

Strategies for Linguistic and Cultural Continuity in Spanish based Catholic Religious Education Programs (Doctrina)

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“It is May 4, 2002. Today is the celebration of First Communion at Faith Catholic Church. The temple foyer, where First Communion participants and their godparents are assembled, is a boisterous space. The odor is particularly dense here—it is the mix of flower fragrances, burnt candle wax, and the unmistakable smell of old-church mustiness. Interspersed in this crowd are fleeting small bodies dressed in stiff and crisp white outfits who are dashing from adult to adult seeking last minute reassurance. They are the doctrina students who for two years have been preparing for this event. The boys are wearing white pants and white jackets. From their arms, a special silk band hangs loose and reaches down to their elbows. The girls wear floor-length dresses with elaborate embroidery; most wear hair-pieces—a wreath, a veil, pearly pins for their elaborated hair-dos. The procession is about to start. The mariachi band has finished tuning their instruments. The doors to the main temple suddenly open and one sees the little angels walk in perfect line formation towards the altar. One adult to a child, the procession bifurcates upon reaching the altar where boys leave wheat stalks (symbolizing the communal bread they are about to take) and girls continue further back into the main altar to deposit baskets full of grapes (symbolizing the wine they are about to drink) before a life-size picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the patroness of Mexico and Latin America. Now seated on plain metal folding chairs arranged in a semicircle right behind the altar table, the doctrina students face the heavily populated pews. Behind them, their godparents stand tearful, but proud. They are all waiting for the officiating priest to reach the altar, as he was the last to enter the temple. The crowd is very still now waiting for the mariachi to finish their entrance song. The mood is contagious. Hearts quiver in anticipation of the ceremony that has just started.” [Fieldnote 5-04-02, PBL]

1. Introduction

This paper draws from two ethnographic and discourse analytic studies that investigate the language and literacy practices of recent Mexican immigrant children who participate in Spanish based Saturday Catholic religious education programs in California. These classes are referred to in Spanish as “doctrina” or “catecismo” and are offered in Catholic parishes as a mandate to teach children the tenets of Catholicism and to prepare them to participate in two important sacraments or Catholic rites of passage, First Confession and First Communion. The excerpt from the fieldnote above describes an important moment in the education of doctrina children of First Communion and which marks them as competent members of their community. Doctrina instruction offers a number of opportunities to understand the role of language as a cultural resource and as central to the transmission, maintenance, and transformation of cultural practice. In particular doctrina classes provide a site for investigating the use of Spanish in the context of U.S. immigration. They also afford an opportunity to understand language use and language change among Mexican immigrant children in California and for documenting Spanish dialects, the use of Standard Spanish, and any changes that might be the result of language contact or language policies.

Language use and maintenance at the parishes, however, need to be understood within the context of official language policy in California. The ongoing debates on official language use provide opportunities to study the development and enforcement of, and responses to, restrictive ideologies of

language. These ideologies have been most visibly enacted through the passing of at least two significant language policies in the state: Proposition 0 (passing English as official language of the state, 1986) and Proposition 227 (the elimination of state-supported bilingual education programs, 1998). In a state where the largest number of immigrant groups is Latino, 32.4% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000), the enforcement of these policies illustrate an exclusionary ideology towards this population. To date, public discussion of immigration remains focused on the disadvantages rather than on the advantages of bilingualism. Despite the establishment of these exclusionary policies, Spanish speaking Latinos and other linguistic minorities continue their efforts to promote bilingual programs. These efforts, along with a number of initiatives to revive endangered languages and dialects co-exist with multiple policies and proposals that restrict multilingualism in both public and private spheres (Hinton, 2001; Wong-Fillmore, 1991).

As researchers in the field of education we believe that in order to fully understand the educational experiences of Spanish speaking Latino students, and in particular the Mexican descent population of California, we must look at the range of educational experiences of these students during the span of a week, even in the span of a single day. This range extends beyond public school campus perimeters and into neighborhoods including the home, community centers, parks, playgrounds, and churches to name a few. It is in these various learning spaces that children come to acquire the skills and knowledge that make them competent members of their linguistic and ethnic communities, and doctrina classes are examples of these spaces. It is also in these educational contexts that they learn culturally-relevant practices that might be entirely different than those in the public schools and which can be sources of conflict between home and school. Education researchers must strive to understand the socialization of these different competencies and their outcomes.

2. The Church as a socializing institution

The role of the Church as a socializing institution in the maintenance of cultural and linguistic practice has already been acknowledged in research on child development and literacy and academic outcomes (Cohen & Lukinsky, 1985; Duranti, Ochs, & Ta'ase, 1995; Heath, 1983; Zinsser, 1986). Heath's (1983) long-term ethnographic study in the Piedmont Carolinas, for example, focused on describing the language practices of children across different learning settings. These contexts included the home, the school and Sunday school instruction in two different working-class communities, Roadville and Trackton. Her findings indicate that the majority of the children in the White working-class community at Roadville were socialized to language practices that mapped more easily onto those of the school; yet this was not the case for the children of the Black working community of Trackton. Heath's examination of these groups' language practices revealed that the skills and readiness that children can bring to school are not always productively utilized in the development of literacy skills at school. In a study of church-based literacies, Duranti, Ochs, & Ta'ase (1995) draw from fieldwork in (formerly Western) Samoa and in a Samoan community in Los Angeles to illustrate the ways in which the same tools for learning afford different literacies and worldviews in Sunday school instruction. The researchers illustrate the ways that reciting a Samoan alphabet tablet with Westernized pictures socializes Sunday school students to American values in Samoa, but in a Samoan church in Los Angeles, the same instrument offers a diasporic link to their culture. The language and learning experiences provided by the Roadville, Trackton and Samoan Churches illustrate that literacy practices can be important nexus to cultural networks beyond the home and the church. Farr (1994) and Guerra (1998) have mapped the literacy activities of Mexicano communities in both Chicago and Michoacán, Mexico, charting a continuum of practices that does not stop at geographical or political borders. In recent work, they have collaboratively examined the literacy development of an older learner, Josefina, a member of a prayer study group, through an analysis of her writing assignments in the form of "letters to God." Josefina's writing reveals an interesting blend of genres from letter-writing and prayer in her personal interpretation of Bible passages and her Christian faith (Guerra & Farr, 2002). Josefina, like the teachers and students in the Samoan churches described above, interprets literacy activities in ways that create links to personal or cultural experience. In Catholic doctrina instruction, teachers employ a number of interpretive resources that allow their Mexican descent students to affiliate with Bible characters and events at the center of

Mexican Catholicism, including the telling of the narrative of “Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe” the patron-saint of Mexico (Baquedano-López 1997, 2000). Let us examine in some detail an example of doctrina instruction. Señora Teresa is a doctrina teacher at St. Paul’s Catholic Church preparing a group of forty-two students for First Communion. In this particular lesson, she holds a picture book depicting images of Jesus’ childhood in Nazareth. Her goal is to help children relate to Jesus as an obedient and helpful child. In the excerpt of transcribed classroom interaction reproduced below [transcription conventions follow those outlined by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974, see Appendix], Señora Teresa points at a drawing of Jesus and his parents Joseph and Mary and asks her students the following:

St. Paul’s 01-14-95

- 1 Teresa: Quién es este señor
 who is this man
 ((pointing at a picture of Joseph))
- 2 qué era su oficio de San José
 what was St. Joseph’s trade
- 3 qué era su oficio del señor San José
 what was St. Joseph’s trade
- 4 cuál era su oficio
 what was his trade
- 5 era ingeniero?
 was he an engineer
- 6 Students: no
 no
- 7 Teresa: Doctor?
 doctor
- 8 Student: no
 no
- 9 Teresa: Qué era
 what was he
- 10 Student: Carpintero
 carpenter
- 11 Teresa: Era carpintero
 he was a carpenter
- 12 era un señor muy humilde
 he was a very humble man
- 13 tener un trabajo como San José
 to have a job like St. Joseph
- 14 no es de vergüenza porque cualquier trabajo es bueno
 is nothing to be ashamed of because any job is good
- 15 porque Jesús nos lo dió
 because Jesus gave it to us

Through a series of questions and answers, Señora Teresa and her class arrive at the conclusion that St. Joseph’s profession as a carpenter, although humble, is virtuous. Note in particular the construction of the professions of engineer and doctor in juxtaposition to St. Joseph’s work as a carpenter. As our continued examination of classroom instruction in doctrina indicates, this does not necessarily suggest that people should not aspire to these professions, instead, the message that seems to be reinforced here is to not be ashamed of holding a humble job because historically, at least in the Christian tradition, there is great wealth in accepting God’s (or Jesus’) dispositions (Baquedano-López, Leyva, Barretto, and Rosales 2003). As she continues to flip the pages of the picture book, Señora Teresa shows her class an illustration of Jesus helping Joseph in his work as carpenter:

- 16 Teresa: Miren al niño Dios cómo le ayudaba a San José
look at baby Jesus how he helped Saint Joseph
((shows the image in the book to the students))
- 17 El niño Dios era bueno con su papá
baby Jesus was good with his father
- 18 Ustedes son buenos con sus papas?
are you all good with your parents
- 19 Students: (xxx-) no:::
no
- 20 Teresa: Por ejemplo si les mandan a tirar la basura
for example if you're asked to throw out the trash
- 21 rezongan?
do you complain
- 22 o van inmediatamente a hacerlo
or do you immediately do it
- 23 Students: (unintelligible)
- 24 Teresa: Sí
Yes
- 25 Sí
Yes

In this excerpt, the teacher makes a link between Jesus' good behavior as he helped his father and the students' home experiences. Of interest here is the statement about Jesus' good behavior towards his father ("Baby Jesus was good to his father") against which the behavior of the children is elicited through a question in "are you good to your parents." While the students seem to be initially confused as to the type of response expected from them, they quickly relate to an example from everyday life. This example offers the hypothetical scenario of an everyday activity (being asked to throw out the garbage) that would place children in a position of being good to their parents just like baby Jesus was.

The role of the Church in the development of religious, moral and even academic competencies, however, can be complex. Its social reproductive force can be totalizing and an instrument in reinforcing dominant ideologies and patterns of unequal access to the benefits of the larger society, some may argue that the very juxtaposition of highly regarded professions and St. Joseph's humble trade as a carpenter exemplify this reproductive force. The study of doctrina classes in urban centers in California provides us with a lens from which to examine these reproductive ideologies as well as the responses from Spanish speaking Latinos to ensure continuity of linguistic and cultural practice in the context of immigration and the social institution of the Church.

3. Children's Catholic religious education

The two ethnographic studies that form the basis of this paper focus primarily on the language socialization practices of teachers and students in doctrina classes. We understand language socialization as a theory and method supporting the notion that throughout the lifespan people are socialized through language to become competent participants and members of various groups and communities, including schooling institutions. Language socialization is thus the lifelong process that results in the acquisition of knowledge and skills through language practices and interaction with more expert and knowledgeable others. For the past twenty years, this theory and method has been analyzing human development and has contributed to our understanding of how people are socialized through and into language and the process of becoming competent members of multiple communities (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986; Ochs, 1988; Garrett & Baquedano-López, 2002). From this perspective, language has a mediating role in the socialization of competency during collaborative activity between experts and novices. In doctrina classes, through classroom question and answer exchanges, narrative, prayer, and other familiar forms of classroom discourse, including IRE exchanges (Mehan, 1979, Cazden, 1988) students and their teachers negotiate shared understandings about what it means to be a

competent doctrina member (Baquedano-López, 1997, 2000, 2002; Baquedano-López & Ochs, 2002; Baquedano-López, Leyva, Barretto, & Rosales 2003).

Drawing from ethnographic studies of two Catholic parishes with a Spanish speaking Latino population, one in Los Angeles (1994-1998) and the other study currently taking place in the East Bay of the greater San Francisco metropolitan area, we illustrate the different ways in which the teachers and leaders of children's Spanish based religious education at the two parishes engage and respond to ideologies of language learning and use. More specifically, through a discourse analysis of interactions in classes and official ceremonies and meetings, we focus on these groups' strategies for establishing linguistic and cultural continuity. In the Northern California parish, its mostly Latino leadership operates an educational program that proactively reinforces Spanish use at the parish and promotes its use in educational settings beyond parish instruction. At the mostly European American parish in Los Angeles, exclusionary discourses reflecting the political climate that surrounded the passing of Proposition 187 in 1994 (the elimination of social services to undocumented families) and the advent of Proposition 209, which was to pass later in 1996 (eliminating affirmative action programs), prompted church officials to eliminate doctrina instruction. Yet, the leaders and teachers of the Spanish based program circumvented local policies and continued to use Spanish in religious education classes.

Elementary school age children of Catholic religious background are expected to attend religious education at local parishes. In the U.S., Catholic religious education for children is established under the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) as an effort to reach children who are not enrolled in a parochial elementary school. This program varies in organization and scope and even the type of population that it serves. In recent years, the term "Catholic Christian Development" has been slowly replacing the old and we have even heard the program referred to as Children's Catholic Education. Faith Catholic Church and at St. Paul's Catholic Church offer CCD classes to both English- and Spanish speaking children who reside within the parishes' jurisdiction. At these parishes classes were held during the weekend in the classrooms of each of the parishes' elementary schools. The Spanish based doctrina classes take place on Saturday mornings from 10:30-12 noon during the academic year and meets for a total of 23 sessions. The English based classes also meet during the weekend but adhering to a different schedule. In fact, the two student populations do not overlap for either instruction or for any of the academic activities of the CCD program. At both St. Paul's and Faith Catholic Church, the majority of the students enrolled in CCD were Spanish speaking Latino, of Mexican descent. Besides learning the standard religious curriculum, just like the students enrolled in the English based classes do, doctrina students learn to prepare for the celebration of religious ceremonies deeply embedded in Mexican culture. These celebration include El Día de los Muertos, (All Saints Day), Christmas posadas (which is the recreation of Joseph and Mary's journey to Bethlehem), and the feast of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe on December the 12. Given that our focus has been on investigating doctrina practices, below we further outline the specifics of this program.

Doctrina instruction is officially organized into three tracks distributed across the 1-8 grades. However, rather than using grade of instruction as an organizer, the age of the child is the determinant factor of placement in the different grades. In the first track (corresponding to the 1st grade in elementary school), children experience their first contact with their "faith." In these classes, children learn their first prayers and stories centering around the life of Jesus. In the second track (2nd & 3^d grade) usually for children between the ages of 7-8, students begin to master the necessary prayers and behaviors for their First Confession and Communion. The third track spans 4th-8th grade education and is generally for older students, their ages ranging from 9-13. These students receive additional training in Catholic beliefs and practices. Students preparing for First Communion, receive two years of preparation, and in their second year they are ready for their First Confession and First Communion. While this is the end-goal of doctrina instruction, that is, the preparation for these two sacraments, the way each parish enacts a commitment to the education of the parish's children is varied. In the two studies we report on, Faith Catholic Church is more invested in the broader goal of education. This perspective was articulated by the pastor on the occasion of the first day of doctrina instruction. During his welcoming address to the parents and students, Father Pablo, an energetic man in his mid-sixties, emphasized that the church and the doctrina program were there to help Latino families with the schooling of the children, particularly those in elementary and middle school. He then commented on the importance of the parents in working towards getting to know and supporting the doctrina teachers

and to follow up on the activities that doctrina teachers organized for their children. This construction of the church and doctrina classes as links to further children's public education is not the norm. As we will discuss in more detail, this perspective was not supported at St. Paul's Catholic Church where English instruction and mainstreaming was favored.

3.1 Doctrina instruction at Faith Catholic Church

Faith Catholic Church is located in a city with a population of over 100,000 in the East Bay of Northern California. Embedded in one of the city's quaint neighborhoods, Faith Catholic Church consist of three main buildings: the church rectory, the main temple and Faith Elementary School. Faith Catholic Church was founded in 1879 by Irish immigrants to the Bay Area. Early parish records recognize the arrival of Italian and a new group of Irish immigrants in the first part of the 20th Century, a group that the parish felt needed particular attention given their lower socio-economic status and other needs. The first immigrants of Mexican descent reportedly arrived to Faith Catholic Church in the 50s as a group of immigrants fleeing political unrest in Mexico. The establishment of Mass in Spanish took place in the 70s and this documents the first instances of official ceremony in a language other than English. The Latino presence at Faith Catholic Church has grown in the past few years and is organized into several parish groups. Led by Spanish speaking, Latino pastor, Father Pablo, Faith Catholic Church regularly holds community-wide meetings that address the concerns of the parish's congregation, especially its Latino congregation. During the two years we have been documenting doctrina instruction and other learning activities at Faith Catholic Church, there have been a number of open forums to discuss ballot initiatives and other bills at which the city's mayor, legislators, and community leaders have been present.

Father Pablo's commitment to the educational development of the parish's children is highlighted in an excerpt of his sermon given on occasion of the year's First Communion celebration. After Father Pablo had encouraged parents to continue to be the moral models in the religious education of their children, he directly addressed the parents' responsibility to actively participate in public schools. Here he explicitly notes that children are not receiving a good education, not just in the city, but in the country as well.

Faith Catholic Church. 05/04/02

1	Father:	La segunda cosa es aquí en este país the second thing is here in this country
2		y aquí en esta ciudad and here in this city
3		y en las que nos rodean también and in those that surround us also
4		la cuestión de la educación the question of education
5		de estos niños es muy importante of these children is very important
6		y la triste realidad es que no están recibiendo and the sad reality is that they are not receiving
7		en muchos casos la educación que se merecen in many cases the education they deserve
8		no no se están no they are not
9		no están recibiendo la preparación que necesitan they are not receiving the preparation they need
10		para poder esperar un futuro mejor in order to expect a better future
11		y es responsabilidad de ustedes los padres and it's the responsibility of you the parents
12		más que nada

13 more than anything
de ir a las escuelas y estar.. en la escuela
to go to the schools and be...in the school
14 porque este es el momento
because this is the moment
15 de estar allí a su lado apoyándolos
to be there by their side supporting them

In this excerpt Father Pablo recruits the participation of parents beyond church-related duties and to extend their responsibilities into other educational contexts. He exhorts them to continue to be involved in the education of their children highlighting this point in the development of their children as the moment needing the greatest support. In this and other ways, the leadership at Faith Catholic Church promotes continuity of practice from church to school. Father Pablo further sacralizes this duty as a God-given responsibility. In his words:

16 Dios les ha entregado a ustedes los padres
God had given you the parents
17 una gran responsabilidad tanto como una gran alegría
a great responsibility just as a great joy
18 en sus hijos
in your children
19 pero Dios tambien espera que ustedes muestren que estan
but god also hopes that you will demonstrate that you are
20 agradecidos y que son responsables
grateful and responsible

Faith Catholic Church's response to the current inequities within the educational system suggests an institutional commitment to the moral, religious as well as academic development of students. As we noted before, this response is not the norm. In our examination of doctrina activities at St. Paul's Catholic Parish in Los Angeles, a very different commitment to the education of doctrina children was being enacted, suggesting that educational practice even within CCD programs is diverse and even contradictory. The elimination of bilingual education programs with the passing of Proposition 227 in 1998 and the proliferation of new state mandated English programs are contributing to the creation of a fast growing monolingual student population. This pedagogical and political entanglement challenges the prospects for the maintenance of linguistic and cultural practice for a large number of students, including of course, Spanish speaking, Latino students. Even within the spaces of long-established and traditionally supportive societal institutions, such as the Church, immigrant communities continue to find exclusionary practices and actively resist them.

3.2 Doctrina instruction at St. Paul's Catholic Church

Located in what is generally considered to be a more affluent area of the west side of the larger metropolitan Los Angeles, St. Paul's Catholic Church is a compound of five off-white colored buildings underneath a busy freeway overpass. Divided by a carefully landscaped median, the buildings are parallel to each other across an ample four-lane road. Lulled by the constant buzz of the freeway overpass, the area immediately surrounding the church compound is working class with small, modest houses and apartment complexes dominating the urban terrain. According to parish records, in the late 70s, the ethnic composition of the predominantly white neighborhood began to change as groups of Mexicans and Central American immigrants moved into the area. These immigrants worked as day laborers and in the service industry, occupations that are still prevalent among many recent immigrants to the area (Valenzuela, 1999). Due to increases in the cost of living in the area, these families eventually moved to neighboring cities. The early changes to the ethnic and class composition of the parish's neighborhood, however, had a definitive effect on its programs, including the establishment of Spanish based children's religious education.

The history of Spanish based religious instruction at St. Paul's is particularly revealing of the brokering work that the Latino leaders must be willing to do. Indeed, for these leaders the ability of the pastor to speak Spanish has been a predictor of the success of the doctrina and other religious programs at St. Paul's. Unlike the leadership at Faith Catholic Church, there has never been a Latino pastor or a fluent Spanish speaking priest at St. Paul's. Even when religious services are offered in Spanish, priests read aloud (sometimes incomprehensibly) from prepared sermons and texts in Spanish. This does not mean that officials at St. Paul's have not been receptive to the needs of its Spanish speaking congregation. On the contrary, there have been institutional efforts to respond to these needs, however, the degree to which this has taken place varies. Even within the spaces of long-established and supporting societal institutions, such as the Church, immigrant communities continue to find exclusionary practices and actively resist them. We discuss next a number of events that took place at St. Paul's that are particularly telling of the entanglement between state policy and educational practice (cf. Baquedano-López, 2002). In the wake of the passing of Proposition 187 (in 1994), which came about great public debate and resistance, the teaching practices and beliefs of the doctrina program at St. Paul's began to be constructed as different and expendable by the larger mostly European American parish of which they are part, had been for over sixteen years. These discursive and ideological practices contributed to the construction of linguistic and cultural difference within the parish. At its monthly council meetings, mostly attended by European American parishioners, parish officials, and the new pastor at St. Paul's openly questioned the purpose of the Saturday Spanish based children's religious education program and proposed an English-only language policy.

Under the proposed policy, doctrina children were to be mainstreamed into English based classes. While parish officials recognized that the parents of doctrina children might resist the transition into English based instruction, the merger was impending as illustrated in an excerpt from the minutes of a parish council meeting:

...the catechism director spoke about the CCD program and said that she would discuss with the doctrina director and other assistants the possibility of combining at least the Confirmation classes so that the division between the Spanish speaking and English speaking groups would be lessened. The director of catechism said that the difficulty with combining the grade school CCD classes is that many of the Spanish speaking parents want their children trained in their own traditions and feel that combining with the English speaking group would not support that training. (February 20, 1996)

There are two observations to be made about doctrina instruction in this excerpt. First, while not elaborated, there is a perceived division between the two programs that rests largely in language use. Second, it is clear that the merger plan will prove to be problematic as "Spanish speaking parents want their children to be trained in their own traditions." But in the context of anti-immigratory discourses and politics, keeping non-mainstream traditions can be a risky business. The division between the parish community was being constructed beyond language use. In an interview with Nancy, the director of the English based CCD program, certain ideologies of language use and learning indicate that immigration status is also at play:

Nancy: What bothers me the most. (3.0) is (1.0) they're getting, (1.8) tch. okay. (2.0) the-(1.0) let's say they come over as illegals. (.) and they don't know a word of English. (3.0) they're put in public school and they're taught in Spanish. (1.8) they have to learn Spanish. (0.8) whether they want to or not. (1.5) and alongside it, they must learn English. (1.5) which is a double burden. (1.5) now. (1.2) I know myself (.) if I went-to Mexico and I wanted to learn the language I wouldn't want you to talk to me in English. (1.2) you're are not going to help me. (1.5) you're not going to help me one bit, you're going to make it harder for me, (1.5) u::h (0.2) you can HELP me, by-by correcting my mistakes. (1.2) but if you put it-if if I have to learn Spanish, then I'm going to have to do it cold turkey. (0.8) okay, otherwise I'm going to be an emotional cripple. (Interview 04/2/96, PBL)

In Nancy's description of the current state of Spanish speaking children in public schools Mexican children not only have an illegal immigrant status, they are not benefiting from bilingual instruction. The connection here to the parish's proposed new language and instructional policy is that immigrant children are receiving religious education in Spanish in ways that replicate the unproductive contexts of their public education. Nancy also offers a blueprint for language learning using herself as a model, in contrast to the situation of the Spanish speaking students she had just described. For Nancy, learning a language is a matter of doing it "cold turkey," without the assistance of public programs, otherwise, instruction would result in emotional handicaps. The message here is that undocumented Mexican children have the potential of becoming emotional cripples when they are taught in their native language. What is important to note is that these discourses not only reinscribe the larger society's views on Mexican immigration and instruction in the native languages as one of society's ills, it also morally justifies action towards Spanish-instituted programs in an attempt to protect immigrant children from experiencing the negative learning experience of using their home language.

Parishioners linked the state's anti immigrant discourses, at the time heavily propagated through mass media in the aftermath of Proposition 187, to the parish council's proposal. The doctrina teachers and other Latino parishioners began to actively respond to the parish's "English-only" proposal. At subsequent monthly meetings, the English-speaking leaders of the Latino congregation voiced the concern that instruction in English would not be as effective as in Spanish for the student population in doctrina classes. "There are some things you just can't explain in English," was a message that began to resonate at the public parish meetings. The director of the doctrina program responded to the suggestion of merging the two tracks with words that powerfully connect the physical, spiritual and cultural self to language: "I can be educated in English: But I talk to my God in my heart language which is Spanish."

In the excerpt reproduced below from a recorded conversation between two doctrina teachers, Ema and Aurea, they chastised arguments used by a doctrina leader which indicated that the use of Spanish was a form of keeping the community's tradition. The doctrina teachers in this conversation react against this argument and suggest an alternative explanation:

- 1 Aurea: Pero pero no no e-debiera de haber dicho la tradición
But but [she] shouldn't have said tradition
- 2 sino que (.) semos cristianos
but that we are Christians
- 3 nada más que en español:!
it's just that we speak Spanish
- 4 (0.2)
- 5 Aurea: N[o?
no
- 6 Ema: >[Yo-yo [si yo si hubiera estado allí
Me-me if I had been there
- 7 Aurea: [somos cató:licos
we are Catholic
- 8 Ema: le hubiera dicho
I would have said (to a person)
- 9 "Oiga usted ya quiere traer
"Listen you already want to bring
- 10 la ochenta y siete a-aquí
the eighty seven here
- 11 a-l[a-la> iglesia? también"
to the church also"

This conversation illustrates the ways in which these parishioners try to personalize, make sense, and appropriate larger social phenomena (see also Baquedano-López & Ochs, 2002). It is interesting to note Aurea's effort to affiliate with the larger group of "Catholics," while at the same time, she

positions the group differently, as having the defining characteristic of being Spanish-speakers: “we are Christians only that we speak Spanish.” Ema, on the other hand, links the state’s position towards Mexican immigrants and the parish’s proposed elimination of doctrina as anti immigrant. The parish’s “English-only” policy, just like Proposition 187, “la ochenta y siete” is here constructed as an attack on the Latino congregation. At the start of the new academic year, however, the parish had begun a new program that officially merged the two. This new program deserves our attention.

Alma, the former doctrina director emerged as one of the most outspoken leaders of the parish. With her knowledge of parish matters—she had been among the first to establish doctrina at St. Paul’s, she became an important linguistic and cultural broker. In the summer months, Alma was appointed the director of the new religious education program (eliminating doctrina instruction). At the beginning of the following academic year, however, classes were still being offered in Spanish. Thus while parish officials proposed and passed the decision to eliminate the doctrina program, the Spanish speaking director and the teachers resisted the enactment of the English-only policy and reorganized the practice of religious education within the new language policy. The responses to the challenge to their linguistic and religious identity have been of resistance both at the discursive level, recall the excerpts from conversations, but also a response that led to action—to continue to have instruction in Spanish.

4. Conclusion

The examples of ideologies and practices that are followed at the two parish children’s religious education programs described in this paper illustrate that the Church is never a homogenous space of practice and ideology. At Faith Catholic Church, parish leadership has been supportive of Spanish speaking Latinos, encouraging not only the moral and religious education of children, but also their academic development in public schools. At St. Paul’s the public discourses on immigration and education translated into exclusionary and reductive practice, eliminating Spanish based instruction in favor of an “English-Only” curriculum. The trajectory of language policies and home language support at Faith Catholic Church and at St. Paul’s, highlight the importance of looking at the enactment of local practices across time and to the ways in which these practices are shaped by the larger institution in which they are embedded; that is, one must study particular ecologies of communicative practices to understand the relationship between individuals and social institutions. In both settings, the response of the parishioners and Latino leadership illustrates a conscious decision to socialize children to use Spanish and promote its use in the continuation of cultural practice.

Appendix

Transcription Conventions

>	Indicates speech faster than normal cadence<
<u>underlining</u>	Represent sounds pronounced with emphasis
?	Indicates rising intonation, not necessarily a question
CAPS	Indicates emphasis, louder than underlining
:::	Colons indicate elongates sounds
(pauses)	Indicate noticeable pauses, silences
((actions))	Indicates nonverbal behavior
.	Indicates falling intonation
,	Indicates slight rising intonation, as if listing items
[Indicates overlap
“words”	Indicates intonation as in reported speech

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