Island, as well as other states, could "counter the overpowering GHC value discourses by framing a GHC policy framework alongside rather than at the expense of an EH policy framework" (p. 28), as Valdez and colleagues suggest. Using a critical race theory framework, this argument is contextualized through the analysis of two distinct linguistically and racially minoritized groups in Rhode Island, Cambodians and Guatemalans.

The examples of Guatemalan and Cambodian youth experiences in schools provide fertile discussion ground for the argument for framing the EH discourse within the GHC discourse. Many Cambodians and Guatemalans came to the United States (US) after being forced to leave their home countries to escape genocide, poverty, starvation, and violence (Menjívar, 2008; Smith-Hefner, 1993), yet the U.S. Government has treated them differently, granting refugee status to Cambodians, but by and large forcing Guatemalans to enter without proper documentation (Feuerherm & Ramanathan, 2016). In the US both groups are rendered invisible in many policy debates due to the aggregation of Cambodians and Guatemalans into the broad racial categories of Asian and Hispanic or Latino, respectively. The CRT frame provides a lens through which one might unpack this and draw attention to the experiences and languages of Cambodians and Guatemalans in the context of RI public education.

1. The Census does not specify which Chinese languages; in Rhode Island these include Mandarin, Cantonese, Taishanese, and other minoritized Chinese languages.

2. The term minoritized languages is used rather than minority languages, as this, in the words of McCarty (2005) "more accurately conveys the power relations and processes by which certain groups are socially, economically, and politically marginalized within the larger society. This term also connotes agency to make change" (p. 40).

Theoretical Framework

Critical race theory (CRT) is used as a lens through which to apply the global human capital (GHC) and equity/heritage (EH) frameworks to the case of Cambodians and Guatemalans in Rhode Island. In the field of education, critical race theory is used as an influential theoretical framework through which to expose the racial inequities that are pervasive in the educational system and to challenge the assumption that the White racial experience is and should be the standard (Ladson-Billings, 1998). CRT also acknowledges the intersectionality of race with other forms of subordination based on gender, class, immigration status, language, surname, phenotype, accent, and sexuality; in other words racial oppression does not occur in isolation, but rather is intertwined with gender, class, language, and other forms of oppression (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

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In analyzing shifts in language education policy as it affects linguistically-marginalized groups, such as Guatemalans and Cambodians, four CRT themes from Delgado and Stefancic (2001) stand out as applicable: essentialism, interest convergence, differential racialization, and the unique voice of people of color. Essentialism is the reducing of a complex issue or population into a simple term, for example labeling all Asians the “model minority.” Interest convergence is the idea that civil rights gains for People of Color happen only when they coincide with the interest of elite Whites. Differential racialization is the idea that society racializes different groups at different times, depending on the historical context. In order to challenge the dominant ideology, CRT emphasizes the importance of the unique voice of color. The unique voice of color in this case will be the voices of Cambodians and Guatemalans in Rhode Island.

Valdez, Delavan, and Freire (2014) define the equity/heritage (EH) framework as one “centered on responding to the needs of English learners (ELs) and other minoritized communities” and a global human capital (GHC) framework as focused “solely on producing multilingual workers to compete in the global marketplace” (p. 5). They explain that each of these frameworks is a combination of EH and GHC value discourses, which they see as “competing value discourses that are already operating within U.S. language policy that shift in dominance to lead people to conceptualize these policies’ benefits in particular ways and for particular students” (p. 5). In the case of language education policy, the EH framework and value discourse are focused on creating equitable educational opportunities for emergent bilinguals and other linguistically minoritized students, while the GHC framework focuses on preparing all students for the global workplace. Flores (2016) cautions that the push for bilingual education for all may actually reproduce hegemonic Whiteness, shifting from monolingual to bilingual hegemonic Whiteness. Alternatively, these competing discourses have the potential to work in collaboration for the mutual benefit of linguistically-minoritized and linguistic majority students through interest convergence. Viewing the EH and GHC policy frameworks through a CRT lens, the EH primarily benefits Students of Color, while the GHC primarily benefits White, middle-class students. In Utah, for example, communications about the state-wide dual language immersion program leverage the GHC discourse, but the program does also include two-way Spanish immersion programs with an equity/heritage emphasis.

While Valdez, Delavan, and Freire (2014) argue that the shift to the global human capital (GHC) discourse is a “policy trend that promotes the teaching and learning of language

skills for the sole purpose of supporting the global marketplace” (p. 6), one could argue that this is not its “sole purpose,” but rather a compelling way to assure that all students have access to a bilingual and biliterate education. By making dual language bilingual education (DLBE) a program for White, monolingual students, as well as for emergent bilingual Students of Color, DLBE gains more political, financial, and pedagogical support. When DLBE is only for students learning English, when most of our official policymakers are still monolingual and do not understand or value the cognitive, social, and cultural benefits of speaking more than one language, there is a danger of risking bilingual education for all. Through interest convergence, language advocacy groups can leverage the GHC discourse to raise the importance and possibility of bilingual education for all to bring the equity heritage (EH) framework to the center of the effort to expand DLBE. In the following section, policies affecting dual language bilingual education (DLBE) in Rhode Island are explored through a critical race theory and global human capital/equity heritage frame.

Policies Affecting Language Education

The US, a nation of people of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, has a long history of multilingualism, although English has been and continues to be the dominant language (Wiley, 2007). Throughout history, different languages have been racialized at different times, and power has been given to certain languages at certain times according to the interests of Whites. The languages that have been most racialized are those associated with indigenous, enslaved, and immigrant groups of color, while the languages of White Europeans have been the most respected (Schmidt, 2002; García, 2009). Schmidt (2002) defines racialization as

a social process whose point is inequality.... As a process, racialization works by rendering others as having certain characteristics (one of which has often been *language*) so foreign or ‘alien’ that it is impossible to conceive of being equal members of the same political community with those so racialized. (p. 158)

Early on, the racialization of languages in the US was done intentionally as part of the conquest and later pacification of Indigenous peoples (García, 2009). European languages were tolerated from the early years of the US through the end of the nineteenth century. In the early twentieth century, the US saw a shift toward the restriction of languages other than English.

Racialization of language is also tied to public opinion of immigration. Throughout history, different immigrant groups have been racialized at different times depending on the political and economic context. For example, Chinese immigrants, who had been coming to the country since the mid-nineteenth century because of the Taiping Rebellion in China and the Gold Rush in California, were excluded in 1882, when the U.S. Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act (García, 2009). Japanese immigrants were also affected by this, likely due to the essentialization of the Japanese as Chinese or as Asian more broadly. More recently, with the increase in significance of China’s economy, Chinese immigrants and their languages have gained stature in the US, as can be seen in the 195% increase in Chinese language programs in U.S. schools from 2004-05 to 2007-08 (ACTFL, 2010). Mexican immigration increased around the turn of the century, and with the additional acquisition of Hawaii in 1898, English became the language of legal documents and the education system.

This English-only rule had failed in Puerto Rico by around 1916, and transitional bilingual education was established and remained in use until 1948, “when Spanish was re-

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established as medium of instruction” with “English taught as a required foreign language” (García, 2009, p. 165). The unprecedented growth of the mostly Black and Brown Spanish-speaking population in the US in recent years has been seen by many as a threat to the White “standard,” at all levels of socioeconomic status. Darker skinned Latinos have been essentialized as “illegal immigrants” creating a negative view of the Spanish language in general (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010; Santa Ana, 2002). With this negative view of Spanish came another English-only movement. Silicon Valley businessman Unz started a campaign called “English for the Children” and sponsored California Proposition 227 in 1998, which banned bilingual education there. He was also instrumental in the passage of similar laws in Arizona (Proposition 203 in 2000) and Massachusetts (Question 2 in 2002) (Wiley & Wright, 2004).

Despite these fears, the U.S. Departments of Defense and State have continued to recognize the need, in the name of national security and economic competitiveness, for highly proficient speakers of a variety of languages other than English in a variety of professional fields. This focus fits within the GHC framework, providing priority funding for languages with global economic and political importance like Chinese, Portuguese, Arabic, and Russian. Minoritized languages like Khmer (Cambodian) are also included on government lists of priority areas, but targeted funding is limited and when available, requires the lead principal investigator (PI) to be from an institution of higher education, excluding community organizations from applying where expertise is more likely present.

There is extensive research to support the argument that English learners (ELs) who are provided the opportunity to develop and maintain their home languages are likely to develop stronger skills in English, and to even outperform their “mainstream” native English-speaking peers regardless of socioeconomic status, gender, race, ethnicity, special needs, or urban/suburban location

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Shift in World Language Education Policy Discourse

In this past decade, there has been a shift in world language education discourse at the national level, with the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) situating its advocacy campaigns within the GHC frame. This has included a shift toward proficiency- and performance-based language instruction with the update of the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines in 2012, the release of the ACTFL Performance Descriptors for Language Learning in 2012, and the creation of the Oral Proficiency Levels in the Workplace document in 2015 (ACTFL, 2015). With the GHC frame helping language education gain traction by demonstrating proficiency gains among primarily White monolingual students in languages other than English (Heineke, Davin, & Bedford, 2018), there seems to be an emergence of space for the inclusion of EH frame. This was evident at the 2015 ACTFL convention, the theme of which had a social justice focus, where

there was a noticeable increase in sessions focused on heritage language learners. ACTFL also collaborated with Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), the National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE), and the National Council of State Supervisors for Languages (NCSSFL) on the development of guidelines for the Seal of Biliteracy (Heineke, Davin, & Bedford, 2018), which is a way to recognize bilingualism and biliteracy within both the GHC and EH frames.

In Massachusetts, groups with interest and involvement in language education formed the Language Opportunity Coalition, which ran a multiyear campaign to reverse the effects of Question 2 with the introduction of the Language Opportunity for Our Kids (LOOK) and Seal of Biliteracy Bills in 2015, and successfully passed the LOOK Act in 2017. This coalition and its LOOK Act is an example of the interest convergence of the Equity/Heritage (EH) and Global Human Capital (GHC) frameworks, as the group aims to promote the development of dual language programs for the benefit of English learners and English dominant students. In California there was also a successful effort in 2016 to repeal most of Proposition 227, through the introduction of Senate Bill 1174, known as the Multilingual Education Act. Unz, the businessman who had led the “English-Only” campaign, however, returned to the scene, and ran for a seat in the CA Senate to fight this. Rhode Island, like Utah, developed a State Language Roadmap in 2012 that recommends the development of dual language immersion programs in all public school districts, creating K-16 pathways in multiple languages. While the State Language Roadmaps were created as a response to business and government language needs, there is still space for the convergence of the GHC and EH frameworks in Rhode Island as well. In the following sections, this notion is explored by focusing on two distinct linguistically minoritized groups in Rhode Island, Cambodians and Guatemalans, whose languages are currently not deemed critical for business or government security.

State Language Roadmaps

State Language Roadmaps offer a possible policy solution for language education by bringing together leaders from business, government, and education to identify and develop a response to state language needs. The concept was developed by The Language Flagship, an initiative of the National Security Education Program (NSEP), in an effort to reach beyond the undergraduate focus of The Language Flagship programs to influence change in language education at the K-12 level. The Language Flagship supports a community of programs designed to create global professionals in a variety of fields who possess Superior proficiency (ACTFL scale) in one of many languages deemed critical to national security and economic competitiveness, which currently include Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Persian, Portuguese, Russian, and Turkish (The Language Flagship, n.d. a.). The Flagship model “addresses the needs of students around the nation who are motivated to gain professional proficiency in language during their undergraduate studies” in combination with a chosen field of study, and also supports efforts “to push the model down to elementary, middle, and high schools.” Flagship considers the integration of language skills into K-12 education “vital to our capacity to educate a citizenry prepared to address the nation’s well-being in the 21st century” (The Language Flagship, n.d. a.). While Flagship funding is targeted only for the aforementioned languages, these programs are also charged to be catalysts for the shift toward proficiency-based education across languages at their respective institutions.

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The State Language Roadmap process begins with university researchers conducting a language needs analysis of state businesses and government service agencies. The university research team produces a preliminary report on the linguistic needs of the state, which is shared with participants at a State Language Summit, where leaders from business, government, and education meet for a full day to further delineate these needs. Thereafter a subset of the participants develops recommendations as to how the state might meet the linguistic needs of state employers, which becomes the State Language Roadmap.

With funding from the U. S. Congress and co-sponsorship from the Departments of Commerce and Labor, the Flagship Centers at the University of Oregon, The Ohio State University, and The University of Texas, Austin led the effort in 2007. Utah, using the model developed by The Language Flagship, created the Utah Language Roadmap in 2009. Rhode Island completed the process in 2012, Hawai'i in 2013, Wisconsin in 2018, and Indiana in 2019 (The Language Flagship, n.d. b.). In Rhode Island, the author led this effort in her former role as the Coordinator of the University of Rhode Island Chinese Flagship Program in 2011-2012, which she and Berka write about more extensively in the 2016 AAUSC Volume (Papa & Berka, 2017), and she continues to lead the implementation effort today.

Prior to the launch of the *Rhode Island Roadmap to Language Excellence* in 2012 (Papa, Berka, & Brownell, 2012), there were only four dual language bilingual education programs in RI public schools: a whole-school K-5 Spanish-English dual language immersion program in the Providence Public School District, two-way K-5 immersion programs in Spanish-English and Portuguese-English at The International Charter School, a developmental bilingual PK-6 strand program for native Spanish speakers in Central Falls, and a K-12 bilingual-bimodal American Sign Language-English program at the state-operated Rhode Island School for the Deaf. One private school, the French-American School of Rhode Island, offers a PK-8 French-English dual language immersion program. In the fall of 2015, two additional districts launched one-way Spanish dual language immersion programs: one in the suburban English-dominant South Kingstown district, and the other in the urban, multilingual, and multicultural district of Pawtucket, where a large number of Spanish and Portuguese/Cape Verdean Creole speakers reside. Providence has since started two-way Spanish dual language immersion programs in three more of its elementary schools. Districts are now considering adding dual language programs in Spanish, Portuguese, and Chinese in the coming years. While this is incredibly exciting, it is essential that the community recognize the challenge of including the languages of smaller linguistically minoritized groups, and to actively work to include these languages.

The Rhode Island Context

Rhode Island is home to just over a million residents and is geographically the smallest state in the US. One can drive across the state in under one hour. Despite its small size, Rhode Island has 36 public school districts and 23 public charter schools. They served 143,346 students in the 2018-19 school year, and of those 10% received English learner (EL) services. From the 2009-10 to the 2018-19, the number of RI students receiving EL services nearly doubled, increasing by 93% (Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, 2020). These students spoke 95 different languages in 2018-19, the most common languages being Spanish (80%), Creole languages (includes Haitian Creole and Cape Verdean Creole) (5%), Portuguese (2%), Arabic (2%), and Chinese (1%); another 10% spoke other or multiple languages (Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, 2020). It is important to note that these figures do not include students who speak languages other than English who are not identified as needing services. Districts typically offer or would like to offer many of these same languages in dual

language bilingual education or world language programs, yet there has been little to no coordination of efforts between world language and English learner education in the state. In the 2018-2019 academic year, Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) world language enrollment data (which excludes dual language immersion enrollment) show that languages offered in RI public schools included Spanish (31,429 students), French (5,227), Italian (2,903), Portuguese (2,052), Mandarin Chinese (877), Latin (366), Japanese (96), German (85), ASL (67), and Arabic (24) (Rhode Island Department of Education, 2020). RIDE has only 2.4 full time positions supporting the nearly 14,000 students categorized as ELs in the state and no position supporting world language education.

Rhode Island Language Education Policy

Since there is no office within the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) responsible for world language education, decisions regarding which world languages are offered, to whom, and for how long are made at the district or school level. The Rhode Island Basic Education Program regulations require that the “determination of the [world language] offerings shall be based on the needs and interests of students, the community, and the global economy” and that each Local Education Agency (LEA) shall provide “Coursework in a minimum of two languages other than English at the secondary level and offerings of at least three consecutive years of the two selected languages” (Basic Education Program, 2018). LEAs are encouraged but not required to offer at least one language other than English at the elementary level (Basic Education Program, 2018). Here there is clearly space available for language education K-12, however world languages are almost exclusively taught at the high school level, and enrollment is discouraging. According to ACTFL (2010), RI public schools had an estimated 40% decrease in K-12 world language enrollment from 2004-05 to 2007-08, and only 16% of RI students in grades 6-12 were enrolled in a world language course in 2007-08. Only a few districts have a world language requirement.

RI colleges and universities typically require two years of world language study for admission and include world language and culture courses as part of the general education requirements for an undergraduate degree. In most cases fulfillment of these requirements is based on “seat time,” or number of hours in the classroom, rather than on proficiency. Two college semesters or three high school years of world language education would produce students with Intermediate proficiency at best. Met (1994, 2003) attributed the weak focus on world language education to an unclear purpose for the use of these skills, noting that little had changed in the eyes of policymakers in that decade. The shift in national-level discourse at ACTFL first to a global human capital (GHC) frame and more recently to an equity/heritage (EH) frame, most notably surrounding the release of national Seal of Biliteracy guidelines is reflected in RI as well. Rhode Island passed legislation in June 2016 that established a Rhode Island Seal of Biliteracy, which brought the GHC and EH frames together to officially recognize the linguistic strengths of the community, including those learned at home and those learned at school (State Seal of Biliteracy, 2016).

In contrast to world language education policies, policies affecting the education of English learners (ELs) in RI are based on the RI Board of Education’s interpretation of Title III of No Child Left Behind (NCLB): Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient and Immigrant Students. (The RI Regulations Governing the Education of English Language Learners (2018) will soon undergo revision to reflect the more recent reauthorization of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, which cancelled NCLB.) While the main focus of NCLB and the RI

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Board of Education's interpretation thereof is on development of students' academic skills in the English language, the RI Regulations Governing the Education of English Language Learners (2018) also state that these regulations are intended to "Facilitate the preservation and development of the existing native language skills of English Language Learners." This clause provides the ideological and implementational space for dual language bilingual education in RI public schools. However, the majority of ELs are in programs focusing solely on the development of academic and social English language skills.

The Rhode Island public has made it known that the state's public schools should provide pathways for all students toward bilingualism and biliteracy in Rhode Island's *Strategic Plan for PK-12 & Adult Education, 2015-2020* (Rhode Island Board of Education, 2015). This five-year strategic plan was developed by a diverse group of community members from various professions, age groups, and ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, and was vetted by the wider RI community through community forums and surveys. Priority 4 of the strategic plan is to produce Globally Competent Graduates, "by increasing the number of students in high-quality, proficiency-based language programs," including world language and dual language immersion, with the goal that at least 14% of graduating seniors earn the Seal of Biliteracy. Although one could argue that including language skills as part of global competence fits under the GHC framework, this priority does also call for investment in the social and emotional health of our students and building the cultural competence of students and educators, which leaves space for the integration of the EH framework. The plan recommends that RIDE develop cultural competence standards, but does not define cultural competence (RI Board of Education, 2015). The world language education field has also been grappling with how to define cultural competence or intercultural communicative competence, although the NCSSEFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements related to Intercultural Communication are a start (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 2017). Using the EH framework, RIDE could engage culturally-based community organizations in the development of cultural competency standards and professional development workshops for educators and candidates to assure that the cultures present are equitably engaged in the process. The following section explores the interpretation and implications of state and federal policies in the Providence Public School District, the largest district in RI, which serves the majority of Cambodian and Guatemalan youth in the state.

Bilingual Education in Providence

Public education in the US and in Rhode Island, specifically, is still very much monolingual, although the research clearly shows that a subtractive bilingual education is detrimental to the emergent bilinguals themselves, and, I would argue, to society as a whole. García (2009) describes subtractive bilingual education this way:

When monoglossic ideologies persist, and monolingualism and monolingual schools are the norm, it is generally believed that children who speak a language other than that of the state should be encouraged to abandon that language and instead take up the dominant language. . . . In this model, the student speaks a first language and a second one is added while the first is subtracted. (p. 51)

Until this point in Rhode Island, linguistically minoritized students, or emergent bilinguals, have been educated by and large in subtractive bilingual education programs. Thus, there is currently a significant population of bilingual students in Rhode Island public schools who are not receiving ESL or bilingual services and whose home languages are not being developed. High school language courses in Spanish and Khmer for native speakers were

once offered in Providence but were discontinued several years ago for unknown reasons. Spanish speakers often do take Spanish in high school, but they are typically not placed by linguistic ability. Anecdotally, teachers in RI's urban districts have reported that they are not allowed to teach Spanish for heritage speakers because that would be considered "discrimination" or "inequitable." One teacher reported that she had begun differentiating instruction for native and non-native speakers in a high school Spanish class in Providence, and although the students were satisfied with this arrangement and were all learning at their respective paces and levels, the administration forced the teacher to revert back to offering the same instruction to all students.

The subtractive bilingualism environment, as well as the high rate of poverty and racial segregation in Providence Public Schools may be contributing factors in academic disengagement. Of Providence students who entered high school in 2015-16, 16% dropped out before graduation in 2019, and in that same year (2018-19) 48 % of high school students and 35% of middle school students were chronically absent (Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, 2020). According to Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, "The Providence-New Bedford-Fall River metropolitan area was the ninth most segregated metropolitan area in the nation for Hispanics in 2010" (2020 p. 18). Although 16% of school-aged children residing in Providence were White in 2010 (U.S. Census 2010), only 8% of students enrolled in Providence Public Schools during the 2018-19 school year were White (Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, 2020). One can infer that White parents in Providence perceive that the quality of the public schools is unsatisfactory and therefore choose to send their children to private or charter schools. Implementing two-way dual language bilingual education with the goal of developing high levels of literacy in both English and another language, would certainly help to address some of the educational disparities that currently exist in RI public schools (García, 2009) and may bring White students back to the public schools, through convergence of the GHC and EH frameworks. Two-way dual language bilingual education (DLBE) programs are programs in which half of the students speak the target language at home and half speak English. As in one-way DLBE for monolingual English speakers and developmental bilingual programs for speakers of languages other than English, at least 50% of the day instruction is in the non-English language. DLBE programs have brought families back to public schools in districts across the country, including the District of Columbia, Delaware, Utah, Los Angeles, and New York City (Adamy, 2016; Guzman-Lopez, 2011; Zimmer, 2015). In the following section, the history and needs of two particular groups in Rhode Island, Cambodians and Guatemalans, are explored, followed by a proposal of how their languages could be developed by bringing the GHC and EH frameworks together through interest convergence.

Cambodians and Guatemalans in RI Education

According to data reported by the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE, 2011), Asian American students are performing very well in Rhode Island public schools. Asian American students in the cohort that entered RI public high schools in 2006 graduated in four years at a higher rate (81%) than did White students (79.3%); the rate for all students was 75.8% (RIDE, 2011). The rate for Hispanic students was significantly lower, with only 66.3% completing high school in four years. Viewing this data through a CRT frame, the experiences of Cambodian and Guatemalan youth are essentialized into broad racial categories, thus rendering their experiences invisible. Delving more deeply into U.S. Census data on Cambodian and Guatemalan Rhode Islanders reveals a very different picture. More than a quarter (28.6%) of Cambodian Americans and more than half of RI Guatemalans (57.5%) between the ages of 18 and 24 in the state have not completed high school (or an

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equivalent) (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2006-2010). While these data may also include people who entered RI after high school, the figures are still cause for alarm. RIDE's choice to collect and report educational data in these aggregate racial categories masks the realities of many of our students of color, including Cambodian and Guatemalan American youth, who are not served well in the current system, providing only a deficit perspective of these emergent bilingual urban communities (Kiang, 2006). Since Cambodians and Guatemalans are essentialized into the aggregate racial categories of Asian and Hispanic/Latino, respectively, it is difficult to determine how many of them are receiving ESL or bilingual services and also to determine the level of literacy in their home languages and English. One can infer that many Cambodian and Guatemalan youth in Providence Public Schools (PPSD) are receiving insufficient support in the development of English and their home languages due to the instability in ESL and bilingual program offerings for those who qualify for those services. There are also likely many Cambodian and Guatemalan youth in PPSD who have oral language abilities in their home languages but have underdeveloped reading and writing skills in the home language, due to the fact that their English upon entrance to PPSD was strong enough to qualify them for the "mainstream."

RI Cambodian American Khmer-English Language Ability

The only data available on Khmer and English language ability among Cambodian Americans in Rhode Island is self-reported data on the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) (Table 1) and on the Rhode Island Department of Education's (RIDE) Home Language Survey administered to parents of students receiving English language learner services. ACS data show that approximately 80% of RI Cambodian Americans speak Khmer, although the data do not reveal the level of oral proficiency or literacy in the language. A number of studies have shown that there is a significant generational language gap, however, between parents and grandparents who primarily speak Khmer and their children who primarily speak English (Chhuon & Hudley, 2010; Dinh, Weinstein, Tein, & Roosa, 2012; García-Coll, Akiba, Palacios, Bailey, Silver, DiMartino, & Chin, 2002; Wallitt, 2008).

Table 1. *Number of Khmer Speakers in Rhode Island by Age and Ability to Speak English, 2006-2010 American Community Survey*

	Ages 5-17	Ages 18-64	Ages 65+	Total
Number of Speakers	896	2,954	233	4,083
Speak English "well" or "very well"	871	2,195	0	3,066
Speak English "not well" or "not at all"	25	759	233	1,017

Source: 2006-2010 American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Most likely the 2,954 Khmer speakers aged 18-64 are the individuals completing the ACS on behalf of their children (ages 5-17) and parents (ages 65+). It is likely that many of the 871 children who speak English "well" or "very well" act as interpreters for their parents, many of the 759 Khmer speakers aged 18-64 who have limited English proficiency. Although these children may be serving as interpreters for their parents and grandparents,

this does not mean that they are necessarily highly proficient in either English or Khmer. It is also interesting to note that approximately 20% of all Cambodians in RI reportedly do not speak Khmer (those missing from Table 1), an alarmingly high number of non-Khmer speakers in a relatively recently arrived group. This data supports the research that indicates an intergenerational communication gap, however more research is needed in this area.

RI Guatemalan American Spanish-English Language Ability

The only data available on Spanish and English language ability (with no data available on K'iche' ability) among Guatemalan Americans in Rhode Island is self-reported data on the U.S. Census Bureau's ACS (Table 2).

Table 2. Number of Guatemalan Spanish Speakers in Rhode Island by Age and Ability to Speak English, 2006-2010 American Community Survey

	Ages 5-17	Ages 18-64	Ages 65+	Total
Number of Speakers	3,342	12,916	304	16,562
Speak English "well" or "very well"	2,981	5,475	15	8,760
Speak English "not well" or "not at all"	361	7,441	289	8,091

Source: 2006-2010 American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Guatemalans are essentialized as Spanish-speakers in the data from the RIDE Home Language Survey, so one cannot infer from this data which of the Spanish speakers are also Guatemalan. ACS data show that approximately 88% of RI Guatemalan Americans speak Spanish, although the data do not reveal the level of oral proficiency or literacy in the language.

Most likely the 12,916 Guatemalan Spanish speakers aged 18-64 are the individuals completing the ACS on behalf of their children (ages 5-17) and parents (ages 65+). As with the Khmer speakers, it is likely that many of the 2,981 children who speak English "well" or "very well" act as interpreters for their parents and grandparents, many of the 7,441 Spanish speakers aged 18-64 who have limited English proficiency. Approximately 12% of Guatemalan Rhode Islanders indicated that they do not speak Spanish, which may be indicative of the large population of K'iche' and other Mayan language speakers in the state. Further research is needed to understand the linguistic complexities of this group.

Implications for Policy

How can the Rhode Island Department of Education, Providence Public Schools, and other districts with significant Cambodian and Guatemalan student enrollment address the dramatic education gaps between Cambodian and Guatemalan students and most other Rhode Island students? The data and research cited in this article suggest the following actions:

1. Disaggregate existing quantitative data to expose the issues that are currently hidden.

It is evident from the data presented in this article that there is a dire need for the critical disaggregation of data by ethnicity in order to expose the utter dichotomy between Cambodian and non-Cambodian Asians, and between Guatemalan and non-Guatemalan Hispanics, as well as other essentialized groups in Rhode Island. The

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Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE) should be required to report data by ethnicity if they are to truly address the inequities in the educational system.

- 2. Collect additional data, both quantitative and qualitative, to provide a clearer picture of the strengths and needs of Cambodian and Guatemalan students, as well as other minoritized groups.** The lack of data point to the need for the collection of more appropriate data to add to the literature on Cambodians and Guatemalans in U.S. public education. For example, quantitative and qualitative research on the experiences and the actual language proficiency of children and adults in these and other linguistically and racially marginalized communities would help to plan a community education strategy. CRT counter-storytelling methodology could be used to conduct in-depth case studies or focus groups with Cambodian youth in Rhode Island public schools that would help the community to better understand the issues faced. The counter-story is defined by Solórzano and Yosso (2002) as a method of giving voice to those people whose experiences are not often told. It is a tool for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the dominant stories of White privilege that is committed to social justice. Research that connects language proficiency to employment in the state is also needed. By drawing attention to the connection between home language literacy and academic achievement and later employment, the interests of government and business (GHC frame) can converge with the interests of linguistically-minoritized groups (EH frame).
- 3. Create new and expand existing dual language bilingual education programs with a social justice focus.** In order to make bilingualism the norm, as García (2009) suggests, interest convergence between the global human capital (GHC) and equity/heritage (EH) frameworks for the benefit of both emergent bilinguals (ELs) and White monolinguals seems necessary. By framing the need for DLBE in Rhode Island using GHC discourse, district leaders and other policymakers have begun to implement new programs, as exemplified by the launch of the dual language program in predominantly White, monolingual South Kingstown in 2015. Pawtucket also used the GHC discourse to start their new elementary Spanish dual language program and secondary Chinese program in 2015. With support from the Rhode Island Foundation, both districts have collaborated with the International Charter School (ICS) on professional development of teachers, which has also aided in a shift to the EH framework, as ICS is committed to developing the languages of the community. ICS has a two-way dual language immersion program where the interests of families whose home languages are Spanish or Portuguese converge with students who speak English at home, which can be seen as a convergence of the GHC and EH frames. Positioning ICS as a leader and state-wide provider of professional development for districts starting or developing dual language programs could open up space for the implementation of programs in other community languages, such as Khmer and K'iche'.
- 4. Increase collaboration between home, school, and community, leveraging community knowledge and power.** The literature on Cambodian and Guatemalan Americans in U.S. schools point to the need for greater connection between home, school, and community (Wallitt, 2008; Ek, 2009; Brabeck, 2010; Chhuon & Hudley, 2010). The U.S. Census Bureau data indicate a low level of educational attainment and high rate of poverty in the Cambodian and Guatemalan communities, which point to a critical need for both preK-12 and adult education. The intergenerational language gap, as well as low levels

of reading ability in Khmer, Spanish, K'iche', and English, point to the need for bilingual education. Attempting to address the issues of poverty, education, and employment separately would be inefficient as well as incomplete. Bringing together the global human capital and equity/heritage frameworks by creating a thoughtful partnership among the home, school, and community-based organizations would allow for the sharing of resources to develop a strategy for community development that considers the cultural values and expectations of the community (Collignon, Men, & Tan, 2001) while also preparing youth for the world of work. Community organizations, such as the Providence Youth Student Movement (PrYSM), the Cambodian Society of Rhode Island (CSRI), the Olneyville Neighborhood Association (ONA), and the Guatemalan Center of New England, are already doing a tremendous amount of work to support and advance the community, but need the support of the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) to effect greater, systemic change. Within the EH frame, RIDE could partner with community organizations to provide professional development for teachers and school administrators in culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy, as well as in Cambodian and Guatemalan history and culture. Community-RIDE partnerships could also educate Cambodian and Guatemalan families about the culture of the school (EH frame), as well as help them to develop crucial literacy and technical skills needed for career advancement (GHC frame).

These approaches would help multiple stakeholders support additive bilingualism, emancipatory multilingual classroom ecologies, and linguistic diversity in the classroom, even in the midst of an “English-only” educational climate (Skilton-Sylvester, 2003; Johnson & Freeman, 2010). Forming a strong partnership would foster mutual understanding and civic engagement, which would not only improve the quality of life of Cambodian and Guatemalan Rhode Islanders, but also affect the advancement of the Rhode Island community as a whole.

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