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(Re)constructing American Linguistic Identity: Disrupting the American linguistic standard in first year composition

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(RE)CONSTRUCTING AMERICAN LINGUISTIC IDENTITY:

DISRUPTING THE AMERICAN LINGUISTIC STANDARD

IN FIRST YEAR COMPOSITION

A Thesis

by

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ABSTRACT

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Abstract: The thesis is a theoretical and analytical perspective on the construction of American Linguistic Identity through a Nationalist lens. By re-theorizing the concept of the nation as a "text", and nationalism as the "composition" of that nation, this work challenges the dominant historical American linguistic narrative. This narrative is informed by an American Linguistic memory that is based on an Anglo-Saxon linguistic hegemony throughout American history. American linguistic memory has perpetuated a tacit English-Only policy in higher education, primarily through first year college composition courses. The tacit English-Only policy has influenced educators' perceptions of students in the composition classroom as native speakers of English. These perceptions, however, are problematic and fail to address the presence of students' linguistic differences. Through a re-evaluation of the American linguistic narrative, we might begin to reconceive of current conceptions of language practices in the writing classroom.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis first and foremost to my family. I would like to express my most profound gratitude to my parents, Rick and Gracie Ramirez, who supported me over the course of my academic career. To my brilliant little brother, Justin; I want to be the big sister you can be proud of. I also dedicate this thesis to my friends and to my colleagues who have always pushed me toward my full potential. A very special thanks to Dr. Colin Charlton for mentoring me over the years; we "grew up together at UTRGV". I cannot begin to describe the depth of my appreciation for every opportunity and all the invaluable experience. I dedicate this thesis to Gregg L. Carter Jr. He has been my inspiration, my motivation, and my best friend through it all. Finally, I dedicate this thesis to my grandmothers, Tommie Ramirez and Sylvia Correa; thank you for always seeing the beauty in me when I so often struggle to see it myself.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For 35 years, Grandma Tommie waitressed at a little locally-owned restaurant on the corner of South 7th St. and 3168 in Raymondville, Texas. Casa Blanca's exterior was as stark white as the day it opened in the early '70's. I would hang off the edge of a barstool as a kid and watch Grandma dart from table to table, taking orders. Sweet tea for the family in the corner underneath the poster of the football player from Lyford (Go Bulldogs!); they exchanged a few words in Spanish before she retreated back into the kitchen. I loved watching her work the room; she was so good at it, talking to people. The door to the kitchen swung open on its hinges and here she was again, balancing an order of chicken fried steak—Mom's favorite—in one hand, and liver and onions in the other. She walked over to a Winter Texan couple seated next to the fake Ficus and gently set each plate down onto the table. They asked her how she was doing today. She responded in English this time, "I'm great!" I watched them chat for a few more seconds before she was on to the next table. I remember a conversation my Dad and I shared once. He told me how Grandma had learned English through waitressing. She was so good at it now you could hardly even tell there was ever a point that she didn't know how to speak it. He told me how she had gotten in trouble for speaking Spanish in school as a kid; "They'd smack the hell out of you." he'd said.

When she finally had the chance, she came over to greet us. She'd hug me and I'd whirl around in my seat to face the other side of the bar. She grabbed a pair of tall, red plastic glasses, filled them with tea and slid them across the bar to my father and I. Dad started talked to her, they spoke in Spanish, to me, a garbled mess of words I couldn't make sense of. She turned to me and said something I couldn't make out anything beyond "Mamas" (a term of endearment she'd often address me by). I had to remind her then that I couldn't speak Spanish and she'd look surprised, maybe more surprised at the fact that she had forgotten. This wasn't the first nor the last time we would have that brief conversation, but over the years, I found myself feeling more and more embarrassed each time.

I'd go to school the following weeks after our visits. The teachers spoke English, the majority of my friends spoke English, the classwork and homework was in English. I read and wrote in English. Every now and then, you'd have those quiet students in the class, quiet because apparently they spoke very little English (if at all), but they'd still be expected to stand up alongside the rest of us and recite the Pledge of Allegiance and the Texas Pledge prior to morning announcements. They'd be required to read and write in English, and when they did speak, to speak in English. I wonder what happened to them, I wonder who and where they are now. I see their faces in the faces of the students in my first year composition classes now. While they aren't expected to stand up in my classroom and salute the American flag everyday, they are expected to read and compose texts in English. What's more, they are struggling to learn a language in an American political culture whose response to any kind of language difference has been (and continues to be): "This is America, speak in [write in, learn in, *do* in] English".

The Problem with this Perception

American culture and education supplanted my grandmother's Mexican culture. I saw my peers' ongoing struggle with this process of cultural and linguistic displacement while I was in school. Now, as a writing instructor, I see myself at risk of doing the same to my own students when I attempt to teach them about writing at the college level. At this level, learning, reading, and writing happen exclusively in a privileged, academic variety of English. In "English Only and U.S. College Composition," Bruce Horner and John Trimbur introduce this idea of a tacit English-Only policy in U.S. college composition by acknowledging, "the fact that U.S. writing instruction is conducted in English seems commonsensical. After all, though English is not the official language of the U.S., this is an English-speaking nation" (594). Contrary to popular belief, "that U.S. writing instruction is conducted in English" is, in fact, the furthest thing from commonsensical. From its inception, the United States was a multicultural, multilingual nation. The U.S. as an English-speaking nation is an idea that is rooted in a history that is far more complex than some may initially realize because it is something that is taken for granted. History chooses to remember English as the language at the birth and inception of this nation because those writing that history, telling the story, spoke English. The history of this nation has predominantly been told from an Anglo-Saxon perspective, which is informed by a narrative that privileges the English language. Therefore, the fact that U.S. writing instruction occurs in English does seem commonsensical, but only to those who *identify* with that narrative. The role of English in this narrative was an influential one that facilitated the construction of this nation, the establishment of its national identity, and the articulation of American nationalism.

Nationalism, according to Anthony D. Smith, has "its own rules, rhythms and memories, which shape the interests of its bearers" (*Nationalism* Kindle Locations 191-192). Nationalist scholars have examined nationalism through competing ideologies (based on the culture of the nation in question), multiple paradigms (primordialism, perrenialism, modernism), and theoretical lenses (as modernization, religion, construction of language, ethnicity, etc). However, "the language and symbolism of nationalism merit more attention…the language or discourse of nationalism cannot be considered separately, since they are so closely tied to the ideologies of nationalism" (*Nationalism* Kindle Locations 267-270). The American English language is symbolic of what it means to be American, a notion that has gone uncontested in nationalist scholarship on American Nationalism because "the history that the nationalist seeks is not an academic discipline; it is a political instrument to be exploited and manipulated for national aims" (Dawisha 17). American English is derived from British English, but according to John Trimbur, "in a stroke of linguistic nationalism, [Noah] Webster made American English historically antecedent to British English" ("Uneasy Settlement" 35). After the American Revolution, America sought to establish itself as an autonomous nation, with a language of its own. There was a concerted effort to distinguish American English from its British counterpart, citing it as pure, and thus, superior, implying that its speakers, too, must be pure and superior.

Today, America mostly functions under an English-Only ideology. The tendency of proponents of American English to privilege the English language has resulted in a type of linguistic displacement, one that "forgets," and illegitimates any non-Englishes and English dialects in the historical narrative. The English language in American linguistic memory is a testament to English-Only proponents' success not only in history, but in academia. In nationalist scholarship and composition studies, there has been a "remarkable silence" in regard to "the

multilingualism that linguistic memory has erased," despite the multilingual reality that instructors encounter in the classroom (Trimbur, "Uneasy Settlement" 38). U.S. Students enrolled in first year composition (FYC) courses come from various linguistic backgrounds, and it is often the case that the languages they speak and compose in do not align with the English linguistic standard that is privileged in higher education. As a way to try and inculcate those students, efforts in the past included confining them to courses whose purpose was to sanitize them of their linguistic difference.

If we consider education as the method of shaping a nation's citizens—"[directing their] opinions, their likes, and dislikes that they shall be patriotic by inclination, passionately, of necessity"—then we can start to understand why the English language in particular was/is privileged (Rousseau qtd. in Dawisha 19). In the United States, the American English "language was the expression of a nation's spirit and conscience" (Dawisha 17). American English was and is "a reflection of [the American people's] unique identities and of the circumstances that are peculiar to them" (17), but these were "post-colonial circumstances, in an English-speaking settler colony" (Trimbur, "Uneasy Settlement" 21). These were a very specific set of circumstances that defined a certain population within a certain context, yet non-native English speakers continue to be held to an unrealistic linguistic standard. As a result, speakers who fail to match up to that linguistic standard may be viewed as un-American. Furthermore, the English language (and one's ability to use it) has been used to define what it means to be American. Educational institutions and U.S. college composition also play a role in helping define American nationality on the basis of language. There are potential implications for students in U.S. college composition who fail to compose and communicate in the linguistic standard privileged in higher education.

In this thesis I will re-evaluate the traditional American national narrative by (re)theorizing "the nation" as a discursive community whose nationalism is the practice of a particular discourse. This discourse is informed by a national narrative, which privileges the usage of a dominant language and subsequently, the speakers of that language, as well as their history memories. In doing so—within an American context—this places speakers of other languages and national backgrounds in the precarious position when it comes to national and linguistic identity.

Nationalism has been theorized as the result of modernization (social/political transitions from premodern to modern history), as a type of "modern religious movement," a linguistic/literary construction, and even as a "discourse of gender and ethnicity that shape individual identities" (Kramer 526). Historically, the study of nationalism has been governed by "the assumption that nationalisms are historical," and therefore "the study of nationalism leads to historical analysis" (Kramer 526). History is the study of narratives, accounts, documentation, all of which are interpreted and reinterpreted through discursive practices. In other words, our understanding of nationalism is shaped by how historical narratives are talked about, and, more importantly, who does the talking and what language that "talking" occurs in, because that is the language that is often valued. In an American context, the narrative was relayed in English by the English, who would go on to use it to define the American "character" and American culture. Applying this new lens (of nationalism as discursive) would allow me to disrupt the dominant national narrative specifically for the purposes of exploring the English language in U.S. history. Specifically, how English was used and imposed upon diverse groups as a way to expedite assimilation into "American" culture". Finally, to consider English's place in American linguistic memory, how an English-Only ideology influenced the design of U.S. college

composition courses, and the implications/consequences for students' linguistic identities in these courses.

Overview of Study

The content of this thesis is situated primarily in theoretical exploration, concluding with suggestions for potential practical application. Chapter 2 contains a review of relevant literature pertaining to scholarship in nationalism and rhetoric and composition studies. Chapter 2 is divided into two parts; the first half provides an overview of nationalism, its theories, competing paradigms, and definitions for (and lackthereof) the "nation." The latter portion emphasizes the role of language in the "literary and linguistic construction of nationalism" (Kramer 537). The second half addresses language, the concept of linguistic memory, the United States' tacit policy of "English-Only," and its influence on the creation of first year college composition courses. The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate that the overarching goal of nationalism is to preserve the nation via the preservation of the dominant national narrative and privileged modes of discourse (i.e. English).

Chapter 3 contains a *brief* survey of nationalist movements throughout European and North American history for the purposes of emphasizing the discursive process and practices (i.e. attempts to standardize language) that initiated and promoted these activities. I wanted to be able to show that this connection between language, identity, and nationhood was not exclusive to an American context. Chapter 3 attributes the success of nationalist ideas to their widespread dissemination in societies, facilitated through the standardization of language. This chapter

concludes by illustrating how language was used to foster nationalist sentiment and the construction of national identity in France, Germany, and the United States.

Chapter 4 specifically examines the role of American English in the construction of American linguistic and national identity within the context of educational institutions, which, historically, have served as sites for indoctrination into the national culture. This chapter primarily focuses on the monolingual history in American historical memory in an attempt to discredit it. Education systems in the United States have functioned under an English-Only ideology that has gone on to influence the creation of first year composition courses in higher education. Chapter 4 problematizes this ideology, citing its origins in a false myth of linguistic homogeneity that exists in U.S. linguistic memory. This ideology is the result of the dominant Anglo-Saxon narrative that has informed the construction of U.S. national identity since colonial times. In what might be construed as attempts to preserve English's hegemonic status in this country, history has conveniently "forgotten" the presence and contributions of other non-English languages and dialects. Chapter 4 goes on to examine the consequences for doing so within the context of first year composition classrooms and the potential implications for students' national/linguistic identities. This chapter prompts us to consider the inclusive and exclusive aspects of language (and language policies) and how it may affect one's ability to participate in the national community.

Chapter 5 provides a brief overview of the contents of preceding chapters, including the notion that institutions of higher education tend to privilege and perpetuate a standardized form of discourse that students are socialized into or excluded from, should they fail to assimilate. In a nation that touts education as the means by which one can succeed—and whose definition of "success" is based on socioeconomic status—excluding students also excludes what they could

potentially "bring to the table" in furthering the nation's state of "well-being". If we want our students to do well, we must to combat the tacit English-Only policy in U.S. composition. I propose that instructors of first year composition courses (FYC) move away from perceiving language difference as a detriment or hindrance so that they may begin to view it as an asset instead. In doing so, it allows us to rethink the Anglo-Saxon narrative that our present English-Only ideology is based on, how it's informed individual linguistic and national identities. I provide examples of some potential course projects that would allow students to reflect on their individual linguistic identities and what factors may have influenced the construction of those identities. Finally, I include considerations for future research by recommending that scholars continue to explore the connection between students' language and identity, and provide an example of a potential design for a future study.

What I am attempting to do here is to identify how the English language in America is remembered in American collective memory as the language that was *there* at the moment of settlement, specifically British colonial settlement. That linguistic memory negates the presence of other populations and cultures that contributed to the establishment of this nation and has defined the American character in a way that manages to exclude those who display any kind of language difference. Nations are "supported…by a mass, standardized, compulsory, public education system" that are responsible for instilling national values (*Nationalism* Kindle Locations 1153-1156). Educational institutions and curriculum have been informed by this linguistic memory and have traditionally privileged a "standardized" version of the English language. Classrooms have become increasingly diverse and students' national and linguistic backgrounds no longer adhere to traditional conceptions of language. Before we can truly validate students' languages, we must first disrupt the standard.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

National and linguistic identities are influenced by several different factors, chiefly among them are the cultures and discursive communities we, as individuals, are brought up in. Culture and community are terms that are as complex as they are multi-faceted. The concept of identity is also just as complex. I am frequently prompted to ask: who am I? I am the product of a nation, a national community, with a public culture and a common language. I am a student, and an academic, attempting to enter a discourse by adopting its language, but doing so requires that I make a type of linguistic compromise, one that up—until this point—I had not bothered to question because English is all I have ever known, all that we have ever been expected to know. It is an expectation that stems from a celebrated story that we the people of the United States have become well-versed in, a version of nationalism that has shaped the nation, its national culture, and the community. But before I can identify the ways in which American nationalism has influenced the construction of national and linguistic identities, I must embark on the arduous task of expounding upon existing theoretical frameworks of nationalism.

On Defining [and Not Defining] the Nation and Nationalism

There are several theoretical frameworks—*interpretations*— of nationalism. In order to

begin to construct/assign my own definition(s)/interpretation(s), specifically in relation to [*national*] linguistic identities, I would like to start by surveying some of the existing paradigms/theories/interpretations in this interdisciplinary field of study.

The Nation

Attempts to define the "nation" have been heavily debated by scholars in the field: according to Anthony D. Smith in *Nationalism*, "nation" is "the most problematic and contentious term in the field", inciting a perpetual back-and-forth rivaling only that of the, perhaps, equally as debated, age-old, "chicken or the egg" dilemma (*Nationalism* Kindle Locations 321-322). What came first: the nation or nationalism? To which there exists two possible "answers": one "operates within the circle of nationalist ideology", the other supposes "if the concept of the nation predated the ideology of nationalism, then we can no longer characterize it simply as a category of *nationalist* practice" (Smith, *Nationalism* Kindle Locations 338-339). But what, then, is the "nation"? In *Imagined Communities,* Benedict Anderson concedes "nation, nationality, and nationalism – all have proved notoriously difficult to define" (3). So difficult, in fact, that there are those who would avoid definitions altogether. Rogers Brubaker proposes that we examine how the word itself (nation) is used—within certain contexts—to construct meaning (instead of simply *assigning* meaning to it). In *Nationalism Reframed*, he argues that:

> We should not ask 'what is a nation?' but rather: how is nationhood as a political and cultural form institutionalized within and among states? How does nation work as practical category, as classificatory scheme, as cognitive frame? What makes the use of that category by or against states more of less resonant or effective? What makes the nation-evoking, nation-invoking efforts of political entrepreneurs more or less likely to succeed? (16)

Brubaker recommends that we perceive "nationness as a contingent event or happening" instead

of trying to understand it as referring to "substantial, enduring collectivities" of people (*Nationalism Reframed* 21). Brubaker's approach to the nation requires that we consider what came before, what led up to that "happening" that birthed the nation. There are *things* that "make" a nation, significant characteristics that define what *kind* of a nation we are looking at (as opposed to simply deliberating on "what *is* a nation?"). The nation is primarily endured by its characteristics, characteristics that are practiced and promoted by its people.

Conversely and rather definitively, in "Sovereignty, Nationalism, and Self-determination," James Mayall "[concludes] that no generally applicable and objective definition is available, but to a prolonged, if inconclusive, debate about the identity and origin of nations" (478). According to Mayall, there is no "objective definition available," nor should there be, because a nation, if we consider it a "happening" is subjective to the situation in which that happening occurs, which requires a shift in approach from looking at it as *the* nation, to *a* nation, which might allow us to consider multiple nations and the context(s) that engendered them.

Nevertheless, several proposed definitions have been put forth in hopes of encapsulating the complexity of this/these phenomena of *the* nation. These definitions vary based upon the theoretical lens or paradigm—perennialism vs. modernism—through which the "nation" (and nationalism) is considered (Smith, *Nationalism and Modernity* 21-22). Perennialism "[regards] nations as recurrent and/or persistent phenomena of all epochs and continents, but in no way part of the 'natural order'" (Smith 23). Conceiving of nations as part of a natural order is more characteristic of primordialism, a "more radical [position]" of perennialism that characterizes the nation as "organic", "immemorial", "ancestrally-based" (Smith, *Nationalism and Modernity* 23). According to Walker Connor (a primordialist), a nation "connotes a group of people who believe they are ancestrally related" (Connor *xi*). Primordialists tend to "make little distinction between

ethnic groups and nations", hence the idea of nations being "ancestrally-based" (Smith, *Nationalism and Modernity* 45). However, "until the members are themselves aware of the group's uniqueness, it is merely an ethnic group and not a nation" (Connor 103). While "nation" may connote collective cultural identity in much the same fashion as "ethnic community" does,

> it is not an ethnic community because…the ethnic community usually has no political referent, and in many cases lacks a public culture and even a territorial dimension, since it is not necessary for an ethnic community to be in physical possession of its historic territory. (Smith, *Nationalism* Kindle Locations 365-367)

In an attempt to formally distinguish *ethnie* (ethnic communities) from nation, Smith proposes we understand the concept of nation as "'a named human community residing in a perceived homeland" whereas an ethnic community may or may not be in possession of said "homeland" but still maintain some kind of link or connection to it (Smih, *Nationalism* Kindle Locations 382-383). A nation maintains its own collection of common myths, however there is no particular ancestry or singular point of ancestral origin (*ethnie*). A nation shares a history, while an *ethnie* shares memories; a nation has distinct public culture, an *ethnie* "one or more elements of shared culture". Finally, a nation has "common laws and customs" whereas an *ethnie* has "a measure of solidarity" at least among the elites" (Smith, *Nationalism* Kindle Locations 382-386).

Modernists, on the other hand, (Anderson, Gellner, etc.) contend nations are "wholly modern", "created" political communities and are "therefore not deeply rooted in history"; "nations and nationalism were social constructs of cultural creations of modernity". To say that nations are "wholly modern" negates the existence of nations prior to the French Revolution, an event cited by some historians as the "beginning" of nationalism (Smith, *Nationalism and Modernity* 17). To say that they are not "deeply rooted in history" is to say that they were/are solely "the consequences of [revolution]," nations are born from the "features and conditions" preceding revolution. Nations served as vehicles for "rapid social change" whose driving force

consisted of "a territorialised political community, a civic community of legally equal citizens in a particular territory," which in some cases happened to result in revolution (Smith 21-22).

Gellner defines the nation as "a political principle, 'which hold that the political and national unity should be congruent,'" its people and its politics should align. But who amongst the people or "national unity" defines its politics; certainly not the totality, rather a select group whom, as Brubaker suggests, *make* the nation (Smith, *Nationalism and Modernity* 29). In *Imagined Communities*, Modernist scholar Benedict Anderson proposes that the nation is "an imagined political community," "*invented*" and socially constructed (6). The nation is *imagined* because "members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson 6). This image is an illusion—a fiction of sorts—that is utilized for the purposes of maintaining that congruency (of "the political and national unity") or, the people. According to Adeed Dawisha in "Nation and Nationalism: Historical Antecedents to Contemporary Debates," the nation is "created, nourished, and sustained, through the telling and retelling of [nations'] pasts" (5). The nation is a narrative, a purposeful construction of "historical and literary representations, that…mold the imagined collective identities we call nations" (Dawisha 6). This then begs that one inquire into who gets to tell that story, delegate the narrative. These narratives are comprised of all those aspects that serve to characterize a nation; its myths, great achievements, displays of bravery, the development of literacy, progress in intellectual and artistic pursuits, its ability to overcome adversity. They also tend to conveniently "forget" certain aspects that are "less than seemly… the self-inflicted wounds; the civil wars, massacres, and human atrocities; the ethnic, linguistic, and religious cleavages and dislocations", but who enacts/initiates the "forgetting" (Dawisha 6)? Packaged and passed down throughout history and

literature, these narratives thrive, informing the "identity" of the nation, an "identity" that has essentially—for all intents and purposes—been fabricated. With that in mind, I move to examine the nation in its current state, more specifically, how it got *there*—what makes a nation; a nation as category—as Brubaker suggests, and its nationalism.

Nationalism

Nationalism—like "nation"— does not have a singular definition. Instead, it has many usages. According to Lloyd Kramer, analyses on the concept of nationalism "calls for always incomplete definitions" (Kramer 525); because of the "complexity" of this particular phenomena, "interpreters [resist] every simplifying, comprehensive definition" (525). Smith recommends we start by asking whether there is such a thing as "'nationalism-in-general', as opposed to the specific varieties, or even instances, of nationalist movement" (*Nationalism and Modernity* 36). In this context, the term is used to represent a number of concepts:

> (1) a process of formation, or growth, of nations; (2) a sentiment or consciousness of belonging to the nation; (3) a language and symbolism of the nation; (4) a social and political movement on behalf of the nation; (5) a doctrine and/ or ideology of the nation, both general and particular. (Smith, *Nationalism* Kindle Locations 234-239).

Nationalism is relative to the nation and can be expressed as any number of the following: as a "feeling", as "identity", a "social movement", a "historical process", and/or an "ideology"(Hearn 6). Nationalism, according to Connor, "connotes identification with and loyalty to one's nation"; "loyalty" is the result of "feeling" towards one's nation (*xi*). Nationalism as a "social movement," for example, can refer to revolutions, which are often incited by ideologies. The concept of "identity" is informed by ideology, which can be broadly defined as "any set of ideas accepted by individuals or peoples, without attention to their origin or value" (Ellul 116). Smith defines nationalism as an ideology, whose primary concern is maintaining the well-being of the

nation (*Nationalism* Kindle Locations 298-299). Alter defines nationalism not only as an ideology but as "a political movement which holds the nation and sovereign nation-state to be crucial indwelling values, and which manages to mobilize the political will of a people" or the vast majority of the population (Alter qtd. in Kramer 525). Alter specifically attributes these "indwelling values" to the nation and sovereign nation-state; they are vested with the responsibility to enact said values for the political purpose of obtaining some political goal; "Nationalist ideas are thus a distinctive form of modem thought that shapes the political actions and cultural identities of individuals as well as groups" (Kramer 526). Their identity—or identities—depends on the nation and its narrative, which, if considered a result of social construction, means its identity/identities are a result of that construction as well. Kramer discusses this idea of the narrative and its construction as being of more and more importance in the study of this field, stating:

> Historians have always recognized that the success of nationalist ideas depends on their wide dissemination in modern societies, but the communication systems and narratives that promote nationalist identities have become increasingly significant in the study of nationalism since the 1950s. (Kramer 534)

Benedict Anderson discusses the influence of communication. The introduction of print capitalism (newspapers and literature) into modern society facilitated the imagining of communities that became modern nations.

Understanding nationalism "as a construction of language and literature" recognizes "the importance of communication, language, and writers in the construction of nationalism" (Kramer 536). We then perceive the nation as a "text" and nationalism as the composition of that nation (the "writing of it") and the "history of conflicts over competing narratives that seek to define a social community" (Kramer 537). We return once again to this notion of "remembering". Nations are comprised of difference, ethnically, culturally, and linguistically. Recently, "the

literary and linguistic construction of nationalism have therefore moved toward a 'multicultural' description of nations" (Kramer 537) that focuses on linguistic competition and competing languages in society rather on language's unifying properties. Nonetheless, definitions for both the nation and nationalism continue to vary as a result of their complexities.

Memory, English-Only, and College Composition

The second half of this survey of scholarship will focus on what has been and currently is being said within the field of composition with regard to the spoken and written word, with an emphasis on the following concepts: language, English-Only policy, and American linguistic memory. The latter of these terms refers to an English linguistic hegemony that has prevailed throughout American history, informing language policies and practices.

According to Dawisha, " most important to nationalists is the spoken and written word, since all [nationalists] seem to agree that this is the medium through which national consciousness spreads" (16). The spoken and written word are our primary means of communication, it is how we create and assign meaning, but what's more, it is also how we *preserve* those meanings. The narrative(s) we craft—*historical* narratives in particular, for the purposes of this review—inform who "we" once were and now are, as a collective body of individuals residing in a certain community, as a result of how these "stories" are remembered.

Linguistic Memory & the Language Policy of the Modern University

John Trimbur attributes the current status of the English language—as the unofficial *official* language of the United States—to linguistic memory. He begins by exploring the settlement of the U.S.: "English is figured in linguistic memory as the language the Founding Fathers declined to mandate" because it was "already there, at moments of settlement and subsequent nativity" ("Uneasy Settlement" 23). This "refusal" to establish a language was in line with with the "laissez-faire" attitude of the time (Trimbur, "Uneasy Settlement" 24). In other words, "a foundational liberty of the new republic, or the very 'private ness' of the language domain, made it inappropriate for there to be state involvement with language" (Lo Bianco qtd. in "The Politics of U.S. English" 576). While English may not have been officially sanctioned, that did not mean that there wasn't an implicit "covert" national language policy being enacted;

> whereby the politics of language diffused throughout civil society, making language policy a matter of custom rather than law, operating through cultural formations instead of state mandate. (Trimbur, "The Politics of U.S. English" 576)

Speaking English became an accepted social norm—customary—within certain *civil* spheres of society, adopted by individuals who were not only affluent members of the then-national community, but also were influential in the establishment of local and national governments (thus negating the need to officially mandate a policy on language). This effectively continued to lay the groundwork for a tacit English-Only policy.

During the colonial and post-colonial periods, there were several languages in practice, all of which were valued for "commerce, diplomacy, and knowledge" (Trimbur, "Uneasy Settlement" 24). However, Trimbur notes, while the language policy "did not mandate matters of language, neither did it prohibit government action in the realm of language" (24). English was often managed by the state to maintain its governance over newly established territories occupied

by non-English speaking populations. Naturally, this arose in conflict when English was imposed on populations where English-speakers were in the minority, rather than the majority, as was the case in Louisiana after it was purchased by the Union. The acting territorial governor (who spoke no French) decreed "an English-Only policy in government matters" (Trimbur, "Uneasy Settlement" 25). The people reacted, pointing out the faulty logic behind an English-Only policy in a territory made up primarily of French-speakers. President Thomas Jefferson, sought to remedy the situation by "[appointing] bilingual judges and decreed that laws and public records appear in both English and French"—what Trimbur refers to as merely an *accommodation* of the French language (25). Jefferson's policy was an act of "linguistic tolerance"; according to Trimbur, Jefferson believed "that English would ultimately settle in the new territories as the dominant language" (25). English would, however, continue to encounter obstacles. Attempts by settler colonists "to establish the linguistic priority of English against the multilingual realities created by the maritime trade and plantation system" would expedite the establishment of English as the national print language (Trimbur,"Uneasy Settlement" 28). Print language would contribute to the construction of "a national consciousness", an imagined community of English speakers, scattered across the vast expanses of the continent, but united by the production of print capitalism (23). Newspapers, pamphlets, maps, and literature were all printed primarily in English, reinforcing it as the dominant language.

Trimbur also describes acts of "surrogation" in U.S. history, by which the Anglo-Saxon narrative served to replace all others by engaging in a "public [enactment] of forgetting" (Roach qtd. in "Uneasy Settlement" 32). The Founding Fathers are remembered as "the historical ancestors" of the land whereas indigenous populations and non-Anglo-Saxon settlers were conveniently "forgotten". Among those things that failed to be included in the dominant

historical narrative were instances of those "less than seemly" aspects of "linguistic…cleavages and dislocations" (Dawisha 6). Among these cleavages and dislocations are examples of the "conceptual erasure of indigenous populations by representing American Indian languages as extinct or dying" (Trimbur, "The Politics of U.S. English" 580). Historical accounts denied attempts to suppress African languages, also labeling African American language as a "deficient and disabling dialect of English" (Trimbur 580). By removing or disavowing languages other than English was to also remove and disavow users of those languages, further shaping American linguistic memory through an Anglo-Saxon perspective.

Noah Webster, founder of the Merriam-Webster publishing company best known for its reference books, would go on to "[shape] 'American linguistic history into a final, open-ended chapter of the Anglo-Saxon spirit'" (M.P. Kramer qtd. in Trimbur, "Uneasy Settlement" 37). Webster's "dictionaries, spellers, and linguistic tracts", all attempts to standardize the English language, would become a staple in the classroom (37). Gradually, English was institutionalized, perpetuating what Horner and Trimbur refer to as "a tacit policy of unidirectional English monolingualism" wherein English became the only accepted means of communication (594). With the emergence of the modern university, we saw a distinct shift; modern languages were suddenly "territorialized in departments of French, German, Spanish, and so on, as national literatures" (Trimbur, "Uneasy Settlement" 37). A tacit language policy began to take root at the academic level "as writing in English is severed from its former association" (Horner and Trimbur 601) with both classical—i.e. Greek and Latin— and modern languages. Segregated into their own individual "limited spheres of influence", when students did encounter them, they were seen only as "as texts to be read, not living languages to be written or spoken" (Horner and Trimbur 602). Furthermore, English's status was reinforced by the following notions: the study

of modern language was seen as a nonintellectual, feminine pursuit; they are viewed as "texts in an archive"; the study of modern languages is understood as an accessory to the mastery of English; geographical location did not require the learning of modern languages the way polyglot Europe—and its extremely close proximity to other nations—did (Horner and Trimbur 603-606). This very same geographic "isolation" of sorts is what made it exceptionally easy for English to supersede all other languages;

> English in the modern curriculum is warranted as inevitable, not because English was the only living language available in North America but because the use of spoken and written English forms what Benedict Anderson calls an 'imagined community' and a sense of nationhood. (Horner and Trimbur 607)

As a result, all other languages were seen as "unnatural", "alien", *"foreign"*, and thus un-*American*; they were not part of the grand Anglo-Saxon narrative of the nation, remembered and written primarily by English-speakers who failed to give much consideration to non-English(es) and their significance in the telling of this nations history. Therefore, we only "remember" that which we have been told, implicitly and in some cases explicitly: "this is America, speak English".

English-Only & College Composition

English "[became] the unquestioned medium of instruction" in writing studies at the university (Trimbur, "Uneasy Settlement" 37). The "tacit language policy of unidirectional [English] monolingualism has a history and a cultural logic" that continues to influence how we teach, design our writing programs, and subsequently, "our impact on U.S. culture". (Horner and Trimbur 595). Today, "there are increasing numbers of students taking composition courses for whom English is not their first language" (Horner 3), i.e. ESL, (English-as-Second-Language learners), ELL (English-Language-Learners), LEP (Limited English Proficiency), etc. Changes

in immigration patterns and increases in admittance to colleges and universities have resulted in a more linguistically diverse student body. Two movements have emerged within composition studies in response; one calls for a "radical shift from composition's tacit policy of monolingualism to an *explicit* policy that embraces multilingual, cross-language writing as the norm for our teaching and research" (Horner 3). The other calls for standardized English-Only legislation, whose advocates "herald English as the only means of ensuring the unity of American culture and society" (Horner and Trimbur 616). In the event that this movement was to prove successful, such legislation would only serve the purpose of reinforcing English's place in American linguistic memory.

However, mandating language is more than just an attempt at standardization, it is a decisive political move. It is often the case that "the debate for English-Only frequently takes the form of a debate over immigrants themselves" (Horner and Trimbur 608), who brought, and continue to bring, with them their own cultural influences and contributions, language chiefly among them. The children of these immigrants eventually make their way into higher education and composition classes where they encounter(ed) a very different variety of English, a privileged version that they are expected to already have mastered. Paul Kei Matsuda suggests,

> that the dominant discourse of U.S. college composition not only has accepted 'English-Only' as an ideal but already assumes the state of English-Only, in which students are native English speakers by default. (81)

This "assumption" of English-Only stems from what he calls "the myth of linguistic homogeneity" or the tacit acceptance of the composition student as a native English speaker (Matsuda 82). Matsuda profiles the image of the college student—a *character* in the national narrative—and furthermore, how that image informs pedagogical practice. This image, however, is an "abstraction" built upon several preconceived notions, notions that only become

"problematic when [they] inaccurately [represent] the student population" to the extent that the teacher is unable to identify and "address the presence of differences" (Matsuda 83). There it is again, our reoccurring theme: addressing the presence of difference, but not just any difference, a *linguistic* difference.

In order to "participate fully in the civic life of the nation (as full citizens)", "language is requisite to citizenship"; here, language determines your entry into the national community (Horner, "Introduction" 1). In the United States, students are not only expected to know English, they are expected to learn a standardized, privileged form of English. Students are expected to acquire this linguistic ability and hone it through their schooling. Schools are—in and of themselves—*imagined communities*, but "communities can push out as well as pull in people, divide as well as unite", in this case, through the implementation of certain linguistic expectations (Dorn et al. 2). The image of the college student assumes that s/he is a "by default native [speaker] of a privileged variety of English from the United States" (Matsuda 83). because, again, English is figured in linguistic memory as *the* language of the United States. Knowing English is one thing, attempting to learn how to speak and compose in a standardized form, specifically in composition classes is another issue entirely.

The composition classroom has the potential to be incredibly influential with regard to perceptions of language and linguistic practices, solely for the fact that it is "the only course required of virtually all college students in a country where…according to a 2000 U.S. Census, 'more than one in six people five years of age and older reported speaking a language other than English at home'" (Bayley qtd. in Matsuda 85). Students don't just speak/write in standardized "English"—if they speak/write in it at all. They speak "underprivileged varieties of English" (regional dialects), or they are bilingual, or second-language-learners. The myth of linguistic

homogeneity, this *assumption*, is "seriously out of sync with the sociolinguistic reality of today's" composition classroom as well as "U.S. society at large" (Matsuda 85). Yet, this myth has been perpetuated by a policy of linguistic containment, a process whereby students who have failed to be effectively "socialized into the dominant linguistic practices" of the university are "quarantined" (Matsuda 85-86) in remedial classes or excluded altogether via the admissions process: "the language evidenced in an instance of their writing, as in a written placement essay exam, is taken as evidence of their language use as a whole, which is assumed to be fixed and uniform" (Horner and Trimbur 614).

According to Matsuda, the majority of the U.S. population was—and continuous to be—historically multilingual, but "language differences were generally excluded from [the] English-dominated higher education of the nineteenth century" (87). Despite the establishment of Historically Black Universities and Colleges, African American's access to higher education still did nothing to "affect the dominant image [of the traditional student] because they were physically segregated from the rest of the college student population" (Matsuda 87). Matsuda refers to these institutions as sites of ethnic and linguistic containment because they do just that—keep ethnic and linguistic diversity contained. While the Morrill Act of 1862 (and its extension in 1890) made college education accessible to both women and "students from a wider variety of socioeconomic groups", "non-native speakers of privileged varieties of English" continued to be excluded from higher education (Matsuda 87-88). Their inability to speak "privileged varieties of English was often equated with the speaker's race and intelligence" (Matsuda 87-88); English, "the language of the academy", came to be viewed as "discrete from the language of the outside, associated with students' home neighborhoods or ethnic, class, and racial identities" (Horner and Trimbur 614). These individuals took on an "outside status…based

on the assumption of the fixed state of their language" (Horner and Trimbur 614). English became a language of exclusion as a preservation attempt. I would also suggest it was an attempt to preserve the narrative in its entirety, and those who wrote it, those who continue to write it.

Remembering the Nation: (Re)telling/Revising the U.S. Linguistic Narrative

For the purposes of intellectual consideration, I propose we re-remember the nation, *this* nation as the result of a set of specific discursive acts, it is a discursive community and nationalism is the practice and implementation of that discourse (the narrative) for the purposes of preserving the nation as an entity. In doing so, we identify perhaps the most significant key player in the telling of that story, which is not necessarily any one person in particular. Instead, it is the means by which—*in which*—the story is told, and what that means for those of us who find ourselves as students struggling to identify with a narrative and a language that is not our own.

CHAPTER III

(RE)THEORIZING NATIONALISM

A Brief Survey of Nationalist Movements in European and North American History

Each nationalist movement throughout history has been significant to the study of "the nation" and the individual factors surrounding its construction. Much of "the success of nationalist ideas depends on their wide dissemination in modern societies;" (Kramer 534) it is a discursive process that relies on the widespread communication (and adoption) of an ideology. For the purposes of this body of work, the first half of this chapter will focus on some of the more prominent histories/contexts of nation-building (and subsequent nations) with emphasis on the discursive processes that initiated and/or promoted those movements. This brief survey will start by examining France, specifically the French Revolution, which theorists contend to be the first modern example of the nation and nationalism.

The Language(s) of a Revolution

Though historians have failed to agree upon an exact "date of birth", many cite "the French Revolution as the event and period of nationalism's first full blown manifestation" (Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism* 17). David A. Bell notes the significance of the role of language in this manifestation, stating that "for the first time, large numbers of the French came

to draw the common modern equation between the legal category of nationality and the cultural fact of language" (1405). Bell would go on to argue primarily that the language debate was very much a religious debate as well:

> although the revolutionaries themselves framed the problem of a national language entirely as a political one, in fact their attempts both to promote the local languages…and combat them…cannot be extricated from the debates over religion that convulsed France during these years (1408).

According to Bell, "modern nationalism arose out of, and in opposition to, predominately religious cultural systems" (Bell 1409). Religion is recognized as a socio-cultural, political, practice that serves the purpose of unifying a people just as much as it can potentially divide them, not unlike language. In terms of nationalism and the creation of a nation, religion is just another contributing factor, a factor whose discourse encourages the establishment of the national agenda. Therefore, I will focus more on Bell's history of the revolution strictly within the context of his discussion on language and language policies.

In identifying the correlation between language and nationality, part of the objective was to make all citizens of the state speakers of the French language (as opposed to the various regional dialects in use at the time). Language took primacy, or at least some semblance of it; the French revolutionaries recognized that in order to cooperate in government, they needed to be able to communicate with each other (Bell 1407). Plans for linguistic unification would initially lose priority. Despite this, it is significant that the French recognized how large a role language plays in the "imagination", "invention", of the "nation" or the "nation-state". Gellner and Anderson's conception of the nation (as invented and imagined) fundamentally attributes the nation's formation to the necessity of linguistic unification. Their (Gellner and Anderson) prescribed methodologies for accomplishing this unification differ but the result is the same; it "[depicts] the language policies of the revolution as intrusions by the state or urban society into

largely illiterate rural communities that had previously existed, so to speak, in a linguistic state of nature" (Bell 1408). Enacting language policies was an attempt to "impose order on chaos" (1408); language was regulated for the purposes of expediting unification and furthering the cause.

Prior to the revolution, "linguistic diversity struck few people as a problem" (Bell 1411). However, in years subsequent, increases in literacy rates and the availability of the printed word, "markedly influenced linguistic practices" to the extent that Parisian French "reigned unchallenged" in various political, educational, and social forums. Over the course of the revolution, "local languages…found few defenders" and their "canonical literary works"—the works whose principal purpose, traditionally, is to inform a nation's identity, to express versions of the national narrative—were either forgotten or "treated as 'burlesque' merely by virtue of their language". They were regarded as purely comical. Their primary purpose was solely to illustrate examples of "writing as carnivalesque, capable of expressing meanings not permitted by the conventions of 'polite' usage without necessarily crossing into the territory of the obscene and forbidden" (Bell 1411). Redefining the significance of these works resulted in two things: 1) a change in perception stemming from the degrading discourse surrounding these works (valuing them for their *lack* –and as examples of—linguistic merit), and 2) the underlying implications of such degradation: the inferiority of the language(s). Efforts of linguistic marginalization were so successful, Bell states, that it allowed "the comte de Mirabeau", one of the most prominent leaders in the French National Assembly (governing France during the early stages of the revolution) "[to] speak casually of France as 'a nation of twenty-four million people speaking the same language" (Bell 1412). While we cannot confirm that this was the first time France was referred to as "a nation"—nor that it was indeed a nation of people who spoke the same

language—it is worth noting that there is something to be said about the implications of the comte de Mirabeau's statement. We can interpret that the ability to speak the "same language" is a prerequisite for achieving nationhood and that this assumption is a *natural* characteristic of a nation.

This assumption was not without consequence; it led to a "disdain for, or even blindness to, the country's diversity had strong underpinnings in prevailing linguistic theory" (1412). Dialects were stigmatized (and their speakers along with them) the moment that French grammarians sought to "[define] 'correct' speech". A language policy began to emerge. The years 1789 and 1790 saw a push for linguistic unification, with Abbe Henrí Grégoire at the helm, "[condemning] linguistic diversity" and inciting further discourse on linguistic unification, carefully broaching the issue distinctly as a matter of social equality; "they termed linguistic diversity a barrier to social equality" (Bell 1415).

During the "Reign of Terror" (a period of time between 1793-1794 where those deemed enemies of the Revolution were executed), the French government established an official policy on linguistic uniformity. A report by Bertrand Barère framed France's regional dialects as "four '*foreign'* idioms", formally identifying them as non-French and, subsequently, their speakers as well; 'federalism and superstition speak Breton, emigration and hatred of the Republic speak German, counter-revolution speak Italian, and fanaticism speaks Basque'…" (Bell 1415-1416). By declaring these regional dialects as "non-French", it excluded a population of people who linguistically did not identify with what was being defined as the "French citizen". Language and nationality "cannot be considered separately since they are so closely tied to the ideologies of nationalism" (Smith, *Nationalism* Kindle Locations 268-269). Language is symbolic of nation and nationalism, and nationalism and nation are symbolic of language. Barère's report

accomplished two things: the first recognized language as a means of determining nationality and/or national allegiance (not to be confused necessarily with patriotism, but certainly a part of it); the second: the report was exemplary of how discourse is used to frame, contextualize, assign, and define. Essentially, in this case, how language was/is used to talk about language.

The revolution spanned over a decade, and in that time it "[sought] to mold the diverse population of France into a single nation" (Bell 1437). Speaking the same language became "a requirement of citizenship" and "the idea of French uniform *national* language, rather than just the language of an educated elite, gained the power of ideological charge that it has retained ever since" (Bell 1437). To be recognized as a citizen of France, you had to speak French, making language tantamount to citizenship. However, it was not until relatively recently (1950s) that "the communication systems and narratives that promote nationalist identities have become increasingly significant in the study of nationalism", allowing researchers to consider the role of modern communication in the dissemination of "nationalist ideas" (Kramer 534-535). The French Revolution is only the first example of how those "communication systems," language (and the narratives assigned to/associated with non-privileged versions of language), facilitated the promotion of nationalist ideas. Scholars are recognizing just how much language factors into the "creation" of a nation, as a means of identification, and the significance of that linguistic narrative/the linguistics of the narrative.

Through this examination of language, the nation can be understood as a construction, a story we've been told, a story we continue to tell ourselves, a story that is based on a series certain discursive practices. Before it can become a story, it must be conceptualized, and that concept is then introduced into public discourse, at which point it relies primarily on discursivity and subsequent manifestations of that discursiveness. In order to prove the point that nationalism

and the nation are based in/on discursive practices, it necessary to further explore the pervasiveness of these "manifestations" by examining another country in Europe—Germany—whose citizenship is defined by "contrasting conceptions of 'nationhood,'" a "country with a significant cultural difference," (Kramer 534) whose nation and nationalism, while purported as different in their conception, depend on discourse to propagate German national identity.

Peering through the Prism

The French nationalist movement was virtually all-inclusive—it willingly accepted those who chose to adopt its political and cultural ideals. Germany, however, "has always defined its nation as a 'community of descent'" that "stressed ethnicity and therefore remained closed to others" (Kramer 543), based on "'the *symbolic* resources upon which they draw when they reconstruct boundaries'" of national identity (Zimmer qtd. in Berger 9). Germany maintained a type of exclusivity based on its conceptions of national identity. The construction of identity would inform the construction of the nation itself over time.

Germany's is a history of change. M. Rainer Lepsius acknowledges that, "there is hardly another European nation with a history so full of changes as Germans" and in its conception(s) of the nation (Lepsius 481). As such, "some of the characteristics and functional connections of the nation and nationalism can be analyzed more clearly than holds true for the other West European state" (Lepsius 481). The German nation is built upon a set of myths and, like other nations, maintains a national narrative of its own. However, unlike other nations, Germany's story is—arguably—particular. According to Stefan Berger, the German nation is rooted in history, beginning in the Middle Ages with:

> only a tiny elite of learned clerics and nobleman who occasionally talked about 'nation'. When this discourse began to influence a broader stream of people between 1750 and

> 1850, those who thought about Germany were confronted with one major problem: they could trace the German nation back in history. (1)

The German nation is a "classic case of ethnic nationalism", whose national identity is defined "primarily in terms of blood, common traditions, language and religion rather than in terms of politics" (Berger 9). Germany is a nation that perceived of itself as a "natural" type of nation, one that, Smith writes, "is based partly on the unjustified association of primordialism with an organic type of nationalism" (Smith, *Nationalism* Kindle Locations 1250-1251). In "The integrative revolution," Clifford Geertz writes that the primordial paradigm refers to a kind of "primordial attachment" (Geertz qtd. in *Nationalism* Kindle Location 1255). This kind of attachment relies on the "perceptions and beliefs" of naturalness—how "we, as individuals and members of collectivities, feel and believe in the primordiality of our ethnies and nations – their naturalness, longevity and power", not for a supposed "intrinsic nature" (Smith, *Nationalism* Kindle Locations 1258-1264). In other words, this primordial attachment revolves around an unquestioned conviction of German-ness. The German nation did not spring out of some primordial pool; rather it is a matter of German *identity,* of the *belief* in the "naturality" of its existence.

German devotion "is not so much affection for a particular land as a longing for German feeling and German spirit" (Humboldt qtd. in Greenfield 365). German nationalism defies certain definitions of nation; it does not rely on a connection to land, but to one and other. Germans' primordial attachment to each other was strong enough to function in "the absence of a clearly defined geographical territory for the German nation"; it was of little consequence to people inhabiting the "German lands" up until 1871 (Berger 2). Germany is fascinating in comparison to other nations if we consider that a type of national consciousness, an identity, essentially predated the existence of the nation itself. The nationalism came before the nation, or rather,

those distinct boundaries that—for some—define a nation. France used language to define citizenship; if you were French, you spoke French. The German people were bound, from the "beginning" by how they spoke and perceived of their existence in relation to each other and the land they occupied.

The German lands were comprised mostly of territories without a central authority and whose people did not speak a German dialect (Berger 1). Borders are symbolic; they are a means of identification, not just of a nation, but of its people as well. Germany's lack of "firm geological definitions…gave rise to a strong inclination among German nationalists to define Germany in cultural and linguistic terms" in attempts, perhaps, to unify people concretely as opposed to abstract sentiments of the feeling or belief of belonging (Berger 2). Regardless of certain notions surrounding the establishment of the German nation, it was the product of invention. The only difference is the circumstances in which that invention occurred. The invention of the German nation stemmed primarily from the German peoples' *belief* in their "primordial" origins, their perceived identities, and even their superiority. Things like "orderliness, cleanliness, resilience, and efficiency" Stefan Berger writes, "are not permanent features of an unchanging national character of the Germans" (4). They are simply "culturally produced ways of thinking about and performing the nation" based on collective memory (Berger 4). Collective memory informs identity (and vice-versa); it aids in the construction of those ways of thinking about/performing the nation "through rituals and the symbolic enactment of the past in narrative and non-narrative formats" (Berger 7). Identities "are flexible and situational. They depend on contexts" (Berger 5).

Collective memory—what Berger refers to as a "kaleidoscope: twist the prism and…the pieces fall into place in an entirely different pattern"— is the means through which we

contextualize certain instances. A simple "twist" in the prism and a "nation becomes a discursive field, an arena in which many players negotiate and struggle over the diverse meanings attached to national identities" (Berger 7). Whoever manages to obtain "control" of the prism reserves the ability to decide what facet(s) will inform the reality of the nation; "The architects of German national identity did not, as in other cases, come from the aristocracy and the ruling elite, but from a peculiar class of educated commoners, professional intellectuals" who were dissatisfied with their—in essence, "in-limbo"—standing in the social strata at the time (Greenfield 277). German national consciousness would not take root for quite some time, however this did not deter academics:

> …for whom nationality, being Germans—especially if the German nation could be proven to deserve the respect of others—promised more prestige than either their humble origins or their positions, earned by education and scholarly labors, could secure. (286)

German intellectuals had a vested interest in the makings of a conclusive national identity. It would not be until a new class emerged, a new breed of "unattached" intellectuals that would try their hand at inspiring a national consciousness, specifically through their conception of language as the core construct of one's identity.

German intellectuals eventually "conceived of their nation as a higher reality of philosophy and language which manifested itself in the German *race"* (Kramer 536). German intellectuals "argued that national languages were the essence of human identity" (Kramer 536) which in this context means that to be German is to speak the German language. Language was the means through which individuals "could best assert their will through the life of the nation" (Kramer 536); it was "a reflection of the unique spirit of the people" (Greenfield 368). The German language "became an object of worship", a "reflection of the unique spirit of the people, of its *Volkstum*"—its *folklore*—and "the German was the *Urvolk*" a descendant of the "'original

people'" (Greenfield 368). German nationalism succeeded in "symbolically [elevating] the masses and profoundly changed the nature of status hierarchy in German society," it completely synthesized the individual into the collectivity (Greenfield 369).

The German conception "produced an uncompromising linguistic view of nations that led to fanaticism, violence, and death," a period in history that we are, by now, all too familiar with (Kramer 534-536). Again, we see the role that language plays in constructing the nation. In this instance, language was used as a definitive characteristic of German citizenry. The discourse that surrounded the German language, conceived of it as pure and therefore, Germans who spoke it were also pure. This notion inspired the creation of the German term *Urvolk* or "first people", people who were free of "foreign admixtures" (Greenfield 368). The strength of the *belief* in these attributions of language and legacy or bloodline, was incredibly significant, attributions that were themselves the result of the decisive discourse that surrounded these constructs. German nationalism was the result of specific discursive acts, and language was a means to an end. German national identity was conceived through the incorporation of specific qualities; the way those qualities were talked about—specifically that German "nationality was based on blood"—achieved the construction of the German character and Germany, the nation (Greenfield 368).

France and Germany are exemplary of how nations and nationalism are constructs—products of discourse— of/in a complex narrative. The purpose of highlighting these two nations in particular was to emphasize the dissimilarities in their respective "origin stories", yet it remains that language played a key role in both contexts of national "coming-into-being"; as criteria for determining "belonging" i.e. citizenship, for the purposes of a united populace, but primarily how language was used to speak about *the* language(s) of the nation. It was

discourse—practiced in whatever privileged vernacular—that informed the construction of the nations and nationalisms, and which allowed those certain linguistic vernaculars to take primacy and influence the construction of identity. That said, the following section continues to delve into the construction of identity(s) and the telling of a tale that is perhaps, a little more close to home.

Once Upon a "Land of the Free, Home of the Brave"

The United States of America is the most forthcoming example of this notion of the nation as a narrative; its nation/nationalism—not unlike other nations/nationalisms—was constructed on the basis of identity. American identity was in many ways a reinterpretation of English national identity. North Americans were not *American* until they chose to identify themselves as such. Prior to that "moment", they were English colonists. In America "there was almost no social reality, other than the one the [English] settlers brought with them in their own minds"; they "came with a national identity; it was a given" (Greenfield 402). They perceived "the community to which they belonged as a nation" (Greenfield 402). A national identity was present prior to an American identity, prior to the "institutional framework of the American nation…and national territory," all of which are considered to be "foundations of nationality", thus emphasizing "the symbolic nature of nationality" (Greenfield 402). In this framework, Nations do not awaken nationalities, nationalities are invented and imposed upon individuals, thus leading them to *believe* "that they are indeed united and as a result to become united" (Greenfield 402). National identity is responsible for taking populations of people and bringing them together, and "this applies more rigorously to America" because of its "inherited" ideological belief that American society was indeed a nation (Greenfield 402). According to Greenfield, it is arguably the "ideal nation"— a "purer example of a national community than

any other" because its "seed population…consisted of citizens of a nation who brought the conviction of their nationality with them to a new continent" (403). These were people who already perceived of themselves as belonging to a nation, a sentiment that would go on to be challenged, reinforced, and (arguably) completed only after the Civil War once the South reunited with the Union.

Founded on the "cultural basis of Protestant English *ethnie"*, the United States is a nation,

> Bound by a common language, common laws, shared political symbols and a 'secular religion' – saluting the flag, celebrating public holidays, the cult of the Constitution and the founding fathers, commemorations of the glorious war dead, and so on. (Smith, *Nationalism* Kindle Locations 1005-1007)

The United States has always been a multicultural, "polyethnic and plural nation" thanks to the influence of slavery, interactions with Native American tribes, and a constant influx of immigrant populations (Greenfield 482). But then again, "America has been a nation of immigrants from the beginning" (Greenfield 482). The national narrative, however, fails to reflect this diversity, primarily privileging the American colonial history instead. When the colonists emigrated from England, they brought their English nationalism with them, and a sense of national community and identity along with it. Colonists' English nationalism, accompanied by certain inbred English tendencies—particularly a patriotism of rebellion—would ultimately lead to their seeking independence from England (Greenfield 414). Justification for revolt was not far behind, as sentiments expressing American potential for obtaining power and prosperity entered the discourse:

> The growing realization of America's strength and resources further stimulated the brewing disaffection [between the colonies and Great Britain]… "America, an immense territory, favored by nature with all the advantages of climate, soils, great navigable rivers, lakes, etc., must become a great country, populous and mighty; and will, in less time than is generally conceived, be able to shake off any shackles that may be imposed

upon her…" (Greenfield 414-418)

Amidst tensions with Britain, it would not be long before the colonists would find themselves more inclined to notions of independence. Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* only served to cement the public's readiness to cut ties with England, arguing in short that the time had come to part ways, an endeavor they succeeded in, as we well know.

The American Revolution, Hahns Kohn proposes, was not so much a reaction to oppression, rather a matter of freedom and "the promise of still greater freedom" (272). "Freedom" and "liberty;" both terms that would go on to define and inform American identity/character. Enter Noah Webster, an American schoolteacher, who would take it upon himself to "[lay] the foundations of an American language and culture," citing that as an independent nation, America required a national character (Kohn 300-301). He rationalized that "'Nothing can be more ridiculous than a servile imitation of the manners, language, and the vices of foreigners,'" distinguishing himself and other Americans like him from the non-Americans (Webster qtd. in Kohn 300). Webster would play a pivotal role in the establishment of a cultural nationalism, authoring a spelling book that for a significant period of time "was second only to the Bible in shaping the mind of the nation in its infancy," its purpose: to initiate linguistic standardization (Kohn 301). The [American] English language, at least in Webster's grand scheme, would achieve dominant global linguistic status. In an effort to achieve this, he set about establishing the standard for an educational curriculum, calling for,

> "a selection of essays, respecting the settlement and geography of America; the history of the late revolution and of the most remarkable characters [i.e. the Founding Fathers] and events that distinguished it, and a compendium of the principles of the federal and provincial governments should be the principal schoolbook,". (Salvatorelli qtd. in Kohn 302)

Education would become a means of indoctrination into American national culture, whose goal

was to "imbue youth with patriotic feelings and to act as a much needed bond of unification" (Kohn 304). Language would play a key role in this indoctrination process. American nationalism, Kohn writes "was not based upon language, nor upon external symbols; it was founded upon an idea" (307). Nonetheless, it was an idea where language just so happened to play a crucial role. Again, it is worth reiterating that English was "the language the Founding Fathers declined to mandate," as it was conveniently "already there, at moments of settlement and subsequent nativity" (Trimbur, "Uneasy Settlement" 23). English was taken for granted; it was simply understood as the primary language of communication. Webster understood the importance of language in relation to the cultivation of the American character, but he "wished to go even farther than a distinct language"; Webster "propagated an American 'fashion'". Implicit in this fashion is the linguistic aspect; English became "a matter of custom rather than law, operating through cultural formations instead of state mandate" (Trimbur, "The Politics of U.S. English" 576). Granted, while Webster's idea of "fashion" was "primarily an expression of economic nationalism" it was also "an expression of the American Spirit", a way of *being,* and part of being American was to speak English, or at least that was the assumption (Kohn 307). So, when the Founder's declined to dictate an official language, they also did not do much in the way of "[prohibiting] government action in the realm of language" either (Trimbur, "Uneasy Settlement" 24).

Thomas Jefferson perceived of "a nation composed of all racial and linguistic strains", thus he "strongly opposed the settlement of immigrants in compact groups, and advocated for their wide distribution" for the purposes of an expedited integration amongst other settlers (Kohn 309). Those immigrants would then find themselves required to assimilate to dominant language practices in order to engage fully in the community. The introduction of the printing press and

subsequent print material—most if not all of which was in English—allowed for the dissemination of materials on a much larger scale. American English began overtaking the colonies as the dominant language in practice, requiring non-native speakers to assimilate or be rendered incapable of participating fully in the community. English took "linguistic priority" and "its authenticity as the language of settlement" (Trimbur, "The Politics of U.S. English" 580). was enforced and reinforced on more than one occasion. Again, as with France and Germany, in the United States, language becomes synonymous with citizenship. In order to engage in American society people had to adopt the language. Language is the defining characteristic of national identity, in this case, the English language and American national identity, specific examples of which will be explored in the following chapter.

Nationalism as Rhetoric, A Form of Discourse

Language is used rhetorically to establish the identity of a nation, in its construction of a national narrative, and its nationalism. I surveyed the nations and the nationalist movements above, to prove not only language's role in the construction of nations and their national identities, but to showcase how language itself, is used to incite nationalist movements. In other words, to theorize nationalism itself as a form of rhetoric. According to Anderson,

> …nationalism is mainly a form of discourse, a type of narrative that imagines the political community as finite, sovereign and horizontally cross-class. Nations are based on vernacular 'print-communities', that is, reading publics of vernacular print-languages and literatures – mainly novels and newspapers, which portrayed the imagined political community in sociologically vivid and easily identifiable ways. (*Nationalism* Kindle Locations 1791-1794)

Indeed, while print media was fundamental to the spread of nationalism, it is important to note

that the discourses that sparked nationalist movements were initiated first and foremost in the mind and were promoted/communicated verbally. The French Revolution was spurred by a discourse of discontent with the current regime. As a result, the founding of the French nation was based on a narrative that recognized the importance of communication systems (language) in unifying a population of people with varying dialects. The German nation equated language with race in its national narrative, which would in turn, inform the construction of the nation, establishing language as one of the defining characteristics of citizenship and thus, national identity. In the North American colonies, language was also used as a characteristic of both citizenship and identity. Noah Webster's efforts glorified and standardized the American English language, giving it primacy in the colonies over all other languages; it is a standard that continues to be perpetuated to this day. Webster's influence, among other circumstances, helped shape American linguistic memory that is based on a myth of English linguistic homogeneity in the United States. However, the following chapter seeks to disrupt the narrative that has contributed to reifying the place of English, primarily in U.S. education and college first year composition.

CHAPTER IV

DISRUPTING THE STANDARD: AMERICAN ENGLISH

The previous chapter theorized nationalism as a form of rhetoric, as being a set of distinct discursive acts, with emphasis on how language—historically—has influenced the construction of a nation, its narrative, and subsequently, its national identity. This chapter examines American English's role in the construction of American linguistic identity primarily within the context of educational institutions. Americans spend the majority of their formative years in school where they are taught about who they are/should be, where they supposedly came from, and where they fit into the national narrative. By applying a critical lens to this process, we can begin to see how the American English language has been used to shape—and even exclude—citizens and would-be citizens into a people that promote American exceptionalist rhetoric.

Educational institutions act as strategic sites of cultural indoctrination, functioning under an English Only ideology that "equates the acquisition of English with patriotism and Americanization" (Wiley and Lukes 519). Speaking English is, in large part, what it means to be *American.* Noah Webster wanted to set North America and North Americans apart by cutting ties from Great Britain and everything associated with it, including the English language. He took it upon himself to construct American identity, defined by its own language and its own culture. He emphasized the significance of establishing American English as the standard, arguing that it was a purer form of the English language, destined for global dominance. Today, American English is a definitive characteristic of the American identity and its culture, achieved through

Webster's intervention in educational practices. American English has still not been officially mandated, however it continues to be the language used to conduct all official affairs; it has been accepted as the dominant language.

Linguistic Sanitization

People seeking citizenship in the U.S. must go through a "Naturalization" process. They are required to "undergo a five-year bureaucratic ordeal…culminating in citizenship and English tests," (Rippberger and Staudt 10) indicating that one's ability to speak English is tantamount to citizenship, regardless of a lack in official policy. In a nation where the ability to speak its language is implicitly synonymous with citizenship (but whose "citizens" are an amalgamation of different language backgrounds and experiences) there is bound to be some discrepancy in the national narrative/characterization of the country., i.e. who its people *are* and who they have been.

Languages are institutionalized through policy. Institutions—whether political, legal, or educational— tend to valorize (privilege) certain languages over others and valorized languages are naturalized. Originally, educational institutions valorized American English, resulting in a tacit policy of English-Only. Educational institutions naturalized American English, implementing it in curriculum as the language of instruction and even the subject of study. Naturalizing American English rendered it invisible to scrutiny; it was understood without question as the language spoken in America by Americans but not without "forgetting" others.

Webster "forgot" to account for non-Englishes (i.e. creole, pidgin, etc.) in the midst of his efforts to create a standard, uniform version of American English;

> …the uniformity that [he] had in mind, as has so often been the case in the United States, is the language of the New England settlers, the Anglo-Saxon descendants whose own regional dialect became the surrogate for a missing English of national unity. (Trimbur, "Uneasy Settlement" 36)

Webster argued that the people of New England had been living in a linguistic bubble, so-to-speak, "where they '[had] not been exposed to any of the causes which effect great changes in languages and manners'" (Trimbur, "Uneasy Settlement" 36). Theirs was already a "pure" language and therefore a worthy attribute of the new American character. Webster shaped "'American linguistic history into a final open-ended chapter of the Anglo-Saxon'" narrative and cemented American English's place in memory (M.P. Kramer qtd. in Trimbur, "Uneasy Settlement" 37). Consequently, "this linguistic memory has been institutionalized in English studies, U.S. college composition, and the modern U.S. university" (Trimbur 37). Discussing the dominant narrative that has informed the pervasive linguistic myth in history is not enough. We must also begin to examine "the relentless monolingualism of American linguistic culture, the strategies by which English is meant to replace and silence other languages" so that we might be able to undo what has been done (37). These strategies of silence and replacement are enacted through a nation's educational institutions; it is a type of acculturation (a process of assimilating into the dominant culture). Nations, according to Gellner, "are expressions of a literate, school-transmitted 'high culture' supported by specialists and by a mass, standardized, compulsory, public education system"; in short, nations are the product of an educated society (*Nationalism* Kindle Locations 1153-1156).

In the United States, schools are an integral part of the national fabric. In a nation that is made up of a "mix of nationalities and languages, education attempts to teach children country-

specific nationalism" (Rippberger and Staudt 2). Schools continue to weave the national narrative and instill an "imagined" sense of community, "imagined" so as to encourage individuals to enter the fold, but in doing so, they simultaneously become communities of exclusion. For example, through "curricula on history, civics, social studies, holidays, and cultural celebrations, children receive both explicit and subtle messages about what it means to be 'American'" (Rippberger and Staudt 2). An identity (or identities) so ill-defined force those "in between"—so-called "transnationalists"— to grapple with who they are and where they fall on the national spectrum. Educational institutions assume the responsibility of churning out "good citizens" on behalf of the nation, but "citizenship and nationalism are complex, involving both identity and civic virtues that are taught in and out of school" (Rippberger and Staudt 2). The reality of who students are outside of an educational setting sometimes competes with who they are being "taught" to be throughout their educational careers. While strides have been made to move away from our "previous melting pot agendas that focused on an imaginary 'oneness,'" U.S. culture and educational curriculum still has a tendency to "attempt to assimilate diverse people to a European-centered mold" (Rippberger and Staudt 3) beginning (and *ending*) with a type of *linguistic sanitization.* This tendency can be attributed to the establishment of a "unidirectional monolingualism" which,

> …has been codified…in melting-pot ideologies as a 'natural' language shift to the use of English only (with consequent loss of mother tongue) that occurs by the third generation in immigrant families, thereby making bilingualism and the maintenance of home languages appear to be aberrant and un-American. (Trimbur, "Uneasy Settlement" 37)

For all intents and purposes, it is "a three-generation process of Anglicization" that ultimately produces a third, monolingual, generation whose knowledge of the "mother tongue" is fragmented (Alba et al. 467). The role that schools play in this process is significant.

First generation non-English speaking families are at an immediate disadvantage because speaking English is largely a necessity in order to receive an education. In the U.S., "schools often function to maintain a status quo within society despite the ideal of the American meritocracy" or that one's educational merit alone determines their success in the social strata (Cobb-Roberts et al. 18). In reality, success tends to be determined by several factors, namely "family background, social networking, and elite cultural traits, as well as individual effort", though a "quality" education certainly cannot hurt your chances (Cobb-Roberts et al. 18). Unfortunately, most of these advantages are those that first generation immigrant families lack. Many of these families typically come to this country with the intention of making a better life for themselves and their families. However, they are quick to discover that:

> The socioeconomic payoff from learning English is underscored by the finding that the lack of English proficiency is a serious disadvantage in the U.S. labor market, even if it can be ameliorated for some self-employed persons and participants in ethnic economic enclaves. (Alba et al. 468)

Some first generation members of these immigrant families may pick up English, but they have the tendency to default to their mother tongue (or "home language") when conversing at home. Despite this, parents are quick to stress the socioeconomic importance of learning English to their children. As a result, this second generation is primarily made up of bilingual individuals (as opposed to their monolingual predecessors). Upon entering the public school system, this generation's exposure to the English language becomes more widespread as they are encouraged to interact with instructors and peers. For some, English often becomes a preferred method of communication at home, as well. This second generation gives way to a third generation, the majority of which are likely to grow up in a monolingual household, resulting in the completion of a process of Anglicization over the course of a three-generational period (Alba et al. 467-468).

Closer examination of this trajectory reveals how language is implicitly and explicitly purported to be the key to unlocking "success" in U.S. national culture.

In his treatise on the nation and nationalism, Gellner states: "by training a mobile, literate workforce, nations in turn support industrialism, just as the latter encourages nationalism" (Smith, *Nationalism* Kindle Locations 1155-1156). In the U.S., success is determined by one's socioeconomic standing. Socioeconomic standing is determined in large part by an individual's education, along with a few other—with the obvious exception of "family background"—acquired traits (all of which require a certain linguistic competence). It is not exactly a well-kept secret: "everyone from politicians and educational policymakers to non-English speaking immigrants" are aware that "a knowledge of English is virtually required to get an education, to develop professionally, and to participate in civic life" (Horner and Trimbur 594). Language and language policies must be understood as "[instruments] of political, social, and economic control and…language planning as an instrument of social stratification"; language is equivalent to "social capital" (Wiley and Lukes 512-515). Training a "mobile, literate workforce…supports industrialism" which in turn, "encourages nationalism" (*Nationalism* Kindle Locations 1155-1156). When there is a group of people working towards a common goal (their well-being and subsequently, the well-being of the nation), achieving said goal(s) is contingent upon their ability to identify with each other. Their social transactions require a standard, effective, means of *communication*. For those seeking entry into this type of community, linguistic assimilation becomes absolutely necessary. In short, without adopting the English language in this country, an individual cannot hope to fully realize what it means to be a "good citizen", a productive citizen in *American* society. However, assimilation is not without consequence, especially if we

consider the significant relationship between language and its role in aiding the construction of individual identities.

Language & Identity

The U.S. has always been multilingual and multicultural, but our educational practices do little to reflect such a multifaceted history. There are "unwritten norms of language, regulated by power and class" that "show what we value about language and national identity" (Ripperberger and Staudt 93). Our values, "*our"* values*,* as a nation—the ones that inform our individual and collective national identity—are the product of an Anglo-Saxon hegemony dating back to the colonial period. Those values are reflected in U.S. educational curriculum; "books, pedagogy, and teaching styles all embody culture, power, class, and gender relations, privileging" an Anglo-Saxon, English-Only narrative (Ripperberger and Staudt 96). The context in which these students are taught/learn in is not their own, it is based on a history, a narrative written by and for a specific kind of people in *their* language: English. In the United States "U.S. English figures as a loss of memory, a language of forgetting whose very ground of speech is the displacement of other languages" and it has succeeded in that venture, but at a price (Trimbur, "Uneasy Settlement" 37).

Language is more than just a means of communication; it is the thread that maintains the connection between a people and their culture. Language is the means through which identities are constructed. When an individual engages with language, "they are not only exchanging information with their interlocutors; they are also constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense

of who they are and how they relate to the social world" (Norton 410). Individuals are constantly constructing and dismantling their identity, endeavoring to insert themselves into whichever discourse community they seek entry into. Entry is determined primarily by one's ability to adopt the dominant form of discourse (language, vernacular, dialect, etc.). If we conceive of communities as networks of people with a shared set of beliefs or values, we can make the connection between those values and language. Language is essentially "number one" on the list of determinants for entry into a community; in other words, it is *valued*. Identity is determined by values and people *value* their language for its ability to keep them connected to each other.

Language facilitates the creation of communities and communities go on to establish cultures; "language and culture extend beyond patterns of everyday life to include shared understandings that shape social experiences and relationships" (Rippberger and Staudt 10). The "dominant paradigms, predefined concepts that exist are unquestionable, unchallengeable, are transmitted to us through the culture," (Anzaldúa 38) and they often do remain unquestioned and unchallenged. The United States has always been a patriarchal society whose culture is governed by "those in power—men" (Anzaldúa 38). Men like Noah Webster, who took it upon himself to endorse a standardized English as the language of the American citizenry. Men like the Founding Fathers, who failed to mandate a language policy because theirs was a nation envisioned as English speakers. English was viewed as inevitable. Those who would seek citizenship in the U.S. would have to assimilate, a type of linguistic "Join, or Die" mentality, or settle on the fringes of American society.

The inability to speak a language is the inability to participate completely in a culture, in this context, American culture. Those of us, for example, who are victims of a generational linguistic deterioration, are not just losing out on a language, but a culture and a community

along with it, and thus, a potential piece of ourselves or who we could have been, our *identity*. In the face of such linguistic adversity, individuals are required to, in some respects, *sacrifice* who they are (or who their children can be/could have been) because that is the price of citizenship. What does that mean for those of us who find ourselves stuck in an "in-between" where we constantly struggle to define who we are after years of a system attempting to do that for us? It is a system that seeks to confine us—as well as those who came before—to a box; it fails to acknowledge that "the social identity of immigrants can be described as in some ways in process: they are of no *fixed* or single national, regional, or linguistic identity" (Horner and Trimbur 610). Theirs is an identity in flux, caught between two worlds and who they were versus who they now have to be to succeed.

In a society that promotes education as the only means by which to achieve success—in the socioeconomic sense—the continuation of one's education beyond secondary schooling is crucial. There is hardly any time for an individual to ponder who they were/are, should they choose to ponder those things at all. Assimilation at this point becomes a necessity. The concept of higher education is just another part of the narrative this nation sells to students, furthering the nationalist agenda or the "well-being" of the nation and its individuals as defined by socioeconomic success. Like schools, universities serve their own purpose, functioning as a filter for those who enter, deciding who is worthy and who is not, one site in particular acting as a means of containing those who have not fully situated themselves in the linguistic/academic culture privileged by the institution.

College, Linguistic Containment, & the Composition Classroom

However, post-secondary institutions "have found ways to exclude more substantive forms of language differences" primarily through their admissions systems (Matsuda 85). Prior to entering a college or university, students are subjected to a string of standardized tests. These tests are designed to assess students' "college-readiness" in reading, writing, mathematics, and science, but Geoffrey Maruyama argues, "threshold scores used by ACT and others do not adequately assess college readiness" (253). Failure is often attributed to "individual students' inadequate academic preparation" rather than considering their "unprivileged language backgrounds" or issues with the English language itself (Matsuda 86). The assumption that incoming college students were already "native speakers of…privileged varieties of English had already been firmly established" long before (Matsuda 87). In the past, restricted access to higher education on the basis of "ethnicity, gender, religious, socioeconomic, and linguistic backgrounds" painted a portrait of the "prototypical student" in U.S. college classrooms (Matsuda 82-87). This mythical student—the result of a sheer lack of diversity in higher education—was an English-speaker, further perpetuating the myth of linguistic homogeneity. The "prototypical student" construct has gone so far as to influence pedagogical practices that fail to take diversity into consideration. Consequently, instructors conduct their classrooms based on preconceived—oftentimes *misconceived*—notions of who their students really are, writing them off when they fail to display certain glorified characteristics;

> Whatever the sources of their [supposed] incompetence-whether rooted in the limits they were born with or those that were imposed upon them by the world they grew up in-the fact seems stunningly, depressingly obvious: they will never "make it" in college unless someone radically lowers the standards. (Shaughnessy 235)

Some instructors may see limitations where there is simply difference and it inhibits their "ability to recognize and address the presence of [those] differences" properly, primarily because teachers themselves are the product of a system functioning under English-Only assumptions and ideology (Matsuda 83).

Students who demonstrate some semblance of linguistic difference—and consequently, linguistic limitations—are subjugated to linguistic containment. First year composition courses in particular have been "[sites] of linguistic containment, quarantining from the rest of higher education students who have not yet been socialized into dominant linguistic practices" (Matsuda 85). As a method of rectifying students' language differences,

> …students are placed in non-credit "remedial" courses where they are expected to erase the traces of their language differences before they are allowed to enroll in the required composition course. (Matsuda 86)

Students who are unable to meet the remedial course requirements are basically barred entry into higher education all together. First of all, simply terming these courses "remedial" implies the existence of a deficiency; courses like these purport to "fix" students, because evidently, they are somehow broken; when in actuality, they just don't match up to that misconceived ideal of what a student is/should be. These students were individuals that spoke a different language, one that "that reflected not only a different class but also a different race, culture, and historical experience" (Smitherman 14). While recent scholarship has sought to address students' language differences, it is still the case that "language issues are inextricably tied to the goal of college composition" whose central purpose is to "help students become 'better writers'" (Matsuda 84). In the context of a college classroom, becoming a "better writer" refers to:

> the ability to produce English that is unmarked in the eyes of teachers who are custodians of privileged varieties of English or, in more socially situated pedagogies, of an audience of native English speakers who would judge the writer's credibility or even intelligence on the basis of grammaticality. (Matsuda 84)

In effect, FYC, historically, was vested with the task of perfecting writers, under the assumption, of course, that students "have already internalized a privileged variety of English" (Matsuda 84) in all its grammatical and rhetorical complexities, an expectation that informed students' academic experiences since 1872.

The FYC course dates back to the late nineteenth century where it was first instituted at Harvard. Education was considered a privilege enjoyed, of course, by the privileged, or members of society held in high esteem for their socioeconomic success. Needless to say, student bodies at the time lacked diversity, both in terms of gender and ethnicity. The first composition courses incorporated the study of the classical languages (Greek and Latin) as a method of learning to compose in English. Harvard's decision to update the curriculum (which would go on to influence other institutions of higher education),

> shifted the terms of English work from the movement *among* languages to writing instruction in English only. In an important sense, the language policy of the modern university [began] to emerge in recognizable form as writing in English is severed from its former association with the classical languages. (Horner and Trimbur 601)

The "territorialization" of modern languages into separate areas of study allowed English to assume dominant status at the institutional level, not necessarily because it was the only language primarily spoke in North America, but because of its unifying properties.

Written and spoken English established and reinforced a "sense of nationhood," but one based on the very same Anglo-Saxon hegemonic historical narrative that would inspire the myth behind linguistic homogeneity in this country to begin with (Horner and Trimbur 601). The success of social movements in the 60's and 70's led to the implementation of new educational legislation (Upward Bound, open enrollment, affirmative action, etc.). The intention was to try and "redress the academic exclusion of and past injustices inflicted upon Blacks, Browns,

women, and other historically marginalized groups" (Smitherman 13). Upon entering the university, these students would create new challenges for instructors who had little to no experience working with students from other linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The Conference on College Composition and Communication recognized the change in classroom dynamic as something warranting a response. A Language Policy Committee was charged with drafting a "major language [policy]" for the organization that acknowledged students' language differences (Smitherman 7). In 1974, their efforts would yield the "Students Rights to Their Own Language" resolution. While many applauded CCCC, others rejected the policy entirely arguing that it would only "doom speakers of 'divergent' dialects to failure in higher education by telling them that their stigmatized language was acceptable" when it was not (Smitherman 24). The Students' Rights resolution, though informative, "did not go far enough in practice" (Smitherman 27). Despite receiving official recognition, without any concrete prescribed solutions for how to address language difference in the classroom, composition instructors were at a loss.

Furthermore, containment procedures "kept language differences in the composition classroom from reaching a critical mass, thus creating the false impression that all language differences could and should be addressed elsewhere" (Matsuda 93). Attempts to filter these students out contributed to the reification of the English language. They cemented "the social identity of U.S. Americans as English speakers"; privileged written English; and went on to influence future pedagogy and the development of curriculum whose primary goal is a "mastery of written English" (Horner and Trimbur 607). The reality of the situation, however, is that "such an expectation…does not accurately reflect the student population in today's college composition classrooms" (Matsuda 84). Instructors' prescribed solutions to issues of language difference and poor student writing tend to be preoccupied with the grammatical aesthetics of

students' work. When students failed to produce the kinds of writing valued by the institution, their instructors would express frustration, holding students "accountable for what is not being taught" (Matsuda 84). Students are subject to an "ideology of blame"; "the communicative burden" tends to reside with the speaker—or in this case, the *writer*—alone, making it easier to "to blame the victim" for their unsatisfactory performance when in fact, the only thing they are guilty of is being different *than* (Wiley and Lukes 517). They were victims of a system that forced them to reconstitute their cultural and linguistic identities so as to mold themselves in the image of the American ideal.

Students experience several similar instances of victimization over the course of their educational careers, prior even to their entry into post-secondary institutions. As a result, many students develop a negative attitude towards writing as a result and learning to write is viewed as a hostile act. Ideally, college composition courses are "a way to make sure all students entering the university or college write at a certain level" that would allow them to enter into the academic discourse (Ybarra 20). Writing courses that revolve around the misconception that "writing consists primarily of syntactic and mechanical concerns" (Downs and Wardle 555) do little to improve students "understanding of how to write an academic paper" (Ybarra 69). Regardless of instruction, students' improvement is minimal at best, leading them to believe that they are not intelligent enough or that they are "bad writers";

> The student, already conditioned to the idea that there is something wrong with his English and that writing is a device for magnifying and exposing this deficiency, risks as little as possible on the page, often straining with what he does write to approximate the academic style and producing in the process what might better be called "written Anguish" rather than English… (Shaughnessy 235)

Students are often wary of the composition classroom, angry even, because they have been made to feel like they don't *belong*, and they are right to feel that way because the first year composition course was not conceived in the context of a multilingual institution.

(Re)contextualizing FYC

Students who are speakers of other languages, non-privileged dialects of English, or World Englishes, have to grapple with who they are and what the institution requires them to become in order to "fit in". Entering students who do not meet certain linguistic qualifications are shuffled into courses for the purposes of fashioning them into the good academic citizen that they are supposed to be. Students who are subjected to this process are either subjugated or, in some cases, discouraged from pursuing higher education entirely, which is what makes their experiences in FYC courses so important to their overall success. Currently, there is a plethora of scholarship addressing language difference and the value of respecting and acknowledging "Alternative Discourses", but American English still maintains its place of privilege in the academy. Therefore, instructors of FYC should be conscious of the historical/political contexts that led to conceptions of American English and Composition course design. To accomplish this, it would require instructors to continue to rethink the presence of language difference, as well as the role of language in higher education and academic discourse. We might even consider introducing a new discourse centralized around themes of language difference, a discourse of difference.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Brief Overview

In previous chapters, I interpreted theoretical frameworks behind nationalism in order *reinterpret* nationalism as a discursive phenomenon. I endeavored to theorize nationalism as a series of discursive acts; the nation is conceived through a narrative and its "well-being" is maintained through language policies that function to preserve national autonomy, identity, and "encourage" national unity. Nationalism, according to Smith is "an ideology that places the well-being of the nation at the centre of its concerns and seeks to promote its well-being", primarily, I argue, through the use of language (*Nationalism* Kindle Location 299). Chapter 2 reviewed literature in the following areas: nationalism, language difference, and composition. The first half identified existing theories and the dominant paradigms of nationalism, followed by an examination of competing definitions for "nation". The remainder of Chapter 2 briefly delved into the historical context behind American linguistic memory, the tacit English-Only policy, and its influence on college composition curriculum. The latter of which (college composition) functions under that "English-Only" policy, perpetuates it, and promotes the "values" of American culture to a—now, more than ever—culturally and linguistically diverse student body. Chapter 3 surveyed examples of nations and national movements where language was used to explicitly define national citizenship.

Language is often cited as synonymous with citizenship; the inability to speak or adopt a language prevents one from engaging fully in the national community and contributing to the national agenda/well-being. Chapter 4 sought to explore the repercussions (in an American context) of using language as the definitive characteristic for determining citizenship and inclusion in the nation. I have endeavored to re-tell the history of this (the United States of America) nation by emphasizing American English's configuration in our collective memory. I examined schools as sites where national character is constructed, and subsequently, reconstituted, through an acculturation process that relies heavily on the adoption of dominant linguistic practices. I established the significance of first year college composition classrooms, notably for their history as sites of linguistic containment. I have implied that institutions of higher education are places of privilege that perpetuate a standardized form of discourse that students either successfully socialize into or are excluded from altogether.

In this chapter, I will discuss potential "remedies" to curtail that threat of exclusion in the composition classroom as a result of language differences. Excluding students on the basis of their language is, I would argue, counterproductive to promoting the actual "well-being" of the nation. Exclusion simply ensures the preservation of the dominant Anglo-Saxon national narrative that relies heavily upon the English language to characterize and communicate its story. There are conversations we can initiate, as instructors—and scholars—that would allow us to make our students (and other instructors) aware of their participation in an educational system founded upon that very same Anglo-Saxon narrative. We should reflect on that history that has failed to take language difference (and different language *users*) into account. We must consider the ramifications for this lack of inclusion so that we can stop viewing difference as a detriment and start conceiving of it as an asset.

A Different Discourse, A Discourse of Difference

A common purpose of the FYC courses is to prepare students to write at the university level, and as such, instructors and students should be encouraged to think about what it means to write academically for/in the university. What are instructors asking students to sacrifice in the process? When students "learn" English, they are "making complex ideological and social" decisions, when students *write* in English, they are engaging in a similar type of decision-making (Canagarajah, *Resisting Linguistic Imperialism* 57). FYC socializes students into academic discourse where a standard variety of English is the privileged and primary method of communication; students with language differences (second language learners or speakers of unprivileged dialects, i.e. African American Vernacular English) who fail to successfully adopt the privileged dialect are less likely to be recognized or accepted into the academic community.

To combat this overarching notion that writing/*being* an academic means to speak English and to speak a "standardized" variety, composition teachers must "reimagine the composition classroom as the multilingual space that it is, where the presence of language differences is the default" rather than a deficiency (Matsuda 93). FYC Instructors must start talking and thinking about their students—and students' language backgrounds—differently to promote a discourse that acknowledges and validates students' differences. As instructors, we must recognize and respect students' language difference. Furthermore, FYC instructors might also benefit from talking/thinking differently about this so-called standardized version of English as another dialect that should be no more or less privileged than any other. Before we can hope to accomplish this, instructors must look back in order to move forward by examining the history of the English language; one that has been (and *still is*) "deeply implicated in struggles for

dominance against other languages, with conflicting implications for the construction of identity, community, and culture of local people" (Canagarajah, *Resisting Linguistic Imperialism* 57). These battles for linguistic dominance have been waged and won again and again as demographics change and "[endanger] the hegemony of English" (Reyhner 75). Battles are still being "fought", notably in places across the country where populations are historically diverse. However, none are perhaps more complex than those battles along the U.S./Mexico border, on the precipice of two nations. The U.S./Mexico border is an "'in-between [place],' where people share common ground that goes beyond the land itself to include the exchange of ideas and practices" informed by two cultures merged into one (Rippberger and Staudt 8).

Teaching in The "In-Between"

A border region is a place where "two worlds [merge] to form a third country—a border culture" (Anzaldúa 25). Border sites exemplify the consequences for those aforementioned "conflicting implications"—regarding linguistic/national identity, community, and cultural constructions. Borders are where languages, nationalities, and identities, clash and "co-exist"; students bring these internal and external conflicts (sometimes consciously, other times *subconsciously)* with them into the writing classroom. In border communities and classrooms, English is part of a "controversial history" (Canagarajah, *Resisting Linguistic Imperialism* 57). This controversial history informed the identity of a generation (as well as generations to follow);

> I remember being caught speaking Spanish at recess—that was good for three licks on the knuckles with a sharp ruler. I remember being sent to the corner of the classroom for "talking back" to the Anglo teacher when all I was trying to do was tell her how to pronounce my name. "If you want to be American, speak 'American.' If you don't like it, go back to Mexico where you belong." (Anzaldúa 75)

Stories like this are all too familiar to those whose families, grandparents, and parents, were educated in schools along the border. They are part of the U.S./Mexico border narrative, the part that depicts the struggle encountered by those caught between two worlds, two nations, and two national identities. Nationalism on the border is either weak or strong; people either "feel part of both nations" (as opposed to just the one) or they "overemphasize differences to create a sense of national solidarity" (Rippberger and Staudt 8). Whatever the case may be, "ultimately the territorial line represents both the frontlines and limits of national sovereignty" where one national narrative competes with the other, creating a third border narrative where English is remembered for its controversial role as a means of imposing American nationality on those who were not of Anglo descent (Rippberger and Staudt 8). We cannot escape the reality of the situation; "English is colored by these conflicts of the past", making it especially important for FYC instructors to "develop a historical perspective on their profession and the language" in the communities where they teach (Canagarajah, *Resisting Linguistic Imperialism* 57). As teachers, we constantly stress the importance of context to our students, but it is time we started considering the significance of the contexts in which we are teaching, as well.

There is still an "'ongoing 'concerted effort of assimilation and subordination of the Mexican population, especially through Americanization programs in schools and the imposition of the English language at all costs'" (Reyhner 76). The unfortunate irony today is that many FYC instructors in border regions are themselves "Hispanic". Some of these instructors are in the classroom; they have become the gateway; they are a testament to the success of assimilation/subordination systems, systems that, in the past, literally and metaphorically slapped the "Mexican" out of them. Developing a historical/professional perspective would provide instructors (and not just those who are Hispanic) with the ability to reflect on their own

experiences, perhaps even recognize themselves as a product of Americanization. This would allow instructors to acknowledge the detriments of a composition classroom that does not respect the presence of language differences. Instructors (and not just those exclusively situated along border regions) can then begin to overcome English linguistic imperialism by moving towards not just multilingual, but *translingual* perceptions and classroom practices.

Transcending the Linguistic Norm via Translingualism

Translingualism "moves us beyond a consideration of individual or monolithic languages" (Canagarajah, *Literacy as Translingual Practice* 1). Translingualism refers to "a shuttling between languages and a negotiation of diverse linguistic resources for situated construction of meaning"; it allows us to forgo the traditional multi/mono-lingual dichotomy that assumes "that cross-language relations and practices matter only to a specific group of people…[multilinguals]" (Canagarajah, *Literacy as Translingual Practice* 1-2). A translingual approach to language "emphasizes that what we treat as 'standard English' or 'monolingual' texts are themselves hybrid"; they are versions of languages, *dialects*, whose "labels are ideological constructs that mask the diversity inherent in all acts of writing and communication" (Canagarajah, *Literacy as Translingual Practice* 3). A translingual orientation is how instructors can, ideally, start to combat/challenge past and present discursive practices in academia that privilege "standard" English and perpetuate a tacit English-Only policy.

Viewing language through a translingual lens allows us to recontextualize "language difference;" instead, "it makes us sensitive to the creativity and situatedness of every act of communication, even in seemingly normative textual products" (Canagarajah, *Literacy as Translingual Practice* 4). We perceive each act of communication as a careful negotiation

between "worlds"—knowledge, language, and background—that *all* speakers are responsible for engaging in, instructor/student(s), or student/peers. The "communicative burden" no longer rests on any one individual alone. For the purposes of the composition classroom, teaching our students to approach language in this way is much more inclusive. One of the ways we can foster a translingual classroom environment is by exposing students to scholarship that provides them with context on why we might choose to approach language in a way that deviates from the norm.

Incorporating scholarship that addresses themes of "language difference", "linguistic memory," and "translingualism" (to name a few), instructors can establish the framework for students to engage in their own conversations regarding previous (mis)conceptions of language. Students can retrace their individual linguistic histories and compare it to the dominant American linguistic narrative; they can explore the complexity of language in relation to the construction of identity. However, it is also important that instructors be cognizant of the reality that students will face beyond the composition classroom— the reality that is academic discourse. FYC instructors often find themselves confronted with what is perhaps the *main* issue of contention with this particular approach: "how [do we] validate students' vernaculars and teach them academic discourse at the same time" (Nero 142)? Some scholars recommend, "teaching the dominant discourse and making explicit the culture of power in the classroom", but that simply points out a "problem" without actually bothering to make any attempts to have students address (Nero 142). Others encourage students to compose in their "home languages" before revising/editing their writing into "academic English" (Nero 142). The latter 1) limits our understanding of language by placing it into two discrete categories: "academic English" and

"everything else", and 2) "home language" essentially implies that any "non-academic" varieties are not necessarily suitable for use outside of a "home" environment, so word-choice is key.

The trick is to strike a careful balance. An FYC class that seeks to validate students' language while simultaneously preparing them for the rigors of academic discourse should consider incorporating certain texts and assignments in their course design. Students can participate in projects that give them the opportunity to explore aspects of their linguistic identities. For example, a literacy narrative that emphasizes not just their experiences with language, but considers the role that language played in their family members' experiences as well. Here, students are "profiling" themselves and exploring those language backgrounds that may or may not have been influential in the construction of their own linguistic identities. Based on these profiles, we can request that students identify an area of interest, formulate a question, and then pursue an "answer" to that question by participating in academic research activities. In doing so, they will be exposed to the linguistic conventions of academic discourse.

Engaging in these activities functions as a "starting point" for students "to discover [themselves]" through their research and through their writing, to discern how and where they can begin to insert their voices and concerns (Canagarajah, *Resisting Linguistic Imperialism* 183). Afterwards, instructors could conclude by asking students to reflect on all these activities in hopes that they may yield some ideas as to how they are making sense of their linguistic identities in relation to the communities/cultures (i.e. nation) they reside in. Providing students with the opportunity to explore language "issues", and allowing them to approach this topic from *their* perspectives, might even teach us a few things about what *their* concerns are or what *they* value about language.

Moving Forward

The primary goal of the recommendations I discussed in the previous section is to promote awareness of an issue that has plagued both students and citizens of this country for years, first by looking *inward*. We must become self-aware and figure out where our linguistic/national identities "began". For some, it began (*and ended*) in a story our grandmother shared with us once; the one about how her teacher used to spank the palm of her hand with a ruler for daring to speak Spanish in class. Or maybe it was that brief encounter with a Spanish-speaking customer at the local deli where we worked three summers ago. The initial sheer disbelief at our inability to speak Spanish and the chastising that followed made us feel inexplicably *less*, unworthy of our "Hispanic" surname, assigned blame for something that—until now—we realize we had no choice in.

For some of us, the significance of these situations would not become readily apparent until our second semester in graduate school. Only then would we start to question *why*, all because one instructor finally provided us with the agency to do so; better late than never, but therein lays the problem. According to some scholars, "coursework on language issues should be part of every English teachers' professional preparation, relatively few graduate programs in composition studies offer courses on those issues, and even fewer require such courses" (Matsuda 81). As a result, it comes as no surprise that both FYC instructors and U.S. college composition programs are unprepared to address these "issues" of "language difference" (Matsuda 81). Professional development programs need to be created for instructors of English and FYC that specifically focus on (or at least incorporate) training on how to approach language difference in the classroom. Meanwhile, graduate programs in composition need to recognize the importance of offering, or *requiring*, coursework that examines the history behind—and nature

of—language difference and linguistic/national identity here in the U.S., within the context of FYC courses. Language and national identity are frequently debated upon in academia, but it is time we took this conversation into the composition classroom. My recommendations for doing so are just that: *recommendations*. There is still more work to be done to address these issues, both in terms of scholarship and pedagogy.

Considerations for Future Research

This body of work has touched on much larger, complex issues: the relationships between language, nation/nationalism, and identity. I explored these issues for the purposes of examining the potential implications these subjects may have for students in FYC courses. I propose that we continue to articulate what those implications are, not just in the FYC course, but beyond it, as well; it is beneficial to continue to build upon the connection between language and identity, not simply for students' sake, but for the sake of all language users, particularly those in the United States. The dominant Anglo-Saxon narrative that this country was built upon needs to continue to be disrupted. There are people whose histories need to be accounted for, whose languages and cultural contributions need to be recognized, and finally, a more thorough examination of the consequences of that narrative's success, particularly English monolingualism.

The "In-Between"-ers

"Citizenship" in this country is not without its price. Scholarship has only examined the process of that exchange; for example, how schools were/are sites of linguistic sanitization.

Students are cleansed of their native languages and dialects. They are required to adopt a standard version of English and assessed (academically and socially) on their ability to execute it successfully. While some reap the rewards and go on to become affluent, professional, productive citizens, there are others who figure English as a language of loss. Those "others" who suffered the brunt of being born in the "in-between", are the ones who were cheated out of a language, and a culture. They are monolingual, completely fluent in English, perhaps even well-versed in the "standard", but (for some, anyway) their surnames ascribe a whole other culture, an *identity*, that is lost to them. They are a population, a generation, who has since been excluded from the conversation, overlooked, likely because of their mastery of the English language. Monolingualism is not viewed as a detriment, but in this context, it should be. What we have failed to consider prior to this point is the significance of what has been denied to them as a result of succumbing to the effects of American Nationalism/Nationalization.

Suggestions for Further Study

Future research in the area of… might also consider investigating first year composition students' experiences with "academic" writing and language difference in higher education. In doing so, scholars and educators might begin to ascertain what role (if any) American Nationalism and nationalization actually plays in the construction of students' linguistic identities. The study could focus on analyzing students' responses to questions prompting critical reflection on their experiences with written language and language use in higher education. Students' responses could potentially inform perceptions on the construction of linguistic identity in relation to nationalism and nationalist sentiment in order to ascertain possible implications for literacy and pedagogical approaches in the FYC classroom.

Final Thoughts

I pursued this research intending to reinterpret nationalism as a form of rhetoric that relies on the use of language to construct/assign meaning, to "make sense" of the communities (i.e. *nations*) people inhabit. Linguistic hegemony is the means through which nations "encourage" assimilation into (or exclusion *from*) the national community and its ideology that is—the preservation and promotion of the well-being of the nation. However, this process of "nationalization" (*Americanization*, for the purposes of this body of work) is complicated in the face of *diversity*. The education system seeks to promote national and civic values and privileges a certain variety of English, disadvantaging students with different language backgrounds. First year composition can either perpetuate or disrupt this myth of linguistic hegemony. We owe it to our students to combat this myth, to validate their languages in academia and subsequently, their place in this national community. Finally, we owe it to all those that came before, whose wild tongues could not be tamed, so they were "cut out", and to all those who have ever found themselves caught "in-between" because of it.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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