

OUT OF THE MARGINS: MISSISSIPPI'S ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER  
CURRICULUM PRACTICES AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

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By Alexis L. Smith

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Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College

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University, Mississippi

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Approved:

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Advisor: Dr. Katherine Centellas

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Reader: Dr. Oliver Dinius

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Reader: Dr. Allison Burkette

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis concerns itself with Mississippi school's effectiveness in educating the state's budding, primarily Spanish-speaking, immigrant population. I answer three questions: 1) *How* does Mississippi English language curriculum require state socialization of its students? 2) *How* does its curriculum provide for effective language learning practices? And 3) Does Mississippi EL curriculum provide for the magnified existence of immigrant students, or does, and *how does*, state curriculum continue to push immigrant students into the margins? Using inductive qualitative analysis, I explore both Mississippi Department of Education's ELL program guidelines and individual district plans.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

ELL: English Language Learner

ESL: English as a Second Language

ESSA: Every Student Succeeds Act

EL: English Learner

LEP: Limited English Proficiency

MDE: Mississippi Department of Education

NCLB: No Child Left Behind

## Chapter one:

### Introduction

I was knuckle deep in *masa* when Yesi laughed, “*Hermana*, you have got so much to learn.” She was right: her fingers moved quickly, shaping the corn mixture and folding the husks over. I, on the other hand, was awkward. Corn husks not sticking. Too much dough. Clearly, I had not grown up helping my mother prepare tamales for post-church gatherings and events at the plaza; however, my invitation into a kitchen situated in a tiny village in Jalisco, Mexico, made me feel like I was back in my Mississippi home: In a rural, seemingly-homogenous state, my father has served spicy, gritty, pork tamales in his barbecue restaurant for decades.

I use this anecdote to introduce the subject of my thesis: the hidden curriculums that shape Mississippi’s budding immigrant student population, a primarily Mexican population—a group that has occupied places in Mississippi history for quite a while. Using the iconic Delta tamale, for example, we are able to see the complicated beginnings of Mississippi’s relationship with immigrants. How did the tamale make a home here? A multiplicity of theories exists: in the early twentieth century alongside Mexican migrant farm workers, from the U.S.-Mexican war in the 1800s when U.S. soldiers returned home with the recipe, or from the early American Indians that occupied Mississippi. Nonetheless, the point remains: Mississippi has been influenced due to multiculturalism. In fact, many of the most “Mississippi” food items can be directly attributed to African, American Indian, and Mexican influence, among others.

Mississippi's history is not so simple, however. Although Mississippi gastronomy has been created by cultural diffusion, attitudes toward immigrants and non-English languages have been welcomed less happily in the state.

I write this thesis to fulfill my undergraduate tenure as a student of International Studies with a concentration on the social and cultural identity of Latin America. Throughout my time spent in my academic program, my academic interests began to move toward a domestic focus, as I concerned myself with immigrant rights within the U.S. Particularly, I became enamored with equitable access to education for immigrant groups, specifically limited English proficient (LEP) students. Although there are many languages used by various immigrant populations throughout the United States, I primarily engage with the politics of immigration and immigrant education in regard to migrants from the American South. This choice is influenced by many things: time spent in Mexico with seasonal migrant workers; AmeriCorps work in Austin, Texas, with a largely-Latino middle school community; weekly work as a Spanish-speaking tutor in my local high school's English as a Second Language classroom.

Through this work, I have been taught how equitable access to education is confused and complicated when dominant and minority languages and cultures tensely come together. I took this observation, planted it in the field of my academic interests, and watched it grow. Now, I inductively examine the effectiveness of English Language pedagogy in Mississippi, a U.S. state which provides minimally for migrants. While this may seem irrelevant to the field of International Studies, I urge that it is *not*. In fact, there is nothing more international than transnational migration—seasonal migratory farmworkers, undocumented and unaccompanied minors, skilled workers making up

large proportions of the construction industry, and those seeking higher education in physics or the social sciences. In turning my gaze inward, I see that globalization is *here*, even in a place like Mississippi.

Certainly, Mississippi's immigrant population certainly is small when compared to many other Southern states, like Texas, Florida, or Arkansas; however, the population is growing, primarily composed of migrants from Mexico. Generally, immigrants (defined as foreign-born individuals) constitute 2.4 percent of the state's population, "while another two percent [of Mississippi residents] are native-born U.S. citizens with at least one immigrant parent" (American Immigration Council 2017). Though relatively small, several of Mississippi's economic sectors are reliant on large populations of immigrants. Per the American Immigration Council, "eight percent of employees in both Mississippi's social sciences and construction fields are immigrants" (American Immigration Council 2017).

For the purposes of this thesis, I am most concerned with Mississippi's immigrant student population. Since the 2005-2006 school year, Mississippi's English Language Learner (ELL) population has grown by a 129 percent increase. During the 2017-2018 school year, Mississippi was responsible for over 12,000 English learners (EL), or 1.8 percent of all students, in its public-school system.

The unique way in which English learners are spread throughout Mississippi school districts is only one challenge to the equal education of non-English speaking students: Mississippi's official language is English, and the state does not offer funding for English language learning programs, unlike the federal government. Schools, already underfunded, rely on federal monies to power English Language programs—but, this

funding is only allocated to school districts with at least 76 ELL students *and* is sparse. Only \$230 is given per student per year. This entails that rural schools with the most monetary needs are often overlooked, as the English Language Learner (ELL) and general population may be sparse.

### **Research Question**

The numerical data is clear and easily understood: Mississippi's English Learner population is small but growing and spread throughout a multitude of rural, underfunded school districts. The "how" is less clear, and is what this thesis concerns: *How* does Mississippi EL curriculum require state socialization of its students? *How* does its curriculum provide for effective language learning practices? As I explored in the beginning anecdote, though immigrants have long-existed within Mississippi, they have often been stratified out of existence in state narratives. Does the Mississippi EL curriculum provide for the magnified existence of immigrant students, or does, and *how does*, the state curriculum continue to push immigrant students into the margins?

### **Thesis overview**

To effectively answer my research question(s), I engage in a theory-building, descriptive study. In my first chapter, I present my theoretical framework, constructing a narrative using critical pedagogical, nation-state building, and state-socialization theories. Using these three theories, I argue that though schools have begun to readily embrace radical approaches to teaching in other content areas, the same has not occurred in the English learning classroom. In order to maintain a sturdy nation-state, English language learners receive an educational experience outside of mainstream students, as they are socialized into the nation-state.

In chapters three and four, I begin my analysis of Mississippi's English Language provisions. I have elected to use Mississippi as a singular case study and have split my analysis into two separate parts: 1) Mississippi Department of Education's ELL program guidelines and training materials, and 2) ELL district plans from four individual Mississippi school districts. I analyze each using an inductive, qualitative analysis. I analyze narratives and instructions presented in both the Mississippi Department of Education's (MDE) guidelines and district plans; translations from English to Spanish in school handbooks; and teaching pedagogies implemented by teachers, as well as missing data.

In my first chapter of analysis, I examine the Mississippi Department of Education's ELL Program guidelines and training materials. The State's guidelines are, perhaps, the most important to analyze, as this is the primary guiding document for individual school districts and teachers. I conclude that the MDE Guidelines for English Language Learners utilize both the political economy of education and the hidden curriculum. The two are used in a way by which an "us versus them" model is constructed. I find evidence of both the hidden curriculum and the political economy of education in the MDE Guidelines for English Language Learners. In language employed by the Department, EL students are othered, creating a risk of exclusion from the mainstream learning environment. The emphasis of "our" throughout this Department of Education's guidelines creates an "us versus them" model. In this, the dominant group is positioned as more cultured or correct, while ELLs are demanded to assimilate.

In the next chapter, I analyze individual ELL district plans. I elect district plans based on EL population, varying from high EL populations to low. I choose to analyze

plans in this manner, as I want to represent all EL populations in the State. As I have discussed, Mississippi's immigrant population is scattered. Though there are areas with concentrated populations of ELs, many of these students attend schools alongside one or two or five other EL students—to dismiss these districts would be to dismiss the educational experiences of many students across Mississippi. Originally, I desired to incorporate population growth from longer time spans. After data collection, however, I quickly found that Mississippi has only recently begun to maintain robust data regarding ELLs. Data is largely nonexistent before 2010, or even 2012. I find that large inconsistencies exist between the robustness of school curriculums. Little institutional oversight is given regarding curriculum quality and, most importantly, whether or not the ESL plan provided is actually implemented as a program.

I selected Mississippi as my case study for many reasons: Mississippi has a relatively small E -population when compared to the rest of the United States and even its Southern counterparts. Due to this, however, Mississippi becomes an intriguing case study, especially considering the influx of recent immigrants to the state. Because of the state's low number of ELs, little data reporting has been done on EL achievement, as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) does not require schools to show test scores for small student populations. Additionally, the state's EL population is scattered: many districts may only have one, two, or five EL students.

Finally, chapter five concludes my research and presents policy and curriculum recommendations for the Mississippi Department of Education and English Language teachers. I conclude that both the MDE and district plans may marginalize EL students through continued emphasis on assimilation and limited funding of and supervision over

ESL programs. I recommend that Mississippi begins providing funding specifically to ESL programs, that the MDE implement stricter regulation of ESL curriculums, and that ESL curriculum plans be submitted to the MDE annually.

## Chapter two:

### Literature Review

“Language is not only an instrument of communication or even of knowledge, but also an instrument of power” (Bourdieu 1997, 648).

#### **Introduction**

In order to answer my research question, I first construct a narrative using critical pedagogical, nation-state building, and state-socialization theories. While these three theories function as my foundational framework, I also incorporate the following: the hidden curriculum, the political economy of education, and language socialization. Throughout this chapter, I illustrate the ways in which the above theories are practiced within the ESL classroom, both generally and specific to Mississippi. I also utilize historical contextualization to explicate the way in which critical pedagogy, nation-state building, and state-socialization for and of EL students are complicated. By incorporating my theoretical framework and a historical contextualization together, I establish a base for my research of Mississippi’s English as a Second Language provisions.

#### **Pedagogical Frameworks: traditional versus radical**

What is education? What function does it serve? Plainly, does education function beyond curriculums—into areas of political and national socialization? Most specifically, “how do we make education meaningful by making it critical, and how do we make it critical so as to make it emancipatory?” (Giroux 1983, 3). Two groups of theories exist to answer these questions: traditional and radical.

### *Traditional Model of Education*

Traditional theorists of education typically ignore the ultimate question presented, seeing education only as a measure to transmit “skills, facts, and standards of moral and social conduct that adults consider to be necessary for the next generation’s material and social success” (Dewey 1938). Traditional models of education view teachers as the instruments by which this knowledge is communicated and enforced (Dewey 1938), or utilize the “banking model of education” (Freire 1970, 1). Under this model, education is only “an act of depositing,” in which students are the recipients and teachers are the depositors (Freire 1970). Students exist to receive, file, and then to store that which is deposited, with no additional responsibility to analyze, argue against, or form opinions about the information received (Freire 1970). Traditionalists are unconcerned with relations between school and the larger society, and the ways in which schools are involved in the processes of “class, struggle, and emancipation” (Giroux 1983), and even see these processes as necessary: “School might be called a preparation for life, but not in the usual sense in which educators employ that slogan. Powers may be abused in schools as elsewhere, but its existence is a fact of life to which we must adapt” (Jackson 1968, 33).

### *Radical Model of Education*

Radical models of education view schools as both educational sites *and* cultural and political sites; schools are seen as “arenas of contestation and struggle among differentially empowered cultural and economic groups” (Giroux 1983). The banking-model of education is rejected in favor of a “teacher-student with students-teachers”

model, entailing that teachers become both student and teacher through dialogue with students (Freire 1970).

Radical educational theorists, unlike traditional theorists, are ultimately concerned with the question: how does one make education emancipatory? Essentially, radical theorists approach this by asserting that “education should play a fundamental role *in changing the social order and making positive social and political reforms*” (Nouri and Sajjadi 2014, 1) in order to build a more equitable and democratic society (Nouri and Sajjadi 2014; Counts 2013). From this, radical (or critical) theory is concerned with responding to the unequal and oppressive power relations housed within education institutions (Keesing-Styles 2003). Emancipatory education, then, comes from not only giving students knowledge, but from also making them aware of the functions of power (Nouri and Sajjadi 2014; Moss and Lee 2010) – and, more, giving students the tools to cultivate “critical consciousness,” the ability to internalize and understand social oppression deeply and to then be empowered to act against such oppressive elements (Freire 1970).

### *Conflict between the Two*

Radical theorists of education argue that traditional models of education mirror “oppressive society as a whole.” As such,

- a) the teacher teaches and the students are taught;
- b) the teacher knows everything and the students know nothing
- c) the teacher thinks and the students are thought about
- d) the teacher talks and the students listen—meekly;
- e) the teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined... (Freire 1970, 2).

Radical theorists use this as evidence of creating citizens that are “adaptable, manageable beings” (Freire 1970, 2). Since traditional educational models only emphasize rote

memorization of information presented, students do not further engage in materials analytically or critically. Consequently, “the less [students] develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world,” and, thus, the more they accept a role of passivity as citizens (Freire 1970, 2).

Interestingly, however, this educational experience of rote memorization is not standard for all students. Upper-level students, who primarily come from upper socioeconomic status, are exposed to critical thinking and experiential learning in many of their honors and AP classes. Meanwhile, lower-level, vocational track students are primarily located in educational spaces that encourage learning in a way similar to an assembly line, where thought is not needed, just repeated action. It is important to denote this distinction between class among students; I explore this more deeply in sections, “Hidden Curriculums” and “The Political Economy of Education,” later in the chapter.

As educational theory has progressed, especially into the twenty-first century, radical theories of education – more commonly known as critical pedagogy – has become commonplace among academics. Here, it is important to differentiate between theory and classroom practice. Through this explication, I hope to demonstrate the successful and scientifically-based methods through which radical pedagogy is implemented into classrooms.

Where traditional pedagogy relies on teacher as the only source of knowledge and primary authority figure, radical approaches position teacher only as facilitator and mentor. The student role moves from receptacle bin under the traditional approach to “peer mediators, tutors, and counselors” under radical pedagogy. Instruction varies

between the approaches drastically: traditional approaches rely on direct instruction, while a radical approach utilizes self-directed learning, or discovery learning. Content instruction is also varied. Under radical pedagogy, phonetical instruction of reading in exchange for a “whole-language” approach to literacy instruction; mathematics instructors reject rote memorization and utilize interactive learning; and in social studies, traditional American heritage is rejected for a focus on multiculturalism and emphasis on global citizenship.

Thus, for this thesis, I will be utilizing a critical lens by which I will approach pedagogy surrounding bilingual, multilingual, and English-language learning students. The remainder of my literature review will be using a radical approach to education, as I narrow my focus to understand schools as sites of state-socialization, sites of nation-state building, and finally, how these two functions of education impact and English Learning students.

### **Schools as places of state-socialization**

To begin my analysis of multilingual students in schools, I must first outline the ways in which schools must be analyzed. I will be utilizing Henry Giroux’s three “comprehensive understandings” (Giroux 1983) of how schools must first be viewed in order to be understood:

1. Schools cannot be analyzed as institutions removed from the socio-economic context in which they are situated.
2. Schools are political sites involved in the construction and control of discourse, meaning, and subjectivities.
3. The commonsense values and beliefs that guide and structure classroom practice are not priori universals, but social constructions based on specific normative and political assumptions.

According to radical educational theorists, schools must be understood as “powerful social structures actively involved in the process of moral and political reproduction” (Athusser 1977) of nation-state values of where they are situated. Educational institutions are functions of the state, imagined communities (Anderson), that work to establish and reestablish myths of “origin, achievements and destiny” (Bernstein 2000). As such, “it is inevitable under these conditions that education becomes a crucial means and an arena for struggle to produce and reproduce a specific national consciousness” (Bernstein 2000). These reproductions occur in a variety of manners: within hidden curriculums, or the “social control function of schooling” (Vallance 1974), such as school practices or rituals (i.e. saying the national pledge or singing the national anthem), or within pedagogical curriculums, such as the teachings of language, literature, and history (Bernstein 2000).

### *Hidden Curriculums*

Durkheim describes that which is taught beyond textbook curriculums and teacher manuals (Dreeben 1968); Vallance analyzes the “unstudied curriculum,” the “non-academic outcomes of schooling,” or the “residue of schooling” (Vallance 1974); and Bowles and Gintis write about the ways in which schooling reproduces existing class structures (Bowles and Herbert 2011). The socialization of student beyond what is taught in any-given textbook has been of concern to educational theorists for decades. While, as described above, the definitions and analyses of hidden curriculums has varied historically, all come together to identify the hidden curriculum as “those unstated norms, values, and beliefs embedded in and transmitted to students through the underlying rules

that structure the routines and social relationships in school and classroom life” (Giroux 1983).

Following this, schools become much more than sites of simple passivity. These institutions are no longer neutral, moving beyond the conceptualization of spaces where within their walls students are educated of numbers and words—and nothing more. Instead, schools are identified as sites where in which occurs “the inculcation of values, political socialization, training in obedience and docility, the perpetuation of traditional class structure—functions that may be characterized generally as social control” (Vallance 1974).

The hidden curriculum is valuable because these covert socializations are not congruent from student-to-student; instead, students receive different experiences within the hidden curriculum, as it “functions not simply as a vehicle of socialization but also as an agency of social control, one that functions to provide differential forms of schooling to different classes of students” (Giroux 1983). For example, advanced placement classes may be largely taken by white, affluent students. These classes are typically more democratic with less stringent rules and more lively discussion. On the other hand, remedial classes may be primarily composed to minority or low-income students. Such classes are typically less democratic with strict rule enforcements. Through this example, we are able to see two groups of students, affluent and poor, being socialized in two different ways: The advanced placement students are being socialized as citizen-scholars who think critically, while the remedial students are covertly being socialized toward compliance.

In functioning as sites of socialization, schools may be viewed as a mirror of broader society, in that when analyzing these institutions, we can ask questions similar to the following: “Who recognizes themselves as of value? What other images are excluded by the dominant image of value so that some students are unable to recognize themselves? ... Whose voice is heard? Who is speaking? Who is hailed by this voice? For whom is it familiar?” (Bernstein 2000). The answers we assign to these questions speak to nation-state hierarchies of power—or how the system of schooling provides that such hierarchies remain stable (Giroux 1983).

### **Schools as sites of nation-state building**

Building on broader ideas of the hidden curriculum, I narrow the scope of the idea to focus particularly on the ways which the hidden curriculum is used to continue nation-state building, or to reaffirm nationalism – and, thus, proud societal positioning within the nation – in students.

#### *Political economy of schooling*

I will begin discussion of the political economy of schooling, or the idea that socialization through educational institutions (beyond formal curriculum) works to teach different classes of students the skills they will need to take their eventual places in the work force. As Michelson (1980) describes,

The social relations of different tracks in school tend to conform to different behavioral norms. Thus, vocational and general tracks, where most working-class adolescents are channeled, emphasize rule-following and close supervision, whereas college-bound tracks, where most upper and middle-class children are channeled, tend toward a more open atmosphere emphasizing internalization of norms and standards of control (84).

The political economy of schooling works as a function of the hidden curriculum, as a repetitive preparation for production processes, whether that be knowledge or labor production (Anyon 1980). Largely depending on social class, educational experiences vary dramatically depending on where the student is expected to ultimately contribute to the nation-state (Anyon 1980).

### *Forging national identity*

In a diverse nation-state, loyalty to nation may not be greater than competing loyalties; thus, the main challenge for heterogeneous nation-states is to create a sense of political and sociocultural security among citizens, in hopes that “national allegiance [will take precedence] over all other claims which may be made upon them when they are confronted by alternative choices of allegiance” (Emerson 1960).

Public education as a site of state-building is not new; rather, the majority of scholars of nationalism consider public education as one of the “central features of nationalism” (Eriksen 2007, 14), as schools function as sites of citizen-building within the hidden curriculum and as a part of the political economy. Essentially, schools are able to teach students how to be citizens that will ultimately be beneficial to the larger nation-state. Further, linguistic standardization, as Gellner (2008) cites, or such imagined through language, described by Anderson (2006), is the basis of nationhood. Language plays the most important role in nation-state building, as it is vital in “imagining and creating the nationhood.” Without language, the other essential components of nationalism cannot exist:

“It is always a mistake to treat language in the way that certain nationalist ideologues treat them as emblems of nation-ness, like flags, costumes, folk-dance, and the rest. Much the most important thing about language is its capacity for

generating imagined communities, building in effect *particular solidarity*.”  
(Anderson 2006, 136)

Of course, within the United States, we are able to the way in which linguistic standardization has grown in importance as different immigrant groups, and most importantly, indigenous groups, migrated and were annexed into the country.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> centuries, bilingual schools were standard within the United States. This standard, nonetheless, was largely because immigrants were primarily Anglo-Saxon. By the late-19<sup>th</sup> century, following the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the Mexico Cession, Gadsden Purchase, and the annexation of Hawaii and Puerto Rico, tolerance for language diversity declined among the U.S. public. This shift in public opinion can be attributed to the sudden integration of Spanish-speakers and indigenous-language speakers into the nation-state, as nativism and xenophobic sentiment grew popular in the United States’ political sphere. Language was now needed to foster country-loyalty, and English finally became fiercely associated with American patriotism (Baron 1992). As such, harsh prohibitions against bilingual schools were implemented, with European language bilingual schools becoming illegal alongside Spanish and American Indian bilingual instruction (Scott, Straker and Katz 2008).

### **Implications for English-learners**

As discussed previously, a national language is central to nation-state building. Universal education functions as a “primary [mechanism] for cultural and linguistic homogenization” (Friedman 2010, 193). Ultimately, this homogenization creates the conditions needed for “individuals to identify themselves as members of the *imagined community* of the nation” (Friedman 2010, 193). What does this responsibility mean, then, in a globalizing world where schools are becoming more linguistically-diverse? The

responsibility no longer rests just to condition students out of varied vernaculars of English; instead, schools become responsible for deemphasizing the use of entirely different languages, while emphasizing the importance of the nation-state language.

In the United States, the language emphasized is, quite unsurprisingly, English—and consequently, growing migration to the United States has challenged traditional assimilationist views of national identity (Friedman 2010).

### *Language Socialization*

Language socialization is the avenue through which individuals become “culturally intelligible subjects” (Kulick and Shcieffelin 2004, 351; Friedman 2010) or are the processes “that mediate newcomers’ participation in routine cultural practices” (Duff 2002). Though a non-English speaker may have been culturally intelligible in their previous country of origin, inability to operate in the national language of their new nation is challenging: How can an American nation-state identity be fostered when language skills are lacking?

Here, I determine a break in radical pedagogy. In many instances, classroom practices have begun to utilize radical approaches in content areas; however, this has not begun to trickle-down into English Language classrooms. Friedman (2010) observes:

While the discourses of multiculturalism have largely replaced the melting pot metaphor in the rhetoric surrounding education of immigrants, recent ethnographic research has revealed that ideologies of assimilation still hold sway in many classrooms. For example, in their critical ethnography of an elementary school coping with a recent influx of Spanish-speaking immigrant children, Garza and Crawford (2005) explored the “contradictory mission of affirming diversity and promoting assimilation” (p. 600)... the authors argued that despite the school’s stated intent to honor cultural diversity, school policies and classroom practices effectively marginalized Spanish-speaking children...immigrant children were socialized into an ideology of ‘hegemonic multiculturalism,’ defined as the appropriation of the rhetoric of multiculturalism to obscure an

underlying assimilationist agenda (197-108).

Radical pedagogy is easily embraced in classroom settings where the foundational component, language, of nation-state building is already in place. The social identity that is produced by speaking American-English is preexisting. For that, radical approaches to teaching seem commonplace: one can be taught to fight against his or her own social, political, or economic oppression if the fight is contained inside some sense of nationalism. However, among individuals who do not primarily speak English, that social identity is not yet forged—and the absence of a profound sense of national membership challenges the authority of the nation-state.

Language socialization requires an exchange between prior community membership to an American membership (Bloome 2009). More, it demands those being socialized to “adopt ways of speaking, thinking, feeling, acting, and valuing” (Bloome 2009, xiii). And most importantly, language socialization demands that “[they] adopt [our] histories” (Bloome 2009, xiii).

Thus, ELs are submitted to the process of “enculturation, acculturation, and deculturation” (Salomone 2010, 70) by which their language skills and cultural identity are shaped by the new nation-state. This process is *more* than just second-language acquisition. Essentially, every internal and communal belief and experience that make up these students’ identities that “[give] meaning and value to their being...lay open to challenge, rejection, and inversion” (Ignatieff 1993; Salamone 2010, 85). Language socialization need not be a diminutive force; in fact, language “can be a way toward inclusion into the political community of the nations, as when children learn the official language in school” (Salomone 2010, 77). Only through language is it possible for

Bernstein's "imagined communities" to become imagined (Craith 2006, 32). Largely, however, language socialization works as a force of exclusion, "as...children are forced to struggle through mainstream classes where they cannot understand the language spoken by the teacher and are, thereby, denied access to meaningful learning" (Salomone 2010, 77).

*Socialization of Immigrant Identities: the political economy of English-learner education*

Contained within the theory of the political economy of schooling, second language socialization often includes immigrant students being "identified in the classroom and how they take up or contest these ascribed identities" (Friedman 2010, 1999; Duff 2002; García Sánchez 2009). In several recent language socialization studies, it has been found that schools may not socialize English-learners into full membership of the national community. Instead, just as many immigrant groups, these students occupy space as "marginal m[e]n,"

"...one whom fate has condemned to live in two societies and in two, not merely different but antagonistic cultures...his mind is the crucible in which two different and refractory cultures may be said to melt and, either or in part, fuse" (Park 1928, 892).

As marginal men, ELs may be denied membership and then identified as outsiders (Duff 2002; García Sánchez 2009), as "exclusionary notions of national identity are enforced" (Friedman 2010, 1999).

These exclusionary notions are reinforced cyclically, especially in spaces, like schools, where the mother tongue serves as the standard for quality. In schools, students are expected to assimilate to and perform "certain rules of social contact, whether implicit or explicit." When minority languages are posited as breaking these rules of social contact, "effectively [making them] invisible," "they create an impression in the minds of

minority children that their first language is backward, useless, and of low status” (Salomon 2010, 75) These impressions, then, “reinforce negative representations of the language in the private sphere and in the media, which consequently influence educational policies” (Salomone 2010, 75; Priven 2008).

As mentioned in the above section, language can function both as a mechanism of inclusion or exclusion; however, minority language students are often the butt of its exclusionary consequences. In particular, a student’s immigrant status may affect social inclusion. Many EL students may not be authorized immigrants to the U.S. or may have one or more unauthorized parent(s). As political attitudes toward immigration have become increasingly polarized, students may be ostracized for nationality, native language, and immigration status. Public policy has helped to socially exclude immigrants, as laws prohibiting willingly providing car rides to undocumented persons, mandating that children report their undocumented parents, and allowing for racial profiling have all been proposed and/or passed. Moreover, bias and hate crimes against immigrant groups, including Latinos, continue to take place. For example, in 2008, a group of New York high school students, looked to “kill a Mexican.” They murdered an Ecuadorian immigrant (Semple 2008).

Exclusion may occur in many different ways, from the institutional to personal level. Immigrant students, specifically Hispanic students, have experienced increased school segregation: Hispanic students are more likely than black students to attend schools that are more than half-minority, but both groups are more likely to attend schools with low white demographics (Ruiz-de-Velasco and Fix 2000). In the classroom, students may be ignored by content area teachers and other students (Verplaetse 1998).

Specifically, teacher-student relationships may be difficult, as these interactions are primarily characterized by institutional (in)equity.

“The established social order in schools does not allow the consummation or formalization of long-term committed relations. All relationships remain superficial, transitory, and interwoven with hidden and not-so-hidden forms of hierarchical power and institutionalized inequality” (Stanton-Salazar 1997, 19).

As such, minority students, including ELLs, may “become disengaged in school...because of the obstacles they encounter in trying to build trusting relationships with teachers and school personnel” (Stanton-Salazar 1997; Katz 1999, 816). While difficulty creating teacher-student relationships occurs on the personal level, it is due to institutionalized inequality.

Additionally, EL-students may be punished for using their native language in or outside of the classroom. Recently, there have been numerous reports of teachers telling students to “speak American” (Dolan 2017) or that they were no longer allowed to use Spanish in class (Hoy San Diego 2013).

In these instances, we are able to see the way in which both acceptance into the national community and, thus, language is a political process (Jordan 1989), a process determined by power-holders, or those who are able to “use, abuse, accept, and reject the words” (Jordan 1989). As such, the powerful determine the ways in which language must be used to *be* powerful.

Language then comes a practice by which the value of language then becomes determined by the societal value of the person speaking (Bourdieu 1977). In the U.S., the “native-speaker fallacy” has been used to emphasize the idea of a singular, idealized English—an English that can only be taught, linguistically and culturally, by proper

English speakers (Canagarajah 1999). Thus, the prestigious, broadcaster English becomes a commodity, accessed by few (McKinney 2007).

Language as a political process is central to the political economization of student immigrants, in ways similar to the Black-American or vernacularized-English speaking student. On this basis, the English Language Learning classroom becomes a site of separation—the site where students are pushed into their respected position within the nation-state hierarchy of determined value, as stereotypes of immigrant student origins are projected onto students through isolation in their English-Learning classrooms or by fellow students (Friedman 2010).

### **History of English as a Second Language education in the U.S.**

In recent years, the English Only movement has reemerged, gaining new popularity in and following the Reagan administration. Policy changes have continued to draw from the English Only movement, including No Child Left Behind (NCLB), as its emphasis on English standardized testing gives little autonomy to accommodate linguistically diverse student populations.

Before the passage of NCLB in 2001, the Bilingual Education Act, which came into effect under President Lyndon Baines Johnson (LBJ), was the guiding model for EL-education:

No state shall deny equal educational opportunities to an individual on account of his or her race, color, sex, or national origin by the failure of an educational agency to take appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation by its students in its instructional programs (EEOA, 1974).

As President Lyndon Baines Johnson (LBJ) signed the proposition into law, he emphasized the potential the legislation had to improve the education and lives of immigrant and LEP-students:

“This bill authorizes a new effort to prevent dropouts; new programs for handicapped children; new planning help for rural schools. It also contains a special provision establishing bilingual education programs for children whose first language is not English. Thousands of children of Latin descent, young Indians, and others will get a better start—a better chance—in school... We are now giving every child in America a better change to touch his outermost limits... We have begun to unlock the full potential of every boy and girl—regardless of his race, or his religion, or his father’s income.” (Andersson and Mildred 1970, 1).

Through this bill, the federal government “made an unprecedented promise to stand behind programs that would ‘treat the ability to speak in a different language as an asset’” (Petrzela 2010, 407; Rawitch 1967). While the act did not mandate to districts that they specifically use bilingual education, it created precedent and signaled “a shift from the notion that students should be afforded equal educational opportunity to the idea that educational policy should work to equalize academic outcomes, even if such equity demanded providing different learning environments” (Petrzela 2010, 408). Through provision of federal funds and through acknowledging the linguistic diversity in public schools, the U.S. government pledge itself to moving from the old Cold-War era of xenophobia and fear into a “new era in the national politics of diversity, schooling, and state” (Petrzela 2010, 407).

However, beginning in the 1980s, opposition began to grow against bilingual education, due to anti-bilingual sentiment utilized by both Presidents Reagan and H.W. Bush (Ovando 2003). In 1981, Reagan, most outspoken, confirmed,

“It is absolutely wrong and against American concepts to have a bilingual education program that is now openly, admittedly dedicated to preserving their native language and never getting them adequate English so they can go out into the job market and participate” (Crawford 1999, 52).

Following this, the federal government began to minimize funding of bilingual programs, while increasing monies toward English-only programs. In the same time, the Reagan

administration blocked the Carter administration's proposal which would have required bilingual education programs in schools "where at least twenty-five [ELL] children of the same minority language group were enrolled in two consecutive elementary grades (K through 8)" (Crawford 1999, 52; Ovando 2003).

Similar government decisions occurred until the passage of NCLB in 2001, when the Bilingual Education Act was replaced with the English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement Act, or Title III:

- (1) to help ensure that children who are limited English proficient, including immigrant children and youth, attain English proficiency, develop high levels of academic attainment in English, and meet the same challenging State academic content and student academic achievement standards as all children are expected to meet;
- (2) to assist all limited English proficient children, including immigrant children and youth, to achieve at high levels in the core academic subjects so that those children can meet the same challenging State academic content and student academic standards as all children are expected to meet, consistent with section 1111(b)(1)...

Like the Bilingual Education Act, no specific manner of EL-education is mandated, but as language and legislation does, Title III sets a precedent that the purpose of EL-education is *solely* English acquisition.

Since 2015, NCLB has been replaced with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). ESSA did not drastically overhaul NCLB, and standardized testing is still mandatory; however, ESSA has given more autonomy to individual states and school districts in determining specific standards students are held to. Most important to this thesis, ESSA expanded requirements of ELL education, such as more stringent

requirements in reporting EL data and potential increased funding for EL programs. Most strikingly different from Title III under NCLB is in regard to standardized assessments of LEP students:

“(F) LANGUAGE ASSESSMENTS. –

“(i) IN GENERAL. –Each State plan shall identify the languages other than English that are present to a significant extent in the participating student population of the State and indicate the languages for which annual student academic assessments are not available and are needed.

“(ii) SECRETARIAL ASSISTANCE. –The State shall make every effort to develop such assessments and may request assistance from the Secretary if linguistically accessible academic assessment measures are needed. Upon request, the Secretary shall assist with the identification of appropriate academic assessment measures in the needed languages, but shall not mandate a specific academic assessment or mode of instruction.

Additionally, ESSA provides that states implement accountability systems in order to identify schools in need of improvement. These schools include schools where one or more subgroups are underperforming or high schools with graduation rates of less than 67 percent (ESSA Accountability Chart 2017). Within these accountability systems, components, such as standardized test results and ELL proficiency, are weighted differently. Academic factors must be given more weight than nonacademic factors; for example, if a state includes advanced coursework in its accountability system, the state must give “substantial” weight to English learner proficiency rates (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development 2016).

### *Education Policy in Mississippi*

Mississippi has failed to provide a uniform system of free public schools for many of its students. By the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, just a public-school requirement, even if allowed to be segregated, outraged many white Mississippians. One white superintendent declared the creation of public schools as an “unmitigated outrage upon the rights and liberties of

the white people of the state” (Noble 1918, 14) Next, at a state constitutional convention, the convention’s president stated, “We came here to exclude the negro. Nothing short of this will answer.” At the same convention, the Tallahatchie County delegate, emphasized the following:

The white people of the state want to feel and know that they are protected not only against the probability but the possibility of negro rule and negro domination... The remedy is in our hands, we can if we will afford a safe, certain and permanent white supremacy in our state (United States Congress 1891, 731).

In 1927, a Chinese student living in Rosedale, Mississippi, attended the first day of school at the all-white Rosedale Consolidated School. She was removed from the school by noon that day and told that she was not to return to the school, as “she was of Chinese descent and not a member of the white of Caucasian race.” The school’s decision was upheld in the Mississippi Supreme Court, then the U.S. Supreme Court (*Lum v. Rice*), as the court cited *Cumming v. Richmond County Board of Education*, which provided for separate high school for white and black students. In 1954, the decision was overturned by *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*.

Post-*Brown v. Board of Education*, the Mississippi Legislature declared the decision unconstitutional and allowed for schools to close schools or transfer students out of districts in an effort to maintain “peace, order, or tranquility.” Following this, the Legislature added a clause to its state constitution allowing for the discretionary funding of public schools:

The Legislature may, in its discretion, provide for the maintenance and establishment of free public schools for all children between the ages of six and twenty-one year, by taxation or otherwise, and with such grades, and the legislature may prescribe.

By 1987 (the same year English was declared the official language of Mississippi), this clause was changed to eliminate its establishment of a minimum and maximum age for school attendance. The clause exists as the following today:

The Legislature shall, by general law, provide for the establishment, maintenance and support of free public schools upon such conditions and limitations as the Legislature may prescribe (Mississippi Constitution).

Through a history of educational segregation, black and white Mississippi children have often received contrasting educational experiences. Today, this segregation continues, as all of the state's "F"-rated school districts are primarily black, while almost all "A"-rated schools are at least 70 percent white (Southern Poverty Law Center 2017). Between black and white students, there is a 29 percent achievement gap. In 2017, the Southern Poverty Law Center began a lawsuit against the state of Mississippi for failing to provide the promise of education as determined in the post-Civil War U.S. Constitution.

While I have been unable to find a consolidated source from which to construct a historical narrative of Mississippi education pertaining to immigrants and language rights, Mississippi has also failed to provide equitable education for LEP students. As mentioned above, achievement rates between EL students and white students are wide. In mathematics, for example, 22.9 percent of ELs are proficient, compared to 45.2 percent of white students (The Advocacy Institute 2017). Black students, as discussed before, graduate at seven percentage points lower than white students; however, this disparity is even greater for ELs. The demographic has a 55.9 percent graduation rate, compared to a 78.9 percent rate for black students and an 85.8 percent rate for white students (The Advocacy Institute 2017).

In accordance with Title III under ESSA, MDE has, since 2017, done the following:

- 1) Hired three individuals who have a strong background in working with ELs.
- 2) Expanded regional trainings for teachers working with ELs and has offered ongoing technical assistance to districts with an EL population.
- 3) Held cultural competency training sessions.
- 4) Begun moving toward the adoption of EL Proficiency standards (Anderson, Mira and Harrison 2017).

However, the state has failed to accomplish many guidelines set forth by ESSA. For example, Mississippi still does not weight English language proficiency progress in its accountability standards; thus, it is difficult to be sure of EL progress and growth (Anderson, Mira and Harrison 2017). More, due to low populations of EL students in many regions of the state, subgroups may be “opted” out of state standardized tests, if at least 95 percent of students are tested. While this may help schools’ achievement rates, it can make data in regard to EL proficiency rates (outside of language acquisition) difficult to consolidate. In addition to this, the state does not provide standardized, state tests in languages other than English. Moreover, due to Mississippi’s schools’ A-F scale, a district is able to receive a high letter grade, while subgroups, like ELs, could be low-performing (Harris 2017).

Mississippi is *still* one of only six states that do not provide additional funding for ELLs. In 2018, several steps were taken by the Mississippi Legislature to remedy the limited provision for these students. The following bills were introduced:

- 1) House Bill 22, as follows:

An act to establish the Mississippi English Language Learners Scholarship Program for the purpose of recruiting and educating certain qualified persons to teach in an area of critical need in this state with a broadening student population of English Language Learners.

- 2) And Senate Bill 2807, as follows:

An act to amend Section 37-177-21, Mississippi Code of 1972, to provide that a proportionate share of the residual funds in the Education Enhancement Fund prescribed for use for other educational needs shall be appropriated for the purpose of providing additional funding for educational support and teacher resources to school districts with more of its student enrollment comprised of English Language Learners...

Both of these bills failed in committee.

Mississippi's history of education is grim. Throughout its trajectory, white, black, and as we are able to see through *Lum v. Rice*, immigrant students have been provided with differing educational experiences. This literature review's previous theoretical conceptualizations of the political economy of education and the hidden curriculum are evident in this history presented. The very foundation of Mississippi education is to better provide for and equip white students to take leadership and professional roles, while keeping the state from the grips of its citizens of color.

Through this history, we can see a myopic view of who is and is not considered a *true* Mississippian. Arguably, the only true citizen is the white citizen; thus, students of color are submitted to a process of state socialization through their public educations. This state socialization is not a process where all students finally are able to become true citizens; rather, this state socialization provides that each student will take their predisposed place in the political economy.

This thesis is titled "Out of the margins..." as it seeks to bring to light the ways in which Mississippi public schools engage in an invisible homogenization of its students— a homogenization that may not be vehemently shouted by its politicians or superintendents. Rather, the state socialization of English language learners within schools is the failure to include the demographic in the larger student structure. Existing

outside of the black-white racial dichotomy, these students are pushed into the margins and prevented from participating as full residents of the state.

### **Conclusion**

Though schools have begun to more readily embrace radical approaches to teacher instruction, the same experience has not been as heavily implemented in the English-learning classroom. Instead, language learners are often isolated, and as Friedman (2010) notes, victims of a “hegemonic multiculturalism.” English learners’ educational experiences are best understood through a radical theoretical framework, as their schooling should be situated within the broader context of nation-state building and state-socialization. While all students experience these phenomenon, like nation-state building and the political economy of education, through the hidden curriculum of schools, the English learner complicates both as educators’ concerns grow: How is the nation-state maintained in a linguistically diverse environment? In remedying this challenge, English-language learners may receive a complicated experience in the political economy of schooling, as they are socialized into the nation-state while being simultaneously excluded from full membership of the greater community.

## Chapter three:

### Mississippi Department of Education's Guidelines for English Language Learners

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I analyze the Mississippi Department of Education's Guidelines for English Language Learners, the primary guiding document for educators in the state. Using an inductive qualitative methodology, I analyze MDE's guidelines, primarily focusing on phrasing presented within the document. Additionally, I analyze specific sections of the document regarding content area teachers and the ESL classroom.

This chapter argues that the MDE employs both the political economy of schooling and the hidden curriculum in its Guidelines for English Language Learners. The guidelines create an "us versus them" sentiment, as well as precedent for the exclusion of ELs in their schools.

#### **Mississippi Department of Education's Guidelines for English Language Learners**

Written in the first pages of the Mississippi Department of Education's English Language Learner Guidelines (2011) for school districts and teachers is the following:

The cultural and linguistic diversity of Mississippi's student population represent a challenge for educators. As the number of English language learners (ELLs) continues to grow, the student population changes and becomes more diverse. Our fundamental challenge is to anticipate such change and pursue it to our students' benefit. If the goal is to improve education of all students then it must include all students regardless of race, class, and/or national origin. Through our schools, students can gain an appreciation of our cultural diversity and acquire the knowledge and language skills to become productive students in our society.

The sentiment is nice: to provide equal education to all students. After focused analysis, however, a more nuanced view of this appears: *our* schools, *our* cultural diversity, *our* society. This is emphasized again, a few pages later, as the Department of Education repeats its mission in different wording: “The goal is for them to understand and function successfully in our American culture.” Native language support is only encouraged when it is necessary to accomplish “these goals.”

Immediately, othering language is used to describe the educational goals of English language learners. Drawing on the ethnographic work of Garza and Crawford (2005), we are able to see the contradictory, yet very-real, language used by the Mississippi Department of Education—underneath “our cultural diversity” is a demanded assimilation to “our U.S. culture” that follows, giving way to a hegemonic multiculturalism, or “the appropriation of the rhetoric of multiculturalism to obscure an underlying assimilationist agenda” (Friedman 2010). Within this hegemonic multiculturalism, only a particular type of diversity, as determined by the dominant group, is acceptable. As the MDE’s above language denotes, an immigrant’s prior or individual appreciation of cultural diversity is not enough. Instead, their appreciation *must be* an American appreciation, even if the cultural diversity the Department of Education refers to is the student him or herself—and, as I will further analyze in the following chapter, school districts make reference to utilizing international students as a “cultural resource.” Again, under the Mississippi Department of Education’s written guidelines for ELL students and programs, only a hegemonic multiculturalism is allotted for, one in which immigrant and non-English speaking students must conform themselves

to fit what the Mississippi Department of Education's or school districts' ideas of diversity are.

More, and I must emphasize the othering nature of, the use of the term "our" again-and-again reinforces the political economy of EL education, as it creates a precedent in which ELs are situated as outsiders. The notion that ELs are not previously aware of culture diversity or of a particular culture, in general, could work to establish ideas that ELs will never be able to fully socialize into the national or state community—ultimately creating "exclusionary notions of national identity" (Duff 2002; García Sánchez 2009; Friedman 2010).

The Mississippi Department of Education's guidelines rigidly establish that English language acquisition is promoted, not for the benefit of the student, but for the benefit of the state/nation-state:

Our aspiration is to have students succeed both socially and academically in all four language skills. We also wish for them to understand and function successfully in our American culture. To accomplish these goals, it may be necessary to provide some support in their native language. This means of support is entirely appropriate, as it is a research-based accommodation (Mississippi Department of Education, 2011).

Here, the hidden curriculum and its connection to the political economy of education is visible. While the Department of Education's goals include helping ELs gain social and academic language skills, they also include the intention that ELs are also able to, again, assimilate into *our* American culture. Rather, as it was stated in the beginning paragraph ("...students can gain and appreciation of *our* cultural diversity and acquire the knowledge and language skills to become *productive* citizens in *our* society;" emphasis mine), the goal is to create a productive student group—how, though, does the Mississippi Department of Education, and the greater state, measure productivity of

immigrant students? Presently, students with limited English proficiency graduate at the lowest rates when compared to other Mississippi students (excluding students who have learning disabilities). Comparatively, Mississippi students with limited English proficiency had a graduation rate of 53 percent during the 2014-15 school year, with a black graduation rate of 72 percent, a white graduation rate of 79.4 percent, and an overall rate of 75.4 percent (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Further, the later language used – “To accomplish these goals, it may be necessary to provide some support in their native language.” Where the Mississippi Department of Education could begin its guidelines for educators with language that emphasizes the benefit of bilingual students or the ways in which bilingual use might enhance the learning experience, the Department immediately reinforces that a student’s native language is only useful when it is being used to augment English-language acquisition.

The Mississippi Department of Education’s guidelines demonstrate the political process of language—more specifically, how language use is determined by power-holders. When an EL student’s language might be denied use except for instances in which it is important in acquiring the dominant language, the value of the student’s language then becomes determined by the power-holder (Bourdieu 1977).

### **In the ELL Classroom**

While the Mississippi Department of Education does not set official guidelines for ELL instruction in individual school districts, The Mississippi Department of Education approves English as a Second Language (ESL) as a subject-area class for middle and high schools. Instruction in these classes covers reading, writing, reading comprehension,

vocabulary, and etcetera; however, the Department of Education guidelines also provide for instruction “on the social norms and customs of the new culture, school expectations, and study skills” (MDE 2011), unlike a state like California where its Department of Education’s standards are singularly focused on English language acquisition and development (California Department of Education 2012).

Upon moving from classes of concentrated and focused English-language instruction, ESL classes then become a site where “the inculcation of values, political socialization, training in obedience and docility, the perpetuation of traditional class structure—functions that may be characterized generally as social control” occur (Vallance 1974). Within the ESL classroom, social class is important: the class becomes a space in which “differential forms of schooling” are given to “different classes of students” (Giroux 1983). As argued in my literature review, the social curriculum demands that EL students “adopt [our] histories” (Bloom 2009), or the histories that individual school districts or ESL teachers deem as important to learn, as the MDE fails to elaborate on the types of social norms and cultural knowledge that should be taught.

As ESL is only approved as a class for middle and high schools, one can see that ideas of younger and older immigrant students differ. LEP students in primary school are seen as malleable and more prone to easily assimilate into “our American culture” without too much additional help; whereas, secondary students are posited as needing specific, and explicit, instruction in the hidden curriculum. It is implied that without an educator’s help, ELs in middle and high school will fail to assume and practice “the social norms and customs of the new culture.”

## **All it takes are a few “good” teachers: Content Teachers and ELL**

“Reminder: Educators are reminded that linguistically diverse students can achieve socially and academically at the same level as other non-ELLs and contribute successfully to U.S. culture. Positive and non-biased guidance and assistance from ELL teachers and all other personnel will ensure that ELLs develop and achieve success linguistically, academically, socially, and emotionally.” (Mississippi Department of Education 2011, 8)

Here, the MDE implores that all teachers function as language teachers when ELLs are enrolled in their classes. Their responsibility is to “prepare students to access all educational program options available to them,” (Mississippi Department of Education 2011, 6) to employ flexible instructional approaches with the aspiration of success in all four language skills, and to help students “understand and function successfully in our American culture” (Mississippi Department of Education 2011, 6).

In regard to the content area teacher role in English language acquisition, the MDE does not continue to explicate the unique challenges EL students might face in the classroom, such as intimidation and confusion. An excerpt from “How Content Teachers Interact with English Language Learners” by Lorrie Stoops Verplaetse illustrates this well:

“When asked, ‘What do you do when you don’t understand what’s going on in the [content] classroom?’ the young woman from Mexico, answered, ‘I raise my hand, but the teacher does not look at me.’ One of the young Korean men said, ‘I don’t ask questions in class; I solve it on my own.’ And an outgoing young woman from Puerto Rico offered, ‘I tell them that I don’t understand the questions, but the teacher says she doesn’t have time to go back.’” (Verplaetse 1998, 24)

MDE emphasizes the important role of content area teachers without provisions to combat many of the negative, and often unintentional, classroom experiences that EL students are situated in. The Department also fails to reckon the biases that teachers may carry against ELLs, as illustrated by these interviews excerpts: “I have people in my

building that refer to my kids as ‘them.’” “We still have a high number of staff who say things like ‘They shouldn’t be here,’ ‘Send them back to Mexico” (Batt 2008, 41).

Additionally, MDE does not require that teachers be educated in language acquisition, which is not a linear process. Content area teachers may be unfamiliar “with stages of L2 development” and, thus, “how long it takes for ESL students...” (Verplaetse 1998, 28). Content area teachers with no L2 training may also underestimate “ESL students’ abilities to produce extended utterances and therefore [call] on them less frequently and with fewer open-ended questions” (Verplaetse 1998, 28).

MDE addresses the importance unbiased teaching in regard to ELLs; however, the Department fails to provide additional resources or mandated training specifically geared toward educating linguistically diverse students. Teacher attitudes regarding ELLs fail to be addressed, too. Research indicates that content area teachers frequently have “neutral attitudes toward professional development” directed toward working with ELLs and “only slightly positive attitudes toward ELL inclusion” (Reeves 2006, 131).

## **Conclusion**

In Mississippi’s Department of Education’s Guidelines for English Language Learners, the primary, guiding document for school districts and educators in the state, the underlying influence of both the political economy of education and the hidden curriculum is visible. The language used throughout the Guidelines for English Language Learners sets a precedent in which EL-students are at risk of becoming excluded by their schools. The emphasis of “our” throughout this Department of Education’s guidelines constructs an “us versus them” model, where the powerful natives are posited as more cultured and immigrant students as responsible for conditioning themselves to fit in as a

part of “our” American culture and within “our” cultural diversity, even if the students themselves the ones making up said-diversity.

## Chapter four:

### District Plans

#### **Introduction**

“People like me, who don’t speak English, and the teacher, who doesn’t speak Spanish, we would meet and she would talk to me, but I could not understand her,” says Irma. “So I would sit there. She would talk to me. I would take the papers, and we would look at each other and leave. And no communication happened because we didn’t know what to do. No one could speak the other language. I just sat there and listened and left when she was done.”

I begin with this quotation, excerpted from The Southern Education Desk, a news source dedicated to “an in-depth exploration of education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century south,” to illustrate the profound way in which the macro influences the micro—for this thesis, the way in which the precedent set forth by U.S. Department of Education influences MDE’s English Language Learner Guidelines influences individual district ESL curriculum plans, and finally, how all of these combine together to influence the limited English proficient (LEP) student and parent.

In this chapter, I am concerned with school district ESL curriculum plans. Moving from my analysis of the MDE’s ELL guidelines, I narrow my scope of focus to analyze the ways in which individual school districts maintain or differentiate from state guidance. Analysis of individual school districts is important, as the EL parents and students primarily only have contact with the schools they attend. Moreover, school

districts carry the weight of actually implementing the guidelines set forth by the federal and state departments—and, most importantly, are responsible for facilitating a learning experience that is beneficial for both parent and student. When schools fail at this, ELs are marginalized, similarly to Irma, and often are left without access to comprehensible educational materials and, thus, without educational equity.

## **Methodology**

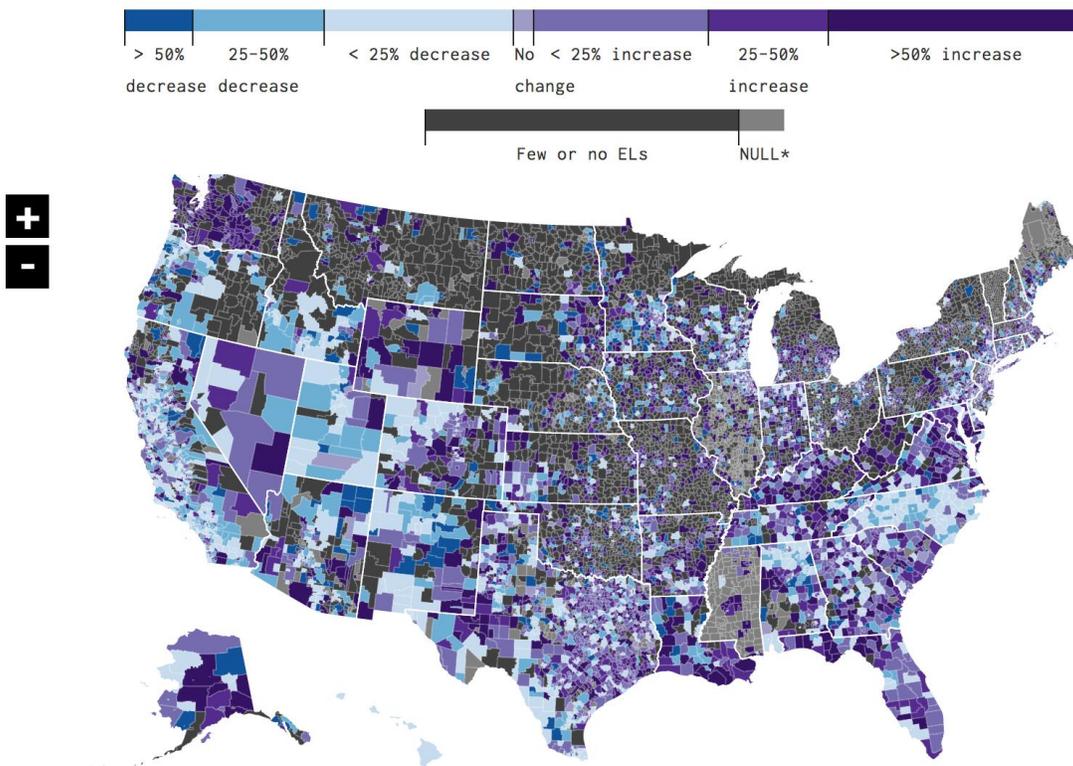
In this chapter, I analyze specific Mississippi school district ESL plans. I analyze the following plans as my primary qualitative sources (or the absence of plan availability):

- 1) Forest Municipal School District
- 2) Pascagoula School District
- 3) Picayune School District
- 4) Madison County School District

School districts were chosen due to ESL population, with population growth from the 2009-2010 school year to 2014-2015 school year taken into account with selecting schools. Within each category of district, I chose school districts that had low population growth and others that had exponential growth. I elected to incorporate demographic growth as a factor of selection as Mississippi's immigration boom, specifically from Spanish-speaking countries, has been a recent phenomenon. Most school districts have had to rapidly adjust and provide for limited-English proficient students; however, other districts have maintained fairly stable percentages of English-language learners over many years. Originally, I desired to incorporate population growth from longer time spans. After data collection, however, I quickly found that Mississippi has only recently begun to maintain robust data regarding English Language Learners. Much data is largely nonexistent before 2010, or even 2012, as presented in MAP ONE below. One study from the Mississippi Legislature reports that Mississippi School districts “opted to not

report student counts in 18% of instances across for years” (EdBuild, 23, 2017). As such, I have completed this chapter of data analysis in the best manner of which I am capable, with district plans I was fortunate enough to find.

**Percentage change in the number of ELs enrolled in an English language instruction educational program, 2009-10 to 2014-15**



MAP 1. United States Department of Education, 2016.

Using analysis of the individual school district plans listed above, I organize my findings conceptually. I begin with an analysis of inaccessibility of district plans and data. Then, I move toward an analysis of subjects presented in district plans; some points of analysis are found in multiple district plans, while others are unique to a singular plan. Of course, if given the time, my analysis would include more robust inductive analysis of numerous plans; however, due to time restrictions and difficulties with data collection,

my conceptual analysis remains limited to the four primary school district plans I have listed above.

### **From the absence of data**

Mississippi school districts are mandated to have ESL district curriculum plans by the MDE. When beginning data collection, my first inclination to receive district plans for analysis was to submit a Public Records Request to the MDE for the following districts: Pascagoula-Gautier, Marshall County, Copiah County, Leflore County, Desoto County, Tishomingo County, Picayune, Madison County, Coahoma, and Forrest Municipal. Upon response to my request, I discovered that although districts are required to have ESL plans, they are not then submitted to MDE; instead, districts must have the plan available when MDE conducts monitoring visits. In order to receive the district plans I needed, I would have to contact each district individually.

Following this, I began to contact and search the internet for the district plans I had intended to analyze. As I began my data collection, I quickly realized the discrepancy of accessibility between districts. Some districts, like Madison County, have their ESL plans available for the public online. Others, like Pascagoula-Gautier and Forest Municipal (both of which have some of the highest EL-populations in the state), do not provide easily-accessible information regarding their programs for the public. In addition to this, some school districts, like Picayune, were responsive to my request for their district plans; however, many did not respond to my requests.

Pascagoula-Gautier's response to my request was most shocking. I requested its district plan via phone. Upon request, I was asked my reason for needing access to the plan, to which I explicitly confirmed was for my senior thesis. The school employee took

my information and emphasized that the plan would be sent to me soon or that the office would call again for additional information. The district did neither, and I have since contacted the central office both by email and phone.

The only available document regarding ELL students through the Pascagoula-Gautier school district website is titled “ELL Goals and Beliefs” (IMAGE 1).

#### **Statement of Beliefs about ELL Students**

1. We believe linguistic and cultural diversity enhances the quality of life, and therefore language and culture should not limit educational opportunities.
2. We believe educators should be skilled in making accommodations for the learning styles of culturally and linguistically diverse children.
3. We believe every student can learn, and high expectations for learning benefit students, regardless of cultural and linguistic background.
4. We believe everyone in the community, including people from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds, should play an active role in the education process.
5. We believe that schools should include, encourage, and support the shared responsibility of those involved in the learning of linguistically and culturally diverse children.
6. We believe people are responsible for and work best in an atmosphere of trust, communication, collaboration, and respect for cultural and linguistic diversity.
7. We believe that school and community leaders must be sensitive to the issues and needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students.

#### **Goals of ELL Program**

1. to provide learners from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds an equitable and appropriate education, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to develop academic, vocational, and social skills to enable them to become successful and productive citizens.
2. to provide services which will enable English Language Learners to become proficient in English, attain mastery of academic subject matter, and participate fully in the regular instructional program;
3. to provide support services to assist English Language Learners in becoming a part of the cultural environment of the school and community;
4. to provide opportunities for English Language Learners to share their culture with the school and community; and
5. to provide families of English Language Learners the opportunity to become an integral part of the Pascagoula School District community.

#### **IMAGE 1**

These goals are admirable and representative of what both the U.S. and Mississippi Departments of Education desire for students: access to equitable education. On the contrary, Pascagoula-Gautier School District’s beliefs about ELL students and

goals for their ELL program does not outline the ways in which the district's ideals are implemented pedagogically. In order to provide for the tenants delineated, such as providing that "learners from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds" receive equitable education, a robust curriculum must be implemented within the school. Due to lack of accessibility, however, the general public is unable to access further information and data regarding the success or validity of the district's mission statement.

The discrepancy of accessibility to English Language Learner data is worrisome and brings into question the legitimacy of district plans. Although mandated by the state, individual district plans receive no further accountability other than needing to be present at MDE visits to schools; however, I ask: is the existence of a district plan enough? And, then, how does the public actually confirm that the MDE is rigorously ensuring that districts *actually* have plans? More, if district plans are not collected by the MDE, how does the state ensure the quality of district EL-pedagogy and curriculum? Or, most importantly, how is the MDE ensuring that EL-students have access to the equitable education provided by law?

In this absence of data, I become worried, not only for lack of data for my thesis but also for students and parents. If the responsibility is removed from MDE and Mississippi school districts to maintain accessible information regarding a federal program, such as Title III, decisions regarding a child's education are difficult to make. School districts have been unresponsive to me, a highly-educated native, white individual. Further, after spending months collecting data in regard to Mississippi English language programs, I have been unsuccessful in locating full district plans and demographic and accountability data—items one would assume should be accessible

after a quick search through any internet browser. The concern rests not solely within the confines of this paper but also with the implications of data collection for this paper: If there are no, or limited, accountability measures or databases maintained for Title III programs in Mississippi, immigrant and LEP parents and students are unable to receive transparency vis-à-vis equitable and high-quality access to education.

**Mistranslation: when language is not validated by the dominant group**

*Picayune School District*

Picayune School District has a student population of 3,738, with 66 total reported English Language Learners. This student demographic comprises 1.8 percent of the total student population. Percentage change data from 2009-2010 to 2014-2015 is not reported by the United States Department of Education; thus, Picayune School District may have only recently begun formally reporting ELL demographic data (United States Department of Education). The district does not provide for consistent ESL teachers and does not provide intelligible translations of important school documents located in school handbooks, as pictured in IMAGE 2 and IMAGE 3 below.

**PICAYUNE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
Title I, Part A  
SCHOOL-PARENT-STUDENT COMPACT**

**ROSELAND PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL** and the parents of students participating in activities, services, and programs funded by Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) agree that this compact outlines how the parents, the entire school staff, and the students will share the responsibility for improved student academic achievement and the means by which the school and parents will build and develop a partnership that will help children achieve the State's high standards.

IMAGE 2

**La ESCUELA INSIGNIFICANTE DISTRITO  
Título yo, la Parte UN PACTO  
de ESTUDIANTE de PADRE de ESCUELA**

**La ESCUELA DE ENSEÑANZA PRIMARIA del PARQUE de ROSELAND y los padres de estudiantes que toman parte en actividades, los servicios, y los programas financiaron por Título yo, la Parte UN del Elemental y Acto de enseñanza secundaria (ESEA) concuerda que estos resúmenes compactos cómo los padres, el personal entero de la escuela, y los estudiantes compartirán la responsabilidad para el estudiante mejorado logro académico y los medios por que la escuela y padres construirán y desarrollarán una asociación que ayudará Los niños logran los estándares altos de Estado.**

IMAGE 3

Here, we are presented with a visual example of dominant and minority language use. Although I was unable to locate an EL curriculum plan for Roseland Park Elementary School, I did locate a section, an explanation of Title I rights, in the school's handbook that was translated into both Spanish and English. A part of the U.S. Department of Education, Title I provides funding (through formula grants) "to local educational agencies and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards" (U.S. Department of Education).

In this section of Roseland Park Elementary School's handbook, the school outlines the ways in which students, parents, and the school are responsible for collaborating in order to achieve Mississippi's education standards. The section is completely comprehensible in English; however, when translated into Spanish, the district's primary language spoken by ELs, the explanation becomes incomprehensible.

Title I, which in English doubles as Title One, becomes Título yo, when literally translated, or Title (the pronoun) "I." Picayune School District becomes literally translated to "la escuela insignificante distrito," or "the insignificant school district."

Throughout the excerpted paragraph, grammatical and vocabularic errors appear again-and-again.

At the most basic level, the problem with such errors in translation is clear: how will students and parents understand what Title I provides, or what their role and rights within Title I are? Then, moving toward a deeper analysis, the mistranslation of pertinent information denies the importance of the minority language, Spanish, in relationship to the dominant language, English. The school engages in a process of language homogenization, as it creates the conditions needed for “individuals to identify themselves as members” of the nation-state (Friedman 2010). Mistranslation of crucial information requires language socialization of LEP families and students. In order to be a full participant in their own or their child’s education, the non-English speaker must learn to navigate within the dominant language. Additionally, the carelessness of translation demonstrates that school administration does not regard communicating to non-English speaking parents in a comprehensible way as important.

**(Un)documented: ELLs and school enrollment**

*Forest Municipal School District*

Forest Municipal School District has a total student population of 1,726 students, with 282 total reported English Language Learners. The school district experienced a 261.7 percent net increase of ELLs from 2009-2010 to the 2014-2015 school year. The EL-demographic comprises 16.3 percent of the total student population, the largest in Mississippi.

The district has no information available on its website about ELL curriculum; however, it does provide its student handbook and registration requirements in both

English and Spanish. The translations of both documents are proficient, unlike Picayune School Districts, as discussed in the previous subsection. Nonetheless, its listed requirements for school registration present an entirely new discussion surrounding accessibility to public education, especially for a student population largely composed of immigrants.

In 1982, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Plyler v. Doe* that undocumented students may not be denied access to public education, per the Fourteenth Amendment:

“These children can neither affect their parents’ conduct nor their own undocumented status. The deprivation of public education is not like the deprivation of some other governmental benefit. Public education has a pivotal role in maintaining the fabric of our society and in sustaining our political and cultural heritage...” (*Plyler v. Doe* 1982).

Due to this, the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Education provide that school districts cannot require students to present a social security card or birth certification in order to register for school. By law, a school district “may request documentation to show that a student falls within the school district’s minimum and maximum age requirements.” This documentation may take many different forms, “such as a religious, hospital, or physician’s certificate showing date of birth; an entry in a family bible; an adoption record; an affidavit from a parent; a birth certificate; or previously verified school records.” Moreover, as provided by the federal government, school districts may request a student’s social security number for use as a student identification number; however, “if a school district requests a student’s social security number, it must: (1) inform you and your child that providing it is voluntary and that refusing to provide it will not bar your child from enrolling in or attending school, and (2) explain for what purpose the number will be used.” A school district may not require

provision of a social security number nor a birth certificate in order for a child to be enrolled with a school.

In Forest County Municipal's registration requirement document, the school district mandates that the following information must be provided upon enrollment in the district:

1. Proof of residence in accordance with the MS State Board of Education Policy for Residency Verification, such as a current electricity or gas bill, automobile registration, and etcetera;
2. A certified birth certificate for the student;
3. A proper immunization report;
4. A social security card for the student;
5. A certified copy of filed Petition for Guardianship or final decree if student is not living with parent;
6. A withdrawal form issued by the student's previous school, if applicable<sup>1</sup>.

The document does not inform parents that providing a social security card is voluntary nor does it explain why a social security card is necessary at the time of school enrollment. Additionally, the registration requirements do not offer additional options for proof of age that could be provided by a parent, such as a baptismal record. Instead, Forest County Municipal School District neglects to provide legally-required information regarding public school enrollment.

The school district's negligence to truthfully inform parents and students about the irrelevance of both birth certificates and social security cards for school enrollment is important, whether due to deliberate practice or bureaucratic incompetence. If due to cruel politics, of course, one could determine that the inclusion of both a birth certificate and social security card enrollment requirement is done politically as a deterrent for ELL-student enrollment. If included out of negligence, the above information shows that ELLs

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A for full text.

may be considered so minimally important that federal law, one that ensures access to education for all students, is not followed. Negligence should be considered a faulty excuse, as both the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Justice have emphasized the importance of providing sure access to education for all students, including LEP and undocumented students.

In 2011, a “Dear Colleague” letter was issued from the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Justice. In the letter, the authors noted that they “[had] become aware of student enrollment practices that may chill or discourage the participation, or lead to the exclusion of students based on their or their parents’ or guardians actual or perceived citizenship or immigration status” (U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Education 2011). I determine Forest County Municipal School District’s negligence to emphasize what is actually required to enroll in school, not a birth certification nor a social security card, puts children at risk of being marginalized out of the public-school system. The district has the largest percentage of EL students, at over 16 percent of total student population, out of any school district in Mississippi. Many of these students may be undocumented or may be foreign-born immigrants to the U.S. Even at the most basic level, Forest County Municipal School District is in disagreement with federal law and must be reminded of “the federal obligation to provide equal educational opportunities to all children residing within [its] district” (U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Education 2011).

## **ELLs as cultural and international resources**

### *Madison County School District*

Madison County School District has a student population of 12,780, with 264 total reported English Language Learners. This student demographic comprises 1.8 percent of the total student population. From 2012-2013 to 2014-2015, the district experienced an 85.1 percentage increase in English Language Learners (United States Department of Education).

The district employs a “pull-out” method of EL instruction. As such, ELLs receive core content instruction through mainstream instructional classes. In addition to core classes, ELLs attend ESL classes, with emphasis on language acquisition. In the K-5 program, English language acquisition is focused on “survival language:” the skills needed to follow directions or make basic conversation. On the elementary level, students are grouped into classes based on English proficiency, whereas secondary students are placed into an ELL class that counts as credit toward graduation (Madison County School District).

Madison County School District primarily relies on content-area instructors to accommodate ELL students. The ESL Handbook Guide recommends “Classroom Instructional Modifications and Accommodations” for the district’s teachers. Recommendations include some of the following: “Be aware of vocabulary, which might seem contradictory and therefore need explanation;” “Avoid yes/no questions;” “Don’t be misled by the ELL student’s ability to ‘shoot the bull;’” and “Keep the student constructively occupied in class” (Madison County School District, 25-26). The list of accommodations consists of 75 different recommendations from varying degrees.

One of the more interesting recommendations that Madison County School District gives to content teachers is to “use the ELL students as an *international resource*” (Madison County School District, 26, emphasis mine). The guide recommends that teachers allow students to provide information about their home country and provide a “cross-cultural experience for the entire class” (Madison County School District, 26).

At first read, using an immigrant student to enhance one’s classroom or to provide a multicultural experience for American students seems harmless or even beneficial. Once pedagogical research is consulted, the danger of teachers engaging in using students as an international resource is stark.

“Through conceptual tools that decontextualize, generalize, and objectify, the field of ESL has implicitly supported a notion of identity as insular and static, passed down intact over time and across locations. But identity is not so much a map of experience—a set of fixed coordinates—as it is a guide with which ESL students negotiate their place in a new social order and, if need be, challenge it through the meaning-making activities they participate in.” (Morgan, 1997, 431).

Identity is fully linked to power and social order. For example, when a student from Central America immigrates to Madison County, Mississippi, their identity transforms into something different than their identity existed as in their home country. Where the student may have been middle-class and a part of the dominant ethnic and language groups in their previous country of residence, when transplanted, this same student becomes a part of the minority: a non-English speaker and an immigrant. In Mississippi, specifically, this student is also becoming part of an ethnic/racial minority, disrupting the state’s traditional black-white racial dichotomy. The student’s identity is transitional.

Of course, giving ESL students the opportunity to express their identity is vital, especially when it involves helping the students develop tools to be able to better process their transitional identities. The wording chosen by Madison County—“using ELL

students...” negates that, however, as power and authority over student identities are given to teachers, not the students. Additionally, the rest of the district plan does not provide for teacher training or curriculum guidelines that could potentially address societal inequalities, power structures, or different kinds of (institutional, structural, personal) discrimination that many immigrant students face both outside and inside of their schools.

### **Conclusion**

Mississippi schools are, primarily, held unaccountable in regard to ESL district plans. As districts are unrequired to submit their plans to the MDE, little oversight is given toward curriculum quality and, most importantly, whether or not the ESL plan provided is actually implemented as a program. Moreover, if districts do have plans, they are often difficult to access, especially because district plans are not consolidated by the state. For parents, this poses a unique challenge: details regarding ESL programs may be overlooked; thus, the promise of equitable education may be breached.

Due to limited guidance provided by the MDE, schools are able to utilize any type of ESL program structure. While loose instructional measures can be beneficial in creating individualized programs that cater to the specific needs of the LEP student populations of different schools, schools then are also able to employ ineffective, unfounded ESL programs and teaching strategies. For example, although Madison County School District provides a sound ESL class model, it also offers dangerous instructions, like using LEP students as international resources, to classroom teachers.

Additionally, Forest Municipal School District is breaking federal law per its school enrollment registration requirements. Students are not obligated to provide neither

a birth certificate nor a social security card in order to be enrolled into public school. MDE's oversight of this is telling: little protection and oversight is given to immigrant students. Although unable to be researched, there is reason to conclude that there may be students in Forest Municipal School District and in other districts across Mississippi that are unenrolled in school due to fear-inducing and illegal tactics used by schools.

Ultimately, the lack of oversight from the MDE regarding English language acquisition programs creates an educational reality that is chaotic and inequitable. As acceptable program structures are not delegated from MDE, some districts may employ founded ESL structures, while others may not. These discrepancies may be exasperated by school funding imbalances throughout the state—and, considering that Mississippi does not provide state funding for ELL programs and federal aid is only granted if a district has 76 ELL students (only \$230/student), many schools have *no* additional monies to apply toward creating a robust ESL program or hiring educators in the field.

## Chapter five:

### Conclusion

This thesis looked to answer the questions, “*How* does Mississippi EL curriculum require state socialization of its students? *How* does its curriculum provide for effective language learning practices? Does Mississippi EL curriculum provide for the magnified existence of immigrant students, or does, and *how* does, state curriculum continue to push immigrant students into the margins?” In order to answer these questions, I 1) created a theoretical framework by conjoining critical pedagogy, nation-state building, and state-socialization theories alongside a historical narrative; 2) analyzed the Mississippi Department of Education’s Guidelines for English Language Learners; and 3) analyzed individual schools district ESL curriculums. By splitting my analysis into these two distinct sections, I explored the ways in which the macro (MDE) sets precedents for instruction and influences the micro (school districts).

Through my research, I determine that Mississippi’s Department of Education utilizes both the political economy of education and the hidden curriculum in its model for educating English language learners. Consistently, the Department emphasizes a “us versus them” model of education, one in which ELLs may be excluded from full participation in their education. Additionally, I found that the MDE urges that content area teachers should work as the primary educators of LEP students; however, the MDE does not provide mandated training for these teachers. Instead, the Department reinforces the myth that good content area teachers are automatically good ESL teachers.

From this, I discovered that school districts receive little accountability measures in regard to ESL programs. Although school districts are required by the MDE to have an ESL district curriculum plan, they are not required to submit these plans to the Department. Thus, these plans are 1) completely at the discretion of individual school districts and 2) unavailable in a consolidated manner for the public. Alongside this, the state provides no additional funding for ELL programs, implying that LEP students are unimportant to state interests.

Most importantly, both MDE's Guidelines for English Language Learners and individual district plans posit that immigrant students are responsible for assimilating into "our" American culture in a manner that is congruent with "our" cultural diversity. Language used throughout documents I analyzed consistently used othering language, creating a "hegemonic multiculturalism," as described by Friedman (2010). Moreover, the continued emphasis of the possessive "our" indicates that ELs are positioned as outsiders of the general student body. Emphasis on assimilation into "our" society marginalizes students by setting the precedent that ELs may be unable to fully socialize into the state as true Mississippians, creating an exclusionary concept of state identity.

### **Limitations**

Due to time constraints and difficultly-accessed data, my analysis does not include as many school district plans as I desired. A comprehensive analysis of all 162 Mississippi school districts is in order to further solidify my findings; however, the analysis presented of the school districts chosen for this thesis demonstrate the educational realities of *many* students.

To further explore my research question, participant observation and ethnographic methods, such as interviews, are necessary. Given strict institutional review board regulations in regard to interviewing minors, I was unable to engage in this methodology for my thesis. Of course, I am grateful for stringent oversight of ethical data collection. For my undergraduate research capabilities, however, I was unable to conduct this type of research.

### **Recommendations**

I recommend that Mississippi begin providing state monies directly for ELL-programs, as federal funding is insufficient and unavailable for many school districts in the state due to rural demographics and small school populations. I also recommend that the Mississippi Department of Education revise its Guidelines for English Learners. The guidelines should explicitly outline the types of ESL-programs acceptable for use in school districts, regulations regarding the implementation of such programs, and required professional training for teachers. Additionally, and most urgently, I recommend that the MDE begins immediate institutional oversight of ESL programs in the state by requiring that school districts submit their ESL district plans to the Department. ESL plans should be treated just as any content-area subject, not a second-thought for the state. Also, I recommend that Forest Municipal County revise its registration requirements as to not break federal law nor to ostracize immigrant students and their families. MDE must hold school districts accountable and provide the leadership and institutional oversight needed to ensure that EL and immigrant students are receiving the equitable, quality education afforded to them by law.

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## Appendix

### Appendix A

#### Forest Municipal School District Student Registration Requirements

Any new student entering the Forest Municipal School District must reside with his/her natural parent(s) or a court approved legal guardian who resides in the Forest Municipal School District in order to be enrolled in any school in the Forest Municipal School District. The student's parents/guardians must accompany the student at the time of enrollment and must provide a photo ID along with the information listed below:

1. Proof of residence in accordance with the MS State Board of Education Policy for Residency Verification. Two of the following documents will be accepted as proof of residence. The document must include the physical street address. Post office box address is not acceptable.
  - Filed Homestead Exemption Application form;
  - Mortgage Documents or property deed;
  - Apartment or home lease;
  - Current electricity bill;
  - Current gas bill;
  - Current water bill;
  - Affidavit and personal visit by a designated school district official;
  - Driver's license or State of Mississippi ID card
  - Voter precinct identification
  - Automobile registration
2. A certified birth certificate for the student.
3. A proper immunization report issued through the family physician or through the health department.
4. A social security card for the student.
5. A student not living with a parent must present a certified copy of filed Petition for Guardianship if pending, and final decree when granted, declaring the district resident to be the Legal Guardian of the student, and further declaring that the guardianship was formed for a purpose other than establishing residency for school district attendance
6. A withdrawal form issued by the student's previous school, if applicable. A student in grade 9 must provide written evidence that he has been promoted to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. A student in grades 10 – 12 must present an unofficial copy of his transcript of credits.

A child must have reached the age of five (5) on or before September 1 of the year of enrollment in order to enroll in the district's kindergarten program. In order for any child to enroll in first grade, the child must have reached the age of six (6) on or before September 1 of the year of enrollment.

A student transferring into the Forest Municipal School District from a non-accredited school or home schooling must be given appropriate placement tests as determined by school officials.

According to rules and procedures of the Forest Municipal School District, the parent/guardian or a designee must come to the school and sign the child out in person. At times during the school year, it may become necessary for your child to be checked out of school by someone other than yourself. By listing the names or others on this form, you are giving the person(s) permissions to sign your child out of school. Forest Municipal School District personnel will not notify the parent if any person who is listed comes to sign your child out of school. The only people who will be allowed to check your child out of school will be yourself and those listed on the registration form. **There will be no exceptions to this process.**

***The parent and student are responsible for providing the documents required for enrollment. Forest Municipal School District is not responsible for obtaining any required documents.***