


12-2018

# The Impact of Ancestral Language Maintenance on Cultural Identity Among White Immigrant Descendants: A Phenomenological Qualitative Study

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The University of San Francisco

THE IMPACT OF ANCESTRAL LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE  
ON CULTURAL IDENTITY AMONG WHITE IMMIGRANT DESCENDANTS:  
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL QUALITATIVE STUDY

A Dissertation Presented  
to  
The Faculty of the School of Education  
International and Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education

by  
Micaella E. Colla  
San Francisco  
December 2018

THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO  
**Dissertation Abstract**

The Impact of Ancestral Language Maintenance on Cultural Identity  
Among White Immigrant Descendants

There is insufficient research on the cultural identity formation of White immigrant descendants who have experienced ancestral language loss. This phenomenological qualitative study conducted in San Francisco, California explored the experiences and perceptions of seven White immigrant descendants in response to these questions: (1) What is the role of L1 (mother tongue) maintenance on identity maintenance among White immigrant descendants? (2) How do immigrant descendants view their cultural identities in the absence of their ancestral languages? And (3) How might educators encourage second language and culture acquisition, while protecting students' first languages and cultures? Research data included narratives from in-depth, one-on-one semi-structured interviews with seven participants.

The qualitative findings of this study uncovered that when White immigrant descendants have experienced ancestral language loss, their cultural identities are exceptionally fragile. Factors such as familial relationships, community involvement, and well-rounded education impacted these participants' cultural identities. Additionally, participants reported that their whiteness allowed them the privilege to choose their cultural identities to some extent. They also described a desire to belong to their linguistic cultural group, and for education to acknowledge the diversity and richness in ancestral language and culture expression. An education rooted in student perspectives is an authentic education.

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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November 30, 2018  
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*To my mother whose support, unconditional love, and personal determination inspired me to find the strength to complete this work.*

*To my father whose support, unconditional love, and sense of humor helped me to find the joy in this work.*

*To Eric whose unwavering encouragement and love fueled my desire to finish the work.*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My dissertation process would have been plagued with worry and difficulty if it was not for the expertise and guidance of my dissertation chairperson, Dr. Sedique Popal. I am eternally grateful for his mentorship, direction, and patience during this process. He made this experience a much richer one. I am also especially grateful to the members of my dissertation committee, Dr. Patricia Mitchell, Dr. Betty Taylor, and Dr. Shabnam Koirala Azad, whose insights made my research stronger. I am very honored to have worked with the seven participants in this study and sincerely thank them for sharing their stories, voices, experiences, and time with me. I am also so thankful for my sister, brother, and friends whose laughter and support lit my way through this dissertation process. Finally, I'm grateful to my aunt and uncle who supported my graduate endeavors. This would not have been possible without all of you. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

#### **Introduction**

Globalization, a complex process in which individual countries have become increasingly more interdependent, has greatly influenced immigration into the United States and contributed to the need for a common universal language (Al Hosni, 2015; Ortega & Verdugo, 2015; Raijman, 2013). English has emerged as the common global language of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Particularly in the United States where English, although not the official language, has maintained its firm grip on the social, political, and economic systems of the country. Deeply embedded in this phenomenon are historical implications of linguistic colonization, heritage language loss, and cultural ambivalence (Al Hosni, 2015; Medvedeva, 2012). For immigrants, and their descendants, the intricacies of heritage language maintenance are profoundly connected to the cultural and social identity of the home community. “Failure to maintain heritage language leads to the inability to maintain cultural identity” (Lee, 2013, p.1576). Without an associated cultural identity, immigrants and their descendants lose their ethnic ties and experience (Fishman, 1989; Fishman ed., 1999).

As immigration into the United States continues, so does the existence of anti-immigrant sentiment, anti-immigration laws, and English-only language policies (Cohen & Wickens, 2015). Many immigrants strive to provide their children with access to vital resources, such as education. However, the complex nature of bilingual education in the United States is deeply entrenched in racialized perceptions of language, imperialistic objectives, and a blatant disregard for the cultural legacy of a language’s people (Bale, 2011; Cohen & Wickens, 2015; Garcia, 1992). Garcia (1992) described the state of

bilingual education as a *schizophrenic double-bind* in which the education of non-English languages, and thus their people, are promoted when they benefit United States interests (p. 15). Bale (2011) offered a further explanation of this phenomenon in stating:

At one extreme, a series of language education policies exists that restricts the use in education of non-English community languages. These policies (viz., in Arizona, California and Massachusetts) ensure that students develop English language proficiency and literacy at the expense of the home language. (p. 2)

The reinforcement of dominant hegemonic English-only ideals neglects the beauty of linguistic heritage and the cultural significance of linguistic identity (Cohen & Wickens, 2015).

In the 1980s and 1990s Ofelia Garcia (1992) proposed the flower garden analogy in reference to language planning and bilingual education in the United States. In reflecting upon the language garden, she described the nurturing and maintenance as such:

The language garden was then seen as a planned space in which the flowers that represented language were enclosed in patterned ways of displaying colors. It was precisely the separate plots for different flowers that preserved the color... In maintenance bilingual education it was the strict separation of languages that enabled language minorities to preserve what was seen as their “mother tongue”... The language garden couldn’t be monochrome, but its colorfulness came from languages that were constrained in carefully planned enclosed spaces whose colors were not always equally valued. (Garcia & Sylvan, 2011, pp. 6-7)

In the 2000s, Garcia (2011) reinvented the language garden analogy and coined the phrase *sustainable languaging* (p. 7). In sustainable languaging, Garcia proposed that

“separate spaces and language colors that refer to another national space and a former time is no longer appropriate in the United States” (p. 8). Language sustainability becomes a vehicle for language maintenance, not in a language’s original form, but rather in interaction with the social context of its speaker (p. 7). This framing of bilingual education acknowledges a renewal of language teaching practices, while supporting the linguistic development of future generations. In today’s globalized world, bilingual education programs that normalize the dominance of English, while pushing other languages to the periphery, only serve to reinforce hegemonic ideals of English-only policies and simultaneously disregard speakers’ linguistic identity. In this interconnected society, language teaching needs to focus on the sustainability of heritage languages resulting in positive linguistic and cultural identity development.

Ewa Latecka (2013) used the term *language ego* to describe the formation of identity based upon the use of a particular language. “In the cases of multilingual speakers, awareness is always from a particular language identity’s point of view or, in other words, from the speaker’s situatedness in the particular language” (p. 3). This *situatedness* is shaped by the social context of the language, and in turn shapes the linguistic and cultural identity of the speaker. It describes the ways in which the speaker interprets his or her world. Zhang (2015) writes, “There is a dialectic relationship between the speakers’ linguistic behaviors and the types of social contacts he or she has, and in the meantime, the speaker negotiates a sense of self as he or she chooses to use one language or the other in different speech contexts” (p. 201). It is critical to examine this link between language choice and social connectedness. As an individual uses one language, he or she uses one aspect of their identity. For immigrant descendants, it

becomes imperative to maintain the heritage language in order to maintain the social and cultural connectedness to their heritage identities.

Immigrant descendants who might identify with a particular cultural, ethnic, or linguistic community (e.g., Spanish-American) may experience a sense of cultural ambivalence without the continued use of their heritage languages (Bale, 2011; Fishman, 1989; Garcia, 1992). Without the heritage language, immigrant descendants are potentially denied access to cultural networks. “The social network approach assumes that individuals acquire language attitudes and language behaviors from particular social networks they maintain ties or linkages with, and it is through language that a person gains access to – or is denied access to – powerful social networks that give him or her the opportunity to speak” (Zhang, 2015 p. 201). Without the opportunity to speak, and, therefore, have a voice, immigrant descendants lose the opportunity to participate in cultural affairs. Thus, learning English as a second language, without the encouragement of maintaining the heritage language becomes problematic in the identity development of immigrant descendants.

English education at school, without strong support for the heritage language, or first language (L1), becomes the vehicle by which language shift begins (Kung, 2013). Language shift is the loss of the L1 in favor of the L2, largely due to the assimilation pressures of the new host country (Fishman, 1989). In order to prevent language shift and foster language maintenance, it is imperative for parents and ethnic community members to encourage the use of the heritage language in conjunction with the learning of the L2. Research has shown that community and parent perceptions of the heritage language are the greatest influence on L1 maintenance (Kheirkhah & Cekaite, 2015; Kung, 2013). “Therefore, a close-knit network structure is an important mechanism of

language maintenance, in that speakers are able to form a cohesive speech community capable of resisting pressure, linguistic and social, from outside their group” (Zhang, 2015, p. 204). If immigrants’ cultural identities are to be maintained through the generations, it logically follows that heritage language maintenance should be a priority in preserving ethnic and cultural identity development.

Fishman (1977) states that language internalizes culture for its speakers, and influences the ways in which a speaker views the world. The heritage language becomes the pipeline to the heritage culture and identity. Without the use of the heritage language, world perceptions and cultural markers begin to disappear through the generations. Without the common use of the heritage language, the disconnect between the worldviews of one generation and that of the next begin to appear. This creates a gap in the cultural identity of generational community members, and thus cultural ambivalence for future immigrant descendants.

It is fundamental to the success of the 21<sup>st</sup> century world, also described as the *interconnected global village*, that heritage languages are maintained through the generations (Brecht & Ingold, 1998; Kung, 2013). This language maintenance increases the diversity of worldviews and belief systems, while fostering positive cultural identity development through the generations. Kung (2013) argues, “One’s heritage language should be carefully preserved and glorified for a more linguistically-diverse global village” (Kung, 2013). Thus, an individual’s heritage language has the potential to be a personal, societal, and national resource that goes beyond personal cultural identity.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Language and identity are closely intertwined (Suarez-Orozco & Qin-Hilliard, 2004). As we speak we reveal facets of our identity: where we come from, our gender,

our values and beliefs, our age, and our socio-economic group (Bale, 2007; Coulmas, 2005; Xue & Han, 2014). To this extent, language and culture cannot be separated. To learn one is to learn the other; to belong to one language group is to belong to that cultural group as well (Fishman, 1964;Valdes, 1997). Today, where globalization and mass immigration have contributed to the spread of languages and people across the globe, the maintenance of one's first language (L1) in a new country is vital to the maintenance of one's identity. As immigrants adjust to the demands of assimilation pressures, subsequent generations of children often lose not only the mother tongue, but also their cultural heritage (Coulmas, 2005; Fishman, 1989).

Although the United States does not have formal legislature enforcing the use of English only, it is quite obvious that English has become the language of power (Coulmas, 2005; Fishman, 1989; Valdes, 1997). Language shift, a process of replacing the mother tongue with that of another, becomes almost inevitable for immigrant descendants who choose to stay in the United States (Weinreich, 1953). Therefore, intergenerational language continuity becomes a link to language and culture maintenance (Fishman, 1989; Weinreich, 1953). For immigrant descendants, issues of cultural ambivalence and cultural disconnect are largely related to the disappearance of the mother tongue. As educators, it is critical to examine ways in which to maintain the mother tongue and culture, while teaching a second language (L2) and culture.

Those ethnic White immigrant descendants who have assimilated into the dominant Anglo-American society potentially encounter a cultural ambivalence that may be more pronounced and discouraging. In order to better understand the importance and significance of heritage language maintenance in sustaining the cultural identity of communities, we must seek to understand and problematize the experiences of those

immigrant descendants who have lost their mother tongues in favor of assimilation into the dominant society.

### **Background and Need for the Study**

According to Zong and Batalova (2015), in 2013 roughly 17.4 million children under the age of 18 lived in the United States with at least one immigrant parent. These children accounted for 25 percent of children under age 18 in the United States. United States' immigration trends suggest that these numbers will increase in the years to come. With linguistically and ethnically diverse classrooms, it is important for educators to acknowledge the existence of students' cultural identities as a gateway to academic success. In particular, it is important for English as a Second Language (ESL) educators to understand the cultural complexities of L1 maintenance and second language acquisition.

The acquisition of a second language also includes the acquisition of a second culture, which may pose a threat to the maintenance of the first language and culture in a new country (Xue & Han, 2014). Parameshwaran (2014) writes, "The proficiency and use of origin-country languages are important indicators of the development and preservation of an ethnic social identity". Without the use and nurturing of heritage languages, the potential for language shift is tremendous, and thus the loss of an ethnic identity. Fishman (1989) argues that, as educators, it is important to understand the ways in which language and culture are inextricably linked and to support L1 maintenance in the classroom. Working towards understanding a model of multicultural and pluralistic education could potentially benefit immigrant students and future generations in maintaining the language and culture of their ancestral homeland.



Immigration into the United States has been a highly contested issue for centuries, resulting in formal legislation that identifies groups of people on the basis of racial, cultural, and linguistic characteristics (Bayor, 2003; Bayor, 2004; Caytas, 2012). This identification has not created an environment of acceptance and multiculturalism, but rather one of isolation in which the immigrant is seen as *the other*. Existing in the marginalized space of *the other*, immigrants to the United States have been systematically forced to assimilate, thus adopting cultural and linguistic values. “The United States has aptly been described as a graveyard for languages because of its historical ability to absorb immigrants by the millions and extinguish their mother tongues within a few generations” (Rumbaut, Massey, & Bean, 2006). As such, it has become a graveyard for the cultural identities of some immigrant descendants as well.

This phenomenon is as applicable to modern society as it was during the turn of the twentieth century, when hordes of European immigrants entered the United States to escape religious and political persecution. Parameshwaran (2014) explains this occurrence by stating, “Historically, having one’s mother tongue be a language other than English had often been associated with non-allegiance to U.S. national values and viewed as a threat to national security”. For European immigrants fleeing their home countries in search of a better life, being unfaithful to the United States, and its protection, was not an option. Many immigrants encouraged their children to speak learn and speak English in the hopes that these descendants would have advantages. In a country where economic success is a main priority for its inhabitants, English language learning is viewed as a positive step towards upward economic advancement (Parameshwaran, 2014). Indeed, for immigrants, English is a pathway to the economic labor market and monetary gains (Parameshwaran, 2014).

However, the expense at which these gains came is questionable for some. “The increased intergenerational integration of ethnic minorities into the majority society appears to encourage the dominance of L2, but at the expense of L1 survival outside of the country of origin” (Parameshwaran, 2014). L1 survival becomes critical in preserving the ancestral cultural values of ethnic White immigrant descendants. For these immigrant descendants, assimilation and extinguishment of the heritage language is particularly problematic as they are adopted into the hegemonic White United States culture. This group of people, while identifying as part of a specific ethnic background, becomes stripped of its ethnic identity due to language loss (Fishman, 1989). The lack of the heritage language, in conjunction with a privileged ability to blend into White society, results in significant cultural ambivalence for these individuals. There is a significant lack of literature on the effects of language loss on White European immigrant descendants’ cultural identity. Similarly, there is a significant lack of literature on the effects of heritage language maintenance on the cultural identity of White European immigrant descendants. Therefore, the present study is needed in order to better understand the cultural identification of ethnic White immigrant descendants as a result of heritage language loss. Deeply investigating the role of heritage language on ethnic identity is significant to understanding cultural ambivalence among this population of people.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the experiences and perceptions of White immigrant descendants regarding the loss of their ancestral languages. This study aimed to understand the role of language in the maintenance of an individual’s culture and identity. It also aimed to assist educators in understanding how

to protect and value students' first languages, while teaching the second language. In doing so, the study explored the connection between identity and language maintenance and language loss. It attempted to better understand what factors cause language loss, and the ways in which educators can help in encouraging the maintenance of students' ancestral languages and cultures. Qualitative data was organized according to emerging themes.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions for this study included the following:

1. What is the role of L1 maintenance on identity maintenance among White immigrant descendants?
2. How do White immigrant descendants view their cultural identities in the absence of their ancestral languages?
3. How might educators encourage second language and culture acquisition, while protecting students' first languages and cultures?

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study was based upon the following theories: the Whorfian Hypothesis (Whorf, 1956) and the Language Maintenance Hypothesis (Fishman, 1991).

#### ***Whorfian hypothesis (linguistic relativity)***

The Whorfian Hypothesis includes two distinct, yet related, perspectives. First, Linguistic Relativity (the weak version) suggests that the ways in which a language is structured impacts the realities and world-views of its speakers. In contrast, Linguistic Determinism (the strong version) implies that the structure of a language determines the speaker's perceptions of the world (Whorf, 1956). For the purposes of this study, Linguistic Relativity theory will be most applicable.

Linguistic Relativity theory postulates that speakers' world perceptions are impacted by, not predetermined by, the structures of the languages they speak (Whorf, 1956). Therefore, White immigrant descendants who have lost their heritage languages may have a different world perception than that of their ancestors due to the language structures that contribute to their understanding of the world around them. This difference in world perception, at the hand of language loss, is one that is worth investigating. Intergenerational language continuity encourages the maintenance of language and cultural identity. Whorf wrote:

The background linguistic system (in other words, the grammar) of each language is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas but rather is itself the shaper of ideas, the program and guide for the individual's mental activity, for his analysis of impressions, for his synthesis of his mental stock in trade. (Whorf, 1956, p. 212)

White immigrant descendants who have experienced a generational language shift lack the grammar structures in which to interpret their world in line with their ancestors. This change in perception results in cultural ambivalence (Fishman, 1991; 1999). Preservation of heritage language includes the preservation of world perceptions and cultural identity.

However, it is significant to note that the Whorfian Hypothesis presents its own challenges to the conceptualization of cultural ambivalence and language loss. "Indeed, he [Whorf] may have overestimated the formative and the preservative role of language in basic cultural behavior, but it is toward the fundamental appreciation of each and every language in the humanizing as well as in the creativity of its speech community" (Fishman & Garcia eds., 2010 p. 32). For the purposes of this study, the Whorfian

Hypothesis will be used to support the notion that language shapes and impacts, but does not solely limit the perceptions of its speakers.

### ***Language maintenance hypothesis***

Fishman (1991) called for a *cultural reconstruction* in language learning. He proposed that L1 maintenance is dependent upon intergenerational continuity and that language shift must be reversed in order to preserve heritage languages. This framework calls for the preservation of heritage languages through the generations and for a redesign in language learning, where the heritage language is given as much nurturing as the second language is given.

This model emphasizes the importance of the heritage language in preserving cultural identity, and directly speaks to preventing the issues associated with cultural ambivalence. Fishman wrote:

[The fact that] language is linked to culture brings us to the realization that there must be yet another link between an ethnoculture and its traditionally associated language: the link that is due to the fact that there is a partial identity between the two, i.e. that parts of every culture are expressed, implemented and realized via the language with which that culture has been most intimately associated. So much of any culture is primarily verbally constituted. (Fishman, 1991, p. 23)

White immigrant descendants who have lost their heritage languages lack this intimate link between culture and language. They lack the bond that language provides a relationship between their personal identity and their cultural identity.

### **Scope and Delimitation of the Study**

This study was confined by specific researcher delimitations. This study used a phenomenological approach to inquiry, which aims to describe and understand the

essence of a shared experience through first-person points of view (Ellis, 2016).

Creswell (2013) states, “a phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (p. 76). In other words, phenomenology allows the researcher to understand the essence, or the meaning, of a specific lived experience through the lens of the research participants (Creswell, 2013).

This approach allowed the researcher to describe and analyze the first-person point of view lived experiences of White immigrant descendants and the potential impact of heritage language loss on their cultural identity. Therefore, the phenomenon to be examined was the link between ancestral language loss and cultural identity among White immigrant descendants. Individual participant data was used to investigate this phenomenon.

Phenomenology asks participants to explain how they perceive and make sense of particular experiences, in order to identify and analyze a particular phenomenon (Roberts, 2013). Thus, a qualitative study of a small sample size of seven participants was used in order to focus on the participants’ individual experiences in great depth (Ellis, 2016; Creswell, 2013; Roberts, 2013). In this study, each research participant shared his or her perceptions of particular experiences in order to identify specific themes that may speak to a larger phenomenon. In-depth semi-structured interview questions allowed the researcher to identify specific questions that aligned to the research questions, while honoring the participants’ desire to tell their stories (Ellis, 2016).

Due to the insightful and analytical requirements of a phenomenological study, participants consisted of seven individuals who are classified as third or fourth generation White immigrant descendants. The semi-structured interviews directly related to the

research questions and the theoretical framework. These in-person interviews covered personal experiences in an effort to unearth the real-life interpretation of the link between ancestral language loss and cultural identity. This included interview topics such as: family histories, family cultural identities, personal cultural identities, personal language identities, and the personal experiences of not speaking an ancestral language. These topics allowed the researcher to delve deeply into the phenomenon and explore its possible implications for White immigrant descendants, allowing others to hear the voices of this specific group of people. Additionally, these qualitative semi-structured interviews were flexible and adjusted to the needs of the research participants as the interview progressed, however they also aimed to capture the way in which these participants interpret their experiences (Roberts, 2013).

As there were seven research participants, the study was confined to the attitudes, perceptions, and self-reporting of the experiences of immigrant descendants in San Francisco; generalizability to a larger population is not applicable. Additionally, these participants only reported upon the ideas related to the research questions and theoretical frameworks. Therefore, the study was confined to topics related to the relationship between heritage language loss and cultural ambivalence. The research questions and theoretical frameworks did not attempt to be inclusive of all hypothesized and theories in the field.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The study was prohibited by uncontrollable limitations as well. As a qualitative study, generalizability to a larger population of people is not applicable. Furthermore, time constraints on the part of the research participants and the researcher existed. The study had to be conducted within the time parameters available. The integrity and

honesty of responses were integral in the collection of data but could have been influenced by the nature of the study. Finally, qualitative research lends itself to a certain level of researcher subjectivity. The research controlled for researcher subjectivity.

### **Significance of the Study**

White immigrant descendants have both a privileged and isolating position within hegemonic United States society. Therefore, White immigrant descendants can easily blend into the fabric of a traditional English-speaking society with little or no question as to their ethnic background. They are accepted simply by their appearance (Craciun, 2013). So, understanding the social and political implications of this privileged position and how they might play out in a classroom environment, allows educators to nurture the needs of diverse student bodies. If educators can understand a student's world view, then they are more likely to be successful in building an authentic classroom experience (Morales, 2016; Whorf, 1956).

Alternatively, White immigrant descendants who culturally identify with a specific ethnic group, are often times denied full access into that group due to language loss (Fishman, 1991). This relationship between language loss and cultural ambivalence is significant for educators to understand if they are to better serve their students. In creating a space for students to explore their ancestral languages while learning the new language, educators guide students on a new journey to honor and explore their own cultural identities. For White immigrant descendants, this process can allow them to regain ownership of a culture and language that had been lost.

Second language acquisition can be a difficult process that can be made even more painful by the neglect of the heritage language. For White immigrant descendants this neglect results in cultural ambivalence. This study aims to provide educators with a



better understanding of the importance of students' home cultures as tied to their heritage languages and identities. It is significant in that it encourages the maintenance of the first language (L1), while still teaching the second language (L2). If L1 proficiency leads to L2 proficiency (Cummins, 1978), then a sincere regard for the L1 becomes central to the teaching of the L2 and additive bilingualism models must be taken into consideration.

Through its findings, this study added to the body of research regarding language and culture maintenance. By attempting to better understand the connection between language maintenance and cultural identity development, this study informed educators as to the importance of understanding and honoring their students' heritage languages as part of their cultural identities. Researchers, educators, administrators, counselors, parents, and students are most interested in this research. Researchers, educators, administrators, and counselors could be interested in the practical classroom applications based upon this study's findings. And, parents and students may be interested in the personal and educational implications of the study, as they relate to student success in and out of the classroom.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Acculturation:** A process of change and modification of traditions, customs, beliefs, and cultural representations due to the contact of two or more cultures. Acculturation suggests that the heritage culture remains intact, to a certain, while the second culture is learned and negotiated. In terms of language, acculturation posits that both the heritage language and culture are influenced, but maintained through this process (Fer, 2015).

**Assimilation:** A process in which a native culture, after sustaining contact with a second culture, begins to adapt to the cultural norms of the second culture. Piaget's theory regarding schemas describes the process of adaptation and accommodation to new

experiences. Within the context of immigration and language learning, assimilation is often viewed as a threat to heritage languages and cultures (Fer, 2015).

**Cultural ambivalence:** The cognitive state in which an individual feels confusion or disconnect to her/his cultural identity. Largely referenced by Fishman (1991), cultural ambivalence occurs when an individual cannot process or partake in cultural standards, norms, and customs of her/his cultural group (Fishman ed., 1999; Fishman & Garcia eds, 2010).

**Cultural identity:** An individual's self-conception of belonging to a particular cultural or ethnic group. This includes participation in ethnic activities and customs, as well as a self-perception that is related to ethnicity, nationality, or religion (Suarez-Orozco & Qin-Hilliard, 2004).

**Heritage language (ancestral language):** A language that is different than the dominant language(s) in a given social, political, or economic context. In the United States, languages other than English are often referred to as heritage languages. The term heritage language implies a cultural connection to a speaker's language. Heritage languages are sometimes referred to as *community languages*, *home languages*, or *mother tongues* (Fishman & Garcia, 2010; Kelleher, 2010).

**Language maintenance:** The generational preservation of heritage languages, despite contact with other languages and cultures (Fishman, 1991).

**Language shift:** The process by which the heritage language begins to dwindle in favor of a new language. This change is often the result of immigration into a linguistically different community or the formal teaching of a second language without regard for the heritage language (Fishman, 1991).

**Linguistic identity (heritage identity):** A cultural and social identity formed through association with one or more spoken languages. This identity informs the ways in which speakers of a language position themselves within given social contexts. Furthermore, the term refers to a symbolic sense of belonging to one or more linguistic communities.

Linguistic identity is also referred to as *linguistic heritage* (Fishman, 1999; Park, 2012).

**Mother tongue (L1):** A language of familial ancestry that may no longer be fluently spoken at home. This term refers to the language of one's ancestors, prior to their arrival in a new country (Fishman ed., 1999).

**White immigrant descendants:** A group of ethnically-white individuals whose ancestors emigrated from a country different than the current country of home. Immigrant descendants are associated with a certain level of cultural connection to the country of origin, but may lack the mother tongue of their ancestors. These individuals may also be referred to as immigrant generations, second-generation, or third-generation individuals (Edwards, 2009; Craciun, 2013).

### Summary

Cultural ambivalence and ancestral language loss among White immigrant descendants is a topic that has largely been unaddressed in scholarly research. However, in an increasingly interconnected world, it is critical to examine the ways in which ancestral language maintenance preserves unique cultural identities. Furthermore, preservation of cultural identities for White immigrant descendants becomes a connection to an identity that extends beyond the classification of *White*.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the relationship between language loss and cultural ambivalence and, thus, the relationship between language maintenance and cultural belonging. Utilizing the theoretical frameworks of Fishman

(1991) and Whorf (1956), the research questions attempted to clearly focus attention on White immigrant descendants' experiences with language loss and cultural ambivalence. Additionally, the study aimed to enhance the body of knowledge surrounding bilingual education.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

#### **Introduction**

The use of a specific language reveals significant elements of our social identity (Edwards, 2009; Fishman, 1991; Fishman, ed., 1999). For immigrant descendants, issues of cultural ambivalence and cultural disconnect are largely related to the disappearance of the ancestral language (Fishman, 1991). While the relationship between language and identity has been explored in several contexts, little research exists with regards to experience of White immigrant descendants. For this group of people, the loss of the ancestral language can be more detrimental to cultural identity. As White immigrant descendants' transition into a hegemonic United States society, they are perceived as White and, thus, potentially lose their cultural identity (Antonsich, 2012). This lack of a cultural marker becomes increasingly problematic in conjunction with the lack of an ancestral language (Edwards, 2009). This study seeks to better understand the experiences associated with ancestral language loss and cultural ambivalence for White immigrant descendants.

#### **Overview**

This review of literature specifically focuses on the scholarly body of knowledge that is relevant to this dissertation. This chapter is divided into three main sections. First, it begins by investigating the relationship between language and thought. It particularly focuses on those areas of research aligned to Linguistic Relativity Theory (Whorf, 1956). Second, the chapter explores the relationship between linguistic identity and cultural identity. In doing so, it investigates the impact of language assimilation, language shift, and ancestral language loss as factors of cultural ambivalence. This portion specifically

speaks to Fishman's (1991) theories on reversing language shift as a means to maintain cultural identification. Finally, the chapter explores ancestral language maintenance and bilingual education as factors for cultural identification for White immigrant descendants.

## **Language and Thought**

### ***Linguistic relativity theory***

Linguistic Relativity theorists believe that the use of a specific language shapes a speaker's perception of the world (Whorf, 1956). In contrast, Linguistic Determination theorists believe that a language's structure (syntax, grammar, vocabulary) determine the way a speaker interprets the world (Whorf, 1956). Barner, Inagaki, and Li (2009) tested the hypothesis that syntactic differences in languages influence non-linguistic thought and perceptions of the world; a strong-version hypothesis. In order to test this claim, the researchers examined mass-nouns and count-nouns across different languages. In doing so, Barner et al. (2009) examined English, a mass-nouns language, and Japanese and Mandarin, classifier languages, in order to determine whether the syntactical structure of the languages influenced speakers' perceptions of meaning.

The researchers tested two sub-hypotheses to determine their main assertion. First, they tested the claim that the effect of language on thought should exist in both the early stages of language acquisition and into adulthood, as syntactic structures and word meanings become engrained. A total of 122 native English speakers from the University of Toronto and 89 native Japanese speakers from Osaka Prefecture University participated. Both groups consisted of university freshman or sophomores majoring in Human Sciences, Language and Culture, Nursing, or Comprehensive Rehabilitation. The tests took place in campus labs or classrooms. In the first test, participants were asked to determine whether a picture of a common noun was a substance, object, or both. In the

second test, participants were shown pictures of people possessing either a set of objects or a portion of a non-solid objects (e.g., eggs), and then asked to determine which person had more of the relevant object. The two tests revealed no statistical significance between Japanese and English interpretations of common nouns, therefore, refuting the strong-version Linguistic Determination theory.

Barner et al. (2009) performed a second experiment to test the claim that the effect of language on thought should affect the cognitive interpretation of an object and, consequently, be independent of linguistic processing. The researchers tested advanced bilingual speakers of English whose first language was Mandarin Chinese and compared them to monolingual English speakers. The participants consisted of 48 native English speakers and 32 bilingual Mandarin Chinese speakers. The participants were shown an object and told that object's name (the novel object). Then the participants were shown the same object in a different shape, and then shown the same object comprised of a different substance. The researchers then asked each participant to identify which was the novel object. In total there were 12 different novel objects that the participants reviewed.

Barner et al. found that the participants' judgments differed significantly depending upon which language they were tested. If the researchers used English during the test, the participants were far more likely to classify the novel object based upon its shape. However, if the researchers used Mandarin during the test, the participants were far more likely to classify the novel object based upon its substance. The researchers concluded that this provides limited support for Linguistic Relativity theory, because the language used determined the speaker's perception of an object. Barner et al. (2009) concluded that a language's structure does not impact world perceptions, however a

language's communicative use may impact cognitive perceptions. Boroditsky (2001) specifically explored Linguistic Relativity with regards to the conceptualization of time and cognitive perceptions.

Boroditsky (2001) tested the hypothesis that some aspects of time are left undefined within an individual's perception of the world. The researcher tested that this conceptualization is largely due to the ways in which a language's speaker talks about time. Boroditsky (2001) asserted that different ways of discussing time lead to different ways of thinking about it. The researcher noted that across all languages, people often times uses spatial metaphors to discuss time; however, they rely upon their concepts of space in order to attribute meaning to these metaphors. In testing her claim, the researcher tested (a) whether or not using spatial language to talk about time have short-term implications for cognitive processing and (b) whether or not using spatial language to talk about time have long-term implications for cognitive processing.

To test her hypothesis, Boroditsky (2001) compared the English and Mandarin Chinese languages. English speakers predominantly use horizontal metaphors to talk about time (e.g., ahead, behind). On the other hand, Mandarin speakers use both horizontal and vertical (e.g., up, down) metaphors to describe time. Boroditsky (2000) suggested that people think about time in the manner in which they talk about it. Participants included 26 native English speakers and 20 native Mandarin speakers, all of whom were graduate or undergraduate students at Stanford University. All the native Mandarin speakers spoke only Mandarin until they were at least 6 years old, and had a mean English acquisition age of 12.8 years.

The study consisted of three separate experiments. First, participants answered spatial prime questions, and then general questions about time. Primes were spatial



situations that were followed by a horizontal or vertical descriptive sentence, all of which was visually displayed. Each participant answered a set of six practice questions and 64 experimental trials, consisting of two spatial prime questions. In total, participants answered 128 prime questions, 32 target questions (true), and 16 filler questions (false), all of which were true/false. Boroditsky (2001) found that both native English and native Mandarin speakers answered horizontal primes faster than vertical primes. However, Mandarin speakers were faster in answering vertical primes than were English speakers. Statistically, the difference in response rate between the two groups of speakers was significant.

In the second experiment, Boroditsky (2001) tested vertical bias in Mandarin-English bilinguals. She hypothesized that Mandarin-English bilinguals, who learned English later in life, would think about time more vertically than horizontally. In this experiment, participants included 25 Mandarin-English bilinguals with different levels of Mandarin and English proficiency. The age at which English acquisition began varied from three to 13 years old. All participants had at least 10 years of English language exposure. Additionally, they were all graduate or undergraduate students at Stanford University. The same technique was used in this experiment as was used in first experiment. However, in order to measure the amount of vertical bias in the participants' responses, *before/after* target questions were omitted. In total, each participant answered 96 primes, 40 target questions, and 40 filler questions. Again, as in first experiment, all testing was completed in English. Boroditsky (2001) found that there was no statistically significant correlation between vertical bias and length of English language exposure.

Boroditsky (2001) noted that the difference in time metaphors between English and Mandarin speakers might not only be related to the difference in the languages, but

also to the difference in culture. The researcher proposed that this could account for the statistically significant results found in the first experiment. The third experiment was designed “to minimize differences in nonlinguistic cultural factors while preserving the interesting difference in language” (Boroditsky, 2001, p. 16). Seventy native English speaking Stanford undergraduates participated in this study. They were asked to use vertical measurements to discuss time, and then make meaning from these metaphors. The test was completed via computer and consisted of 90 true/false questions. Half of the participants was given *above/below* phrases and the other half was *higher than/lower than* questions. Participants then completed the first experiment’s exercises. The results were that the trained native English speakers responded more like the Mandarin speakers than the untrained English speakers. Boroditsky (2001) concluded that these results confirmed that in the absence of cultural differences, differences in speaking impact differences in thinking.

Fausey and Boroditsky (2011) further investigated this conclusion by testing whether cross-linguistic differences impacted eye-witness memory of intentional and accidental events. The researchers specifically focused on speakers of English, an agentive language, and Spanish, a non-agentive language. Speakers of agentive languages typically observe an event and describe the events using direct and assertive word choice. On the other hand, speakers of non-agentive languages typically use less abrasive and less direct word choice when recounting events. The researchers noted that speakers of agentive languages often perceive non-agentive expressions to be evasive and passive. However, non-agentive language speakers use these phrases to clearly distinguish accident from intentional actions (p. 150). Previously existing research has shown that the differences between agentive and non-agentive languages in event

reasoning (Fausey & Boroditsky, 2011). However, this study researched whether *agentivity* in event descriptions also affected eye-witness memory.

In the first study, Fausey and Boroditsky (2011) hypothesized that there is a difference between Spanish and English speakers' descriptions of the same causal events. Sixty-eight monolingual English speakers, with a mean age of 31.49 years, and 29 monolingual Spanish speakers, with a mean age of 28.69 years, reported on a series of video clips. The participants first read the instructions in their native language, and then watched 16 video clips of unique accidental or intentional actions. The study was conducted through an online portal and all instructions were translated by a Spanish-English bilingual. In all the events an actor physically interacted with an object, but the actor's reaction differed depending upon the intentionality of the action. After watching the video clips, the participants were asked to recall the events and specifically answer the question "What happened?".

If the participant's response included a transitive expression (e.g., He popped the balloon), it was coded as agentive. If the participant used an intransitive phrase (e.g., The balloon popped), it was coded as non-agentive. All descriptions were coded by the first author and an independent rater with roughly 98% reliability.

The researchers found that both Spanish and English speakers used agentive phrases equally to describe intentional events, but that English speakers used agentive phrases more often to describe accidental events as well. Spanish speakers used agentive phrases to describe accidental events 59.61% of the time, while English speakers used agentive phrases to describe the same events 74.55% of the time. The first study supported the researchers' hypothesis that there is a cross-linguistic difference between speaker's descriptions of causal events, based upon agentive and non-agentive languages.

In the second study, Fausey and Boroditsky (2011) investigated whether or not these differences affected memory. One hundred and thirteen English speakers from Stanford University, with a mean age of 19.13 years, and 109 Spanish speakers from the Universidad de Chile, with a mean age of 20.85 years, participated in the second study. This participant population was selected to ensure homogeneity among memory performance. None of the participants had taken part in the first study, but, as in the first study, they were all monolinguals.

The study consisted of two tasks. The first task measured memory performance that was not predicted to be different across language groups through an object-orientation memory task. The second task tested for differences in non-linguistic eye-witness memory between English and Spanish speakers through an agent memory task. During each task the participants did not describe any of the images or events, and they were not provided any linguistic descriptions.

During the first task, participants viewed 15 objects for two seconds each via computer. In each picture the object was positioned in one of three possible orientations. The participants were told to pay attention to these images because their memories would be later tested. After this phase, participants were given a distracter task followed by the memory test. In the memory test, participants viewed the three positions of each object and asked to select which one they had previously seen.

During the second task, participants viewed the same 16 videos used in the first study, but with a different actor. Again, participants were told to pay attention to the events in the video and that their memories would later be tested. After the participants had viewed all the videos, a distracter task was administered. The participants then watched the same action as in the 16 video clips being performed by a different actor.

After each new clip, the participants were asked to identify who performed the action the first time.

The second study revealed that intentional actions were remembered well by both English and Spanish speakers, but that accidental actions were better remembered by English speakers. Additionally, as predicted by the first study, the distinction between memory for individuals involved in intentional and accidental events was more pronounced for Spanish speakers. The researchers concluded that eye-witness memory for causal events is influenced by linguistic patterns that differ among languages. Ways of speaking impact eye-witness memory that attributes causal relationships and affect which instances within an event that an individual remembers. This study furthermore proved that language impacts speakers' view of the world.

### **Linguistic Identity**

#### ***Language and identity***

Identity is a comprised of a complex process of socialization (Edwards, 2009; Fishman Ed., 1999). It includes gender, religious belief, ethnic customs, age, and nationality (Haller & Landolt, 2005). Edwards (2009) writes of identity: "It signifies the *sameness* of an individual at all times or in all circumstances, as the dictionary tells us, the fact that a person is oneself and not someone else. In other words, it signifies a continuity that constitutes an unbroken thread running through the long and varied tapestry of one's life" (p. 19). Drawing upon the imagery of this unbroken thread, it makes logical sense that identity involves the use of language as a means of representation. Language becomes a vehicle by which the thread becomes a rope for community members to tie themselves together. This rope unites individuals through their common linguistic identity. Garcia wrote, "The ability *to language* and *to ethnify* is

precisely then the most important signifying role of human beings... It is through languaging and ethnifying that people perform their identifying” (Fishman & Garcia, 2010, p. 519). Garcia’s description of *ethnifying* and *languaging* implies ongoing action, suggesting that speakers continually engage in specific languages in order to express specific identities. Without this action, speakers become limited in their participation of group membership on the basis of linguistic and ethnic identity.

Language becomes an identity marker as it creates and shapes the daily interactions of community members. In doing so, it is socially and contextually constructed, and creates the social and contextual construction of identity. “Another way of saying this is that ethnic identity is contextually constructed. Given the common link (*link not equivalence*) between language and ethnicity, the saliency of specific language use is also contextually constructed” (Fishman ed., 1999, p. 154). Indeed, accent, dialect, and language variations signify participation in and membership of specific community circles, social classes, and ethnic and national groups (Edwards, 2009). Garcia claimed that “language, as a social construction, is not only an instrument for communication but also a semiotic and symbolic tool” (Fishman & Garcia, 2010, p. 520). Edwards (2009) proposed that language is a system in which its users have agreed upon the language’s meaning and symbolism within their relative speech communities. That is to say, that language becomes representative of the experiences and social identities of its users. Therefore, ancestral languages are the links to ancestral identities. Edwards (2009) wrote, “it is in this way that we are always *translating* and *interpreting* when we speak, and our ability to read between the lines, as it were, depends upon a cultural continuity in which language is embedded, and which is not open to all” (p. 55). The ability to derive cultural and social meaning from a language is a point that is imperative to understand.

Choi (2015) examined the connection between heritage language maintenance and ethnic identity among multigenerational Korean-Americans in the United States. Through his research, Choi found that identity and language are closely intertwined and linked by the social contexts in which they exist, thus, supporting Fishman's (1991) language maintenance hypothesis. Choi's research provided insight into the social factors that affect language maintenance and identity formation, and also a general critique of English as an international language.

A total of 181 Koreans and Korean descendants participated in questionnaires and semi-structure interviews aimed at investigating the choice and motives behind their linguistic and identity preferences. The participant group consisted of the following: 58 first-generation Koreans who were born in Korea and immigrated to the United States as adults; 53 1.5-generation Koreans who immigrated to the United States between the ages of one and twelve with their parents; and 70 second-generation Korean-Americans who were born in the United States to first-generation Korean immigrant parents. In total, 76 males and 105 females, ranging in age from 18 to 78 years-old, participated in the study. They all resided in the vicinity of Dallas, Texas and were recruited through Korean ethnic community centers, such as churches, small business associations, educational organizations, and family acquaintances. The distinction between the generational participant groups was significant in the researcher's attempt to investigate language shift and maintenance.

A total of 400 questionnaires were originally distributed, of which 223 were returned, and of which 42 were discarded due to lack of critical information (e.g., age, gender, years of residency in the United States). The questionnaire was comprised of three parts. The first set of questions were personal background questions that included

the participant's age, gender, profession, and educational level. The second set of questions pertained to the participant's language proficiency, language use, and language choice. The final set of questions related to the participant's identity, their perceptions of the importance of heritage language maintenance, and their attitudes towards their ancestral culture and mainstream culture. Each questionnaire included the following response categories: *very well*, *well*, *not well*, and *none*. Because the questionnaires required brief responses, semi-structured interviews were conducted to allow participants the opportunity to elaborate on their insights and perceptions. The interview participants were from all three generations and were randomly selected based upon their availability.

Korean speaking abilities among the participant generations was significant: 37.8% of 1.5 generation participants and 62.9% of second generation participants reported that their Korean language proficiency was *not well* or *none* (p. 246). Additionally, 66% of 1.5-generation participants and 81.4% of second-generation participants indicated that their Korean reading writing and reading abilities were *not well* or *none*. Nineteen percent of first-generation participants responded that they had limited or lack of ancestral language speaking ability and 3.5% of first-generation participants reported that they had limited or lack of ancestral writing or reading ability. The 1.5-generation and second-generation participants reported much higher levels of English speaking, reading, and writing abilities, although 46.5% of first-generation participants indicated that they had high levels of English proficiency as well.

Self-reporting emerged as a major limitation of this study. When analyzed for significance, the self-reported language proficiency data was not consistent across the generations. This inconsistency emerged as a major theme in the data collection and analysis process. Additionally, parental language choice emerged as a major indicator or



heritage language maintenance. When examined throughout the generations, Choi (2015) found that 87% of first-generation participants, 64.2% of 1.5-generation participants, and 34.3% of second-generation participants used Korean when their parents spoke to them. Alternatively, when participants addressed their parents, Korean usage decreased across the generations. Roughly 75.9% of first-generation participants, 41.5% of 1.5-generation participants, and 7.1% of second-generation participants addressed their parents in Korean (p. 246). Data revealed that English as a common language between parents and children became most apparent in generation 1.5 children. Language shift between second-generation participants and their parents was more apparent, as 90.9% of participants use English only with their parents. Language shift between first-generation participants and their parents was also evident, with 19.1% of participants indicating that they use only English with their parents.

Sixty-nine percent of first-generation participants identify as Korean-Americans, while 94.3% of 1.5-generation participants, and 95.7% of second-generation participants identify as Korean-Americans. Age was a factor in ethnic identity evaluation as well; participants ages 19 through 29 reported identifying as Korean-American or American more frequently, across all generations, than did older participants. Gender appeared to not be a factor in identification. The data revealed that identity and language proficiency varied together. As heritage language skills decreased, the participants' identity as *American* or *Korean-American* increased and vice versa. Those participants who used English as a means of informal and formal communication with community members identified as *American* or *Korean-American* more frequently than did those who spoke Korean more frequently.

As Choi's (2015) study indicated, as heritage language use decreases within community interactions, so does a sense of heritage identity. Mercuri (2012) conducted a qualitative ethnographic study of one Latina participant in order to determine the impact of heritage language loss on her cultural identity. As a child, Mercuri's participant Irma, experienced heritage language loss through educational institutions, and as an adult Irma regained her heritage language. Mercuri not only examined the connection between heritage language loss and cultural identity, but also explored how regaining heritage language skills contributed to a richer heritage identity.

The researcher used a non-probability sampling technique to find her participant. Irma was selected from the potential participant pool because she met the life and educational experience requirements, as required by the researcher. Three personal interviews, each an hour and a half in duration, allowed the researcher to explore the participants perspectives on language loss and language socialization at home and at school. Data was analyzed and coded according to emerging themes. Then, these themes were used to understand the effect of English language ideology or socialization on Irma's cultural identity. The interview transcripts were cross-checked by a research assistant and evaluated by the participant. The researcher and the participant had a prior relationship to this study; therefore, issues of trust and confidentiality were greatly diminished.

Irma was a native Spanish-speaking immigrant who arrived in the United States before she was old enough to attend school. The researcher did not indicate her actual age. Irma enrolled in kindergarten as a monolingual Spanish speaker and was routinely punished by her teachers when she spoke Spanish. Her parents understood that Spanish was not a language that would allow Irma to succeed in school. Despite their own lack of

English proficiency, they spoke to Irma only in English at home. Thus, the participant lost both the ability to speak Spanish at school and at home.

The participant described being stripped of her native language and her native identity as she lost the ability to fit into her school's culture or her family's culture. As an adult, Irma began to realize the significance of losing her heritage language and its impact on her identity. She regained the use of her heritage language through school and community interaction.

Three main themes emerged from the study. First, parents' choice to use English in the home, as opposed to their heritage language impacted heritage language maintenance. Second, this choice to favor English over the heritage language impacted the participant's cultural identity and resulted in a sense of cultural ambiguity. And finally, the participant's relearning of heritage language suggested a desire to regain her cultural identity. The study was largely impacted by significant limitations, such as population size, in order to make it generalizable to other populations. However, its findings support Fishman's language maintenance hypothesis in so much as they suggest that heritage language maintenance is the key to heritage language identity.

#### Language Assimilation and Culture Loss

Largely absent from the body of scholarly literature is the examination of assimilationist demands put forth by dominant White society (Antonsich, 2012). In order to critically explore immigrant assimilation and the absence of the aforementioned examination, Antonsich (2012) used empirical evidence from four regional case studies in Western Europe. The case study participants consisted of individuals living in Lombardia (Italy), Pirkanmaa (Finland), North-East England (United Kingdom), and Languedoc-Roussillon (France), and were part of a larger research project regarding

identity and globalization. These regions were selected because they most closely represent Western Europe's socio-economic conditions. Participants were categorized as *local elites* on the basis of their political, institutional, or social role within their local societies. Seventy-one males and 28 females participated in the study: the median participant age was early 50s; they were largely middle class; and the level of education widely varied, with some participants holding university degrees, while others did not have a high school diploma.

The 99 semi-structured individual interviews lasted approximately one hour and were conducted in the participant's native language, except in Finland where English was used. The participants chose the location of the interview as to make it most convenient for them. The researcher did not provide an example of selected interview questions, but stated that they aimed to explore the participants' attitudes towards immigrants, and whether or not the participants preferred an *assimilationist* or *multicultural* approach to immigration (p. 64). Each interview was digitally recorded, transcribed, and then coded in accordance with grounded theory methodology.

Antonsich (2012) did not report the statistical findings of the study, which presents a challenge to the credibility of the study. However, two dominant themes regarding assimilation emerged. First, the majority of participants described assimilation as a one-way process in which the immigrant must become one with the receiving country's culture, values, and social beliefs. As such, the participants believed that assimilation is a natural and normal process, which occurs without political intervention. Second, participants revealed that acceptance for immigrants' traditions and identities is better classified as a *tolerance* for immigrants' traditions and identities. Participants did not describe understanding immigrants' identities, but rather they described indifference

towards them. It was clear that the participants preferred if the immigrants did not interfere with their norms.

These themes revealed a larger implication for assimilation as well. The participants' interviews defined assimilation as a natural requirement placed upon immigrants, in which the newcomer must behave in accordance with the dominant group's ideologies. The immigrant has absolutely no room for negotiation in this situation and all representations of prior national or ethnic belonging should be kept in the private sphere, with the exception of food. Clothing, religion, and language were elements that the participants believe belonged in the private world of the immigrant world. Public expressions of these items were generally viewed with displeasure. Participants felt that language was a significant part of the immigrants' abilities to participate socially and economically in the new country. Therefore, learning the national language was viewed as important for the social and economic success of immigrants.

Parameshwaran (2014) delved into this notion by investigating adolescent language fluency patterns across immigrant generations. In doing so, the study explored attitudes towards assimilation and patterns of generational L1 loss and L2 acquisition. Initial data from the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Survey in Four European Countries (CILS4EU) comprised 4,427 fifteen-year-old students attending 107 schools in English. This sample was chosen through a stratified random sampling method where ethnicity was a factor. Students missing pertinent data such as gender, generation, and educational attainment were removed from the analysis, resulting in 3,827 students.

This group of students was then categorized by ancestral language proficiency. Only those students who currently speak or previously spoke an ancestral language were

kept for the analysis. Data from students who speak English in England was not relevant to the study, nor was data from those students who had assimilated into mainstream language proficiency. This resulted in a sample size of 1,032 fifteen-year-olds, who were categorized by gender, generation, and ethnic group. Six ethnic groups emerged from this data: Indian, Pakistani, Other Asian, African, European (non-British/English speaking), and Other. Although the researcher did not specifically define the classification, six generational groups were also accounted for: 1.25, 1.50, 1.75, 2.00, 2.50, and 3.00+. Data from 545 males and 487 females was used in this study.

Parameshwaran (2014) noted that it is important to consider that this data is based upon self-reported information. The participants themselves reported L1 and L2 proficiencies, thus caution was used in analyzing the data. However, three notable findings emerged from the data. First, if the participants' mother was unemployed, and she was classified as a stay-at-home mother, then greater levels of L1 proficiency were reported. This could potentially be due to the mothers' lack of English language skills. Second, if the participants were surrounded by common ethnic community members who routinely used L1 to communicate, then higher levels of L1 proficiency were reported. This was particularly noticeable if the participants attended school with fellow community members or frequently visited their ancestral country of origin. Finally, generational classification was significant in L1 loss and L2 acquisition. In earlier generations L1 loss is most rapid but decreases by the second and third generations. This is potentially due to the fact that assimilation into a mainstream dominant culture becomes less concerning for educational and economic attainment during these generations. Similarly, participants who were classified as European experienced L1 loss at a slower rate than did African or Indian participants. Again, this is perhaps due to

existing assimilationist conformity. The researcher concluded that the effects of language assimilation on cultural maintenance become significant through the generations.

In 2013, first and second-generation immigrants comprise almost a quarter of the United States population; additionally, over 20% of households were non-English speaking (Medvedeva, 2012; Zong & Batalova, 2015). These numbers are significant in understanding the politics of identity, educational systems, and generational language shift. Immigrant descendants who experienced language loss have also experienced the loss of interpretation and translation of meaning. They lose the connection to a speech community and identity due to their inability to derive a shared meaning. “The implication is that the loss or abandonment of a language in its ordinary communicative role must eventually lead to the dilution or, indeed, the disappearance of its symbolic or associational capacity” (Edwards, 2009, p. 57). The language loss is a loss of meaning, representation, and cultural identity.

### *Ancestral language and culture maintenance*

Lee (2013) recognized the importance of maintaining an individual’s ancestral language, despite immigration or assimilation into a new country and culture. The researcher’s study examined Korean immigrant parents’ perspectives towards ancestral language maintenance and the ways in which these perspectives influence their children’s cultural identity. Seven five- and six-year-old children, three boys and four girls, and their parents participated in this qualitative study in the southeastern region of the United States. The study provided a glimpse into the significance of education and parental involvement in heritage language maintenance.

The parents were originally born in Korea and arrived in the United States with at least a bachelor’s degree in education. All of the children had lived in the United States

with their parents for at least two years. Four of the children were born in the United States, and three of the children were born in Korea. Six of children attended public schools, while one girl attended a private school. All of the children were enrolled in Korean language and culture classes through the Korean Culture School.

In all of these cases, the interviews were conducted with the children's mothers, except in one particular situation where both the mother and father were interviewed. This was due to the fact that the mother felt that the father had a significant amount of influence on their child's education. Half of these participants were employed by a local university or ran a local business, while the other half were stay-at-home mothers whose husbands worked at the university.

This qualitative case study included semi-structured interviews ranging from one-and-a-half-hour interviews with parents, to 30-minute interviews with children participants. The participants chose the language in which they were interviewed and all interviews were videotaped. Additionally, informal and formal observation notes and the children's work-product were used as sources of data. Parental consent was obtained. All interviews were transcribed and participants and a third party reviewed the transcripts for accuracy of information and translation. The transcripts were then coded by theme.

Among the child participants, the researcher found that all the children exhibited a strong sense of Korean identity. When asked if a child was Korean or American, all seven participants responded that they were Korean because they looked Korean and spoke Korean. Additionally, when asked their names, six of the seven children with both English and Korean names responded with their Korean names first. The children also asserted that if an individual cannot speak Korean, then they are not Korean. Finally, the children described the impact of schooling on their ethnic pride. Two participants



described instances where English-only-speaking classmates and teachers actively encouraged the participants to explain their culture and language to their peers. This resulted in the participants feeling incredibly valued outside of the home.

All of the parent participants held positive attitudes about their heritage language and their children's use of it. However, they regarded it in four slightly different ways. First, some parents believed that speaking Korean was a way to maintain their children's ethnic identity. Second, some parent participants encouraged their children to speak Korean in order to support positive self-esteem in school, where their classmates were not all Korean. Third, some parents believed that requiring their children to speak Korean contributed to family cohesion through the generations and across countries. Speaking Korean allowed their children to communicate with them, and also with older and younger relatives living in Korea. Finally, some parents believed that speaking Korean was a valuable resource for their child's future in an increasingly interconnected world.

This study showed the significance of familial and peer support in maintaining a heritage language in order to maintain a heritage culture; however, it is limited in its generalizability. Due to the small number of homogeneous participants, generalizability to other populations is limited. However, the influence of heritage language maintenance on positive identity formation cannot be disregarded.

Avni (2012) approached heritage language maintenance as a means of heritage culture maintenance from a different approach. The researcher examined "how language practices framed and structured the production and socialization of religious and cultural identification" (Avni, 2012, p. 326). Specifically, within the context of a broader ethnographic study, Avni interviewed and observed 12 seventh and eighth grade students (three females and nine males) and seven teachers (five females and two males) at a non-

Orthodox Jewish day school in Manhattan for a period of 18 months. The Jewish studies and Hebrew language program aimed to transmit the Jewish culture and identity to its students. All participants were of Jewish heritage, came from middle-class backgrounds, and lived in different neighborhoods throughout New York City. Among the participants, Hebrew was a native language to one teacher and two students. The remaining participants learned Hebrew as a heritage language.

Through daily observations, detailed field notes, semi-formal interviews (conducted in English), individual and group feedback sessions, students' written classwork, and a collection of the school's marketing materials and policy and curricular documents, the researcher closely examine both the ways in which Hebrew was used as a means to transmit the Jewish culture and the ways in which it was not always successful in doing so. First, it was clear that the student participants believed that Jewish education could not exist without Hebrew education. They understood a clear and direct connection between the culture and the language; to have Jewish education without Hebrew heritage language education was inconceivable to them.

Second, both teachers and students understood the importance of using Modern Hebrew to communicate while in class and additionally understood the importance of reading Biblical Hebrew during religious courses. In engaging in this practice of using the original Biblical Hebrew, the participants reported feeling that they were providing authenticity and legitimacy to their education. The researcher hypothesized that engaging in this practice "transformed a literacy practice into a site of Jewish identification negotiation" (Avni, 2012, p. 328).

Finally, Avni found that the use of Hebrew was linked with culturally appropriate ways of behaving. For example, three students were addressed by their Hebrew names

outside of religious classes in order to communicate the gravity of their collection action. Both students and teacher understood that using the Hebrew name in a secular space indicated the seriousness of one's actions. Thus, the researcher concluded that heritage language use directly connected to a realization of Jewish culture and identity.

Despite the fact that Avni (2012) was able to find several instances where Hebrew was “employed to construct and negotiate a Jewish sense of selfhood and collective consciousness” (p. 331), she also found moments when Hebrew was not used to achieve the same result. During a visit to Israel, the researcher observed that the students did not speak in Hebrew to native-Hebrew speakers, but rather defaulted to English. When questioned, the students reported that they could not confidently speak the language to native-speakers. Additionally, native speakers spoke in English to the students and even distributed English reading materials to them. This was echoed by the sentiment of an Israeli school guard who recounted to the researcher that learning Hebrew as the heritage language was not the same as generationally maintaining the language. This suggested that Hebrew heritage language learners exist in an ostracized space, separate from native-Hebrew speakers. The researcher noted that linguistic choices were not intended as acts of identity in this situation, but instead as a way to be understood in new contexts.

While Avni (2012) shed light on the connection between language and culture, the researcher notes that this study has limited generalizability due to its linguistic community. Because it is a religious language, Hebrew exists differently than other heritage languages that are solely used for the purposes of daily communication. Additionally, the limited participant size and the situation of the study in a larger one better suited the results to this specific community. Furthermore, more information

should be presented in order to make the claim that linguistic choice (in this case the choice to use English, not to use Hebrew) was not an act of identity.

To further understand the connection between heritage language maintenance and cultural identity maintenance, Oh and Fuligni (2010) examined immigrant and first-generation adolescents' relationships with their parents and their identity. The researchers made the claim that this population should be better understood because both identity and linguistic skills are exceptionally formational during this period. Oh and Fuligni predicted the following: language choice among these participants would be dictated by language skill; heritage language proficiency would be related to the quality of parental relationships and strength of the participants' identity; and that different ethnic groups of adolescents understand and experience bilingual education and identity formation differently.

In order to test their hypotheses, Oh and Fuligni (2010) conducted a mixed-methods study of 414 ninth grade Asian or Latino participants in three Los Angeles public high schools. Of the participants, 49 percent were male, 50 were female, one percent declined to report gender, and 187 were Latino and 227 were Asian. In total, 29 percent were immigrants and 71 percent had immigrant parents. The study consisted of a mixed-methods two-part questionnaire that covered the following topics: language use and proficiency, family relationships, and ethnic identity. One part of the questionnaire was completed during class, while the other was completed at home. The total number of questions was unreported.

Oh and Fuligni (2010) found that adolescents' heritage language proficiency, not their language use patterns, was associated with the quality of their parental relationships. Additionally, the researchers confirmed that the adolescents' L1 proficiency was "an

indicator of their connection and respect for their heritage culture, which may in turn be related to the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship” (p. 217). Their findings also substantiated previous research that proposed that L1 proficiency was related to “adolescents’ development of an ethnic identity” (p. 218). Finally, the researchers found statistically significant difference between Asian and Latino adolescents’ heritage language maintenance. Latino participants were more likely to have retained their heritage language than their Asian counterparts. The researchers suspected that this finding might be attributed to the social differences and perceptions of these two groups.

Oh and Fuligni (2010) reported two main limitations to this study. First, adolescent self-reporting might not have been the most reliable source of data, despite noticeable patterns. It would be beneficial to reproduce the study in different communities of adolescents in order to substantiate these findings. And, second, the researchers reported that further research into the relationship between strong parent-adolescent relationships and the correlation to heritage language maintenance is needed. It was questionable if strong family relationships yielded strong heritage language maintenance or vice versa.

### **Summary**

The literature review discussed three main concepts regarding language use and cultural identity. First, it examined the existing research surrounding the relationship between language and thought. Barner et al. (2009) concluded that a language’s communicative use could potentially impact the speakers’ perceptions of the world around them. Boroditsky (2001) and Fausey and Boroditsky (2011) found further support for the notion that language impacts speakers’ view of the world, thus supporting

Linguistic Relativity Theory. In all studies, the researchers found that specific languages contributed to the speakers' perceptions of objects, situations, and events.

Next, the literature review considered the relationship between a speaker's language use and his/her identity. Choi's (2015) study supported Fishman's (1991) language maintenance hypothesis, surmising that among Korean-Americans a use of the heritage language increased the speakers' ancestral cultural identity. Furthermore, Mercuri (2012) found support for the re-learning of the heritage language as a means to reconnect with the ancestral culture. The researcher found that those individuals who lost, but reclaimed their heritage language were able to nurture and support their ancestral cultural identity. Alternatively, Antonsich (2012) and Parameshwaran (2014) found that immigrants often felt a strong sense of language assimilation pressures from native citizens. Thus, immigrants and their posterity were encouraged to abandon their ancestral language in order to assimilate into the economic and social structure of their new homeland. In doing so, these individuals reported feeling less of a connection to their cultural identity when their heritage language was unused.

Finally, the literature review examined the link between ancestral language maintenance and culture maintenance. Lee (2013) found that in cases where immigrants maintained the use of their heritage language, while living in a new host country, we able to maintain a cultural identity among their children. Fostering the use of the heritage language also fostered the nurturing of the ancestral culture. Family and peer support for the use of the heritage language was essential in its use and, hence, the maintenance of a heritage cultural identity. Avni (2012) found that heritage language learning in a Jewish school was understood as both an act of identifying as Jewish and an act of separating oneself from native speakers' Jewish identities. Oh and Fuligni (2010) found that

immigrant and first-generation adolescents who maintained strong family relationships were more likely to maintain their heritage language skills, but acknowledged that the same could be inversely claimed. However, they substantiated the claim that heritage language skill affected heritage culture maintenance; the greater the language skill the more likely adolescents were to self-identify with the heritage culture.

Previous research indicates that language functions as a marker of social identity and that it shapes an individual's perception of reality (Fishman, 1991; 1999; Whorf, 1956). For immigrant descendants, ancestral language maintenance is the link to maintaining the ancestral culture. In the absence of this language, immigrant descendants are faced with cultural ambivalence and identity ambiguity. Societal and economic demands, placed upon immigrants, contribute to the need and desire to linguistically assimilate into United States hegemonic culture. Thus, adapting and responding to the new culture becomes advantageous (Antonsich, 2012).

Within this system, White immigrant descendants hold a privileged position in so much as they may physically assimilate into United States hegemonic culture with greater ease than other groups of immigrants. However, this is a double-edged sword in that it encourages the stripping of the ancestral language and culture in favor of the dominant one. Little research exists that directly speaks to the cultural identity and cultural experiences of White immigrant descendants who have lost their ancestral languages. This phenomenon is important to understand, as the loss of heritage languages in favor of assimilation becomes problematic in preserving the cultural traditions, values, and identity of one's community.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter consists of nine sections. The first section restates the purpose of the study. The second section describes the chosen research design, including the research approach and a rationale for this design approach. The third section identifies the study's research settings. The fourth section describes the research participants. The fifth section outlines instrumentation, including validation of the instruments and issues of confidentiality. The sixth section outlines the study's data collection and procedures, including identifying participants, conducting interviews, and the transcription and validation process. The seventh section outlines the data analysis process. The eighth section specifies the study's protocol for the Protection of Human Subjects, according to the University of San Francisco's Internal Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects. The final section describes the background of the researcher, as it pertains to this area of inquiry.

#### **Restatement of the Purpose**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the experiences and perceptions of White immigrant descendants regarding the loss of their ancestral languages. This study aimed to investigate the role of language in the maintenance of an individual's culture and identity. It also aimed to encourage educators to value students' cultures and first languages, while teaching the second language. In doing so, the study explored the connection between the preservation of cultural identity and language loss. Qualitative data was first organized by emerging categories, and then according to emerging themes developed from those categories.



## **Research Design**

This study used a phenomenological approach to a qualitative research design consisting of an open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with White immigrant descendants who lack heritage language skills. The qualitative open-ended questionnaire captured participants' demographic information, thus building complete participant profiles. Qualitative, semi-structured, one-on-one, in-depth interviews captured participants' personal reflections, interpretations, and beliefs regarding their experiences as White immigrant descendants who lack an ancestral language. Through this approach and research design, the researcher attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the role of L1 maintenance on identity maintenance among White immigrant descendants?
2. How do White immigrant descendants view their cultural identities in the absence of their ancestral languages?
3. How might educators encourage second language and culture acquisition, while protecting students' first languages and cultures?

## **Research Setting**

The research sites included both the researcher's home and one participant's place of employment. Out of convenience, two participants requested phone interviews during the second-round interview sessions. The participants' comfort and convenience were consistently taken into consideration. These research sites are located in San Francisco. Privacy in the home was necessary, but a formal setting was not required. Once the interview began, the participant and researcher were not interrupted. It was imperative

that the research participants felt safe, respected, and comfortable during the interview process, but also important that the interview data was authentic and confidential.

### **Participants**

The study used purposeful, snowball sampling to identify the seven research participants. This sampling technique allowed the researcher to select “information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest” and access additional possible participants via her social network (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, & Hoagwood, 2013). This is a common and strategic technique for phenomenological qualitative studies (Ellis, 2016; Roberts, 2013). Due to the reflective and analytical requirements of a phenomenological study, the research sample included seven participants; no less than six people and no greater than nine people (Ellis, 2016). This sample size allowed the researcher to fully immerse herself in the data, without being overwhelmed by its quantity (Ellis, 2016; Roberts, 2013).

The participants were English-speaking White immigrant descendants who have experienced ancestral language loss. In order to meet this criteria, research participants must: (a) self-identify as White, (b) experience a connection to an ancestral cultural identity, and (c) not be able to speak an ancestral language. These qualifiers allowed for the researcher to specifically identify the link between ancestral language loss and cultural identity among White immigrant descendants. Additionally, participants ranged in age from 25 years old to 40 years old in order to provide an adult perspective across different generations. Socio-economic status was not a factor in this study; however, participants needed to reside in the San Francisco Bay Area in order for detailed, in-person, one-on-one semi-structured interviews to conveniently occur. Gender was a

factor in this study; the researcher recruited four women and three men to participate in this study. Please refer to Table 1 for participants' demographic information.

Table 1

*Demographic Characteristics of the Seven White Immigrant Descendant Participants by Assigned Pseudonyms*

Participant	Gender	Age Group	Ancestral Language	Cultural Identity	Level of Education
Ava	Female	31-35	Italian	Italian-American	Bachelor
Elijah	Male	31-35	Italian	Italian-American	Master
Emma	Female	31-35	Italian	Italian-American	Master
Isabella	Female	31-35	Italian	Italian-American	Doctoral
Liam	Male	36-40	Spanish	Spanish-American	Doctoral
Noah	Male	25-30	Italian	Italian-American	Bachelor
Olivia	Female	36-40	Italian	Italian-American	Bachelor

## **Instrumentation**

### *Validation of the instruments*

In order to ensure the validity of the instruments used in this research study, the researcher adapted previously validated interview guides with the permission of their author. These research studies align to the theoretical foundations and research problem identified in the present proposed research study (Guardado, 2002; 2008). Prior to beginning the research study, the researcher communicated with Dr. Martin Guardado of

the University of Alberta, Canada to obtain these interview guides and to receive full permissions to use them (see Appendix B).

### ***Confidentiality***

So as to protect the participants' identities, all research materials were kept on a private laptop accessible only to the researcher. Additionally, all participants are referred to by gender-true pseudonyms assigned by the researcher. Only the researcher knows the true identity of the participants' pseudonyms.

### **Procedures**

#### ***Identifying participants***

Subsequent to the University of San Francisco Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects' (IRBPHS) approval, the researcher began gathering the names and contact information of possible research participants from within her social network. Please refer to Appendix E for the IRBPHS approval notice. This social network included the researcher's friends, family, classmates, and colleagues. A thorough list of 28 potential participants was composed within a week of IRBPHS approval. The researcher then sent a formal email request for participation in the research study, requesting a response to participate within two weeks. In the event that potential participants knew other individuals who might fit the participant criteria, the researcher also included a request for additional potential participants within the email. The email request contained: (a) a definition of terms taken from Chapter I; (b) an explanation of the intentions and purpose of the research; (c) the open-ended demographic questionnaire (see Appendix C); (d) an explanation of the interview process, including general time commitments and the interview guide; and finally, (d) an explanation of the confidentiality of the research. The email instructed the potential

participants not to complete any questionnaire or interview guide questions, until a formal consent form had been signed. The email request also respectfully asked for voluntary participation.

### ***Consent form***

Once the research participants voluntarily agreed to participate in the study, a formal consent form, along with a prepaid return envelope, was mailed to them for their signature. This occurred within two weeks of receiving confirmation of participation. The researcher also provided the participants with an electronic copy of the consent form. The consent form was signed and returned by the participants within two weeks of receipt. The participant research process began after each consent form had been signed and returned to the researcher.

### **Data Collection**

#### ***Collecting demographic information***

Relevant participant demographic data was collected via the open-ended demographic questionnaire. Upon receipt of the hard copy signed consent form, the researcher mailed the open-ended demographic questionnaire to the participants, including a prepaid return envelope. The demographic questionnaire was sent to the participants within two days of receipt of the signed consent form.

Participants were asked to return the questionnaire within a week of its receipt. Once the participants returned the questionnaire, the researcher created participant profiles using Microsoft Excel. These profiles were constructed within one week of receipt of the questionnaire. The information was kept confidentially on the researcher's personal laptop. At this stage, a gender-true pseudonym was attributed to each participant profile. Only the researcher had access to the identity of the pseudonym.

### *First-round participant interviews*

In-person, semi-structured, one-on-one interviews were conducted during the fall of 2017 and spring of 2018 in San Francisco. Within a week after participant profiles were generated, the first round of interviews was scheduled. Interviews were scheduled no less than two weeks prior to the interview date. This allowed the researcher and participant to prepare for the interview. Interview scheduling was difficult due to the work and personal schedules of multiple participants. At the time of scheduling, the interview guide was again provided to the participants for review. Please refer to Appendix D for the adapted open-ended question interview guide. While sincere consideration was given to the participants' schedules, proposed interview days and times are as follows: Thursdays and Fridays from 2:00 P.M. to 7:00 P.M, Saturdays and Sundays from 11:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

For the purposes of validation and transcription, all interviews were electronically recorded via an iPhone and an iPad recording application called VoiceMemo. The use of two devices provided for additional safety in the case that one device failed to properly record. During two interviews, the iPad failed to record, so the iPhone recording prevented any problems. In order to maintain anonymity, participants were only audio recorded. Additionally, field notes were used throughout the interviews in order to note points of interest and clarification.

The first interview lasted from one to two hours in duration, and included open-ended warm-up, probe, and wind-down questions (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010). These questions are designed to make the interview process seem more conversational, thus reducing participants' anxiety. Warm-up questions included: *How are you? How*

*was work this week? How is your family?* This portion of the interview was recorded, but field notes were not taken during this five-minute conversation.

Probe questions directly correlated to this study's first and second research questions and address White immigrant descendants' language loss and cultural identity maintenance. Table 2 outlines the first and second research questions and sample corresponding interview questions. During this phase of the interview, the participant and researcher were audio recorded and the researcher took field notes, in order to glean additional insights. This phase of the interview lasted approximately 45 minutes to two hours.

Table 2

*Relation Between the Study's First and Second Research Questions and the Participants' Interview Questions*

Research Questions	Participants' Interview Questions
1. What is the role of L1 maintenance on identity maintenance among White immigrant descendants?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you ever tried to learn your heritage language?</li> <li>• Have your family ancestors ever tried to speak to you in your heritage language?</li> <li>• How do you feel about not being able to speak your heritage language fluently?</li> </ul>
2. How do White immigrant descendants view their cultural identities in the absence of their ancestral languages?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you feel about your cultural identity in the absence of your heritage language?</li> <li>• What do you want future generations of your family to culturally identify as?</li> <li>• Do you think your cultural identity would be more fully realized if you spoke your ancestral language?</li> </ul>

*Note.* Interview questions were adapted, with permission, from Dr. Martin Guardado (2008; 2002).

Lastly, wind-down questions addressed participants' feelings about the interview, questions, and next steps. They included: *At this time, would you like to clarify any information you provided? Are you comfortable with the interview process? Do you have any questions for me?* These questions are designed to conclude the interview and put the participant at ease (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010). This part of the interview was audio recorded, but field notes were not taken. It lasted in duration for approximately 15 minutes.

### ***Transcription and validation***

The researcher transcribed the audio recordings within two weeks of the interview date. A locked PDF version of the transcript was electronically sent to each participant for their review. A hard copy of the transcript was offered to each participant as well; this was declined. Participants were asked to review the transcript within one week of receiving it. All transcripts were verified by the participants.

### ***Second-round participant interviews***

The second interview round followed the exact format of the first-round interviews, but focused primarily on the third research question and further questions of clarification from the researcher based upon the first-round interviews. These were scheduled no less than two weeks after the review and validation of interview one's transcript. Please refer to Table 3 for the third research question and corresponding interview questions. This interview round lasted between 45 minutes to one hour. Again, audio recordings and field notes were used during the interview. The transcription and validation process matched that of the first interview round. At the conclusion of this round of interviews, the researcher profusely thanked the participants.



Table 3

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*Relation Between the Study's Third Research Question and the Participants' Interview Questions*


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Research Question	Participants' Interview Questions
3. How might educators encourage second language and culture acquisition, while protecting students' first languages and cultures?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you think bilingual education would have better supported the continued use of your heritage language within your family?</li> <li>• What could educators have done to honor your ancestral cultural?</li> </ul>

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*Note.* Interview questions were adapted, with permission, from Dr. Martin Guardado (2008; 2002).

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### **Data Analysis**

Once all interviews had been finalized and transcripts had received approval, the researcher manually coded each transcript. Coding the transcripts occurred within the month of receiving final participant approval. The researcher followed the following steps. First, the researcher singularly reviewed and annotated each transcript, noting key words, concepts, and potential categories to identify emerging themes. Then, each interview question was answered through identifying specific data points within the transcripts. Finally, the researcher attempted to synthesize and compare the themes across all transcripts, in order to specifically identify the phenomenon of White immigrant descendants' lived experiences regarding heritage language loss and identity maintenance. This process occurred within a two-month time span. These findings will be reported in Chapter IV.

### **Protection of Human Subjects**

The researcher submitted an application for approval to the University of San Francisco Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS). Prior to this submission, the researcher obtained formal approval from her dissertation committee. The data collection process only began after formal IRBPHS approval had

been granted on July 24, 2017 (See Appendix E). All data, recordings, transcriptions, and analysis were kept confidential. Participant names were not used in any publications resulting from the study. This was a voluntary study, and as such participants may have opted to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants signed a formal consent form prior to beginning the study (see Appendix A).

### **Background of the Researcher**

The researcher is a fourth-generation White immigrant descendant who was born in San Francisco, California, resided in Marin County, California during her childhood, and returned to San Francisco after receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree, with a double major in Communications and Women and Gender Studies from the University of California, Davis. Since earning her Bachelor degree, she has earned a Masters in International and Multicultural Education from the University of San Francisco and a Teaching English as a Second Language certificate from the University of California, Berkeley Extension.

During her time in these programs, she has continued to work full-time as a middle school English Language Arts, social studies, and religion teacher at a Catholic school in San Francisco. In this role, she has valued her service to her community and the principles of her faith. Additionally, during graduate school, the researcher has volunteered her time teaching as an English as a Second Language instructor at Canal Alliance. This organization works to support the needs of primarily Latino/a immigrant communities in San Rafael, California's Canal district. Working with this organization and this community of people, allowed the researcher to serve others through culturally respectful second language education that recognizes the importance of maintaining the culture and identity of the first language, while teaching the second.

Although the researcher racially identifies as White, she ethnically and culturally identifies as Italian-American, with specific connections to Sicilian culture. Over the course of her adulthood, she has noticed a shared experience of cultural ambiguity (and for some, ambivalence) among her fourth-generation White immigrant descendant cousins. As she continued to take note of this phenomenon, she also began to notice that many of her cousins attempted to reconnect with the heritage language and ancestral culture of her immigrant ancestors. Although the researcher has been unable to travel to her ancestral homeland, she has pondered the impact of a linguistic and cultural immersion on her cultural identity. Additionally, she has wondered about the effects of assimilation and acculturation for herself and future generations, as society continues to perceive them as *White*. These observations and curiosities led to research in the area of cultural identification and heritage language maintenance, and further informed this line of inquiry.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

#### Overview

This chapter reports on the results of the data analysis for the three research questions presented in this qualitative study. The first-round interview addressed participants' feelings and perceptions about their own cultural identities in the absence of their heritage or ancestral language. These interviews aimed to explore how L1 maintenance affects White immigrant descendants' cultural identities. The second-round interview primarily focused on White immigrant descendants' educational experiences in order to better understand how educators may work to create a space in which heritage language and culture could be protected and expressed, while still teaching a second language and culture. These interviews sought to clarify the role of educators in preserving students' heritage languages and cultures. The three research questions the study addressed were:

1. What is the role of L1 maintenance on identity maintenance among White immigrant descendants?
2. How do White immigrant descendants view their cultural identities in the absence of their ancestral languages?
3. How might educators encourage second language and culture acquisition, while protecting students' first languages and cultures?

This chapter consists of four sections. The first section details the findings related to the first research question. The second section includes the findings related to the second research question. The following section reviews the findings pertaining to the

third research question. Finally, the fourth section summarizes the qualitative research findings.

***Research question one:***

***What is the role of L1 maintenance on identity maintenance among White immigrant descendants?***

Six of the seven participants undoubtedly believed that heritage language maintenance would have been impactful on the preservation of their ancestral cultural identities. However, a consensus among the six participants as to the degree of this hypothetical impact was unclear. One participant initially did not believe that heritage language maintenance would have been impactful on the preservation of her ancestral identity, but in a follow-up interview, shifted her perspective.

***L1 maintenance is the inextricable link to cultural identity maintenance***

Noah, Elijah, and Olivia understood and observed a clear and visible link between L1 maintenance and identity maintenance. They concretely believed that generational preservation of their ancestral language would have led to stronger identifications with their ancestral cultures. Noah believed that preservation of his Italian ancestral language would have allowed him to more clearly culturally identify with his ancestral culture. He stated, “I think I'd probably more strongly just identify as Italian. I would think that would be the ... But yes, both, I think both Italian-American and Italian”. He went on to describe his observations of the use of ancestral languages among his peers as a form of switching between identities. He recounted:

I know that [L1 maintenance preserves ancestral identity] because I know people, who speak in Italian and other languages, who are totally fluent in their ancestral language, in a dialect, and the common language of that country, but also totally

fluent in English and are fully locked into American culture. They can switch back and forth. It's weird to watch because you're like watching a person change clothes. Now they're this person. Now they're not. Obviously, they're the same person, but they ... All of a sudden, I don't really know that person now because they're speaking a different language. They have this different aura all of a sudden. They snap back and start talking to you in your native language, but it's clear that is the connector because I've seen it.

Noah further described this *different aura* in stating, “I think language is also kind of a little portal into another way of thinking about the world... It's a different way of thinking. It's a different way of describing things. There's different expressions, different things ... Nothing really translates perfectly”. He elaborated that within this lack of perfect translation exists the essence of one’s culture.

Two other participants, Isabella and Elijah, recounted a similar experience.

Isabella noted the same concept in stating that “there's colloquialisms, there's things you can express in a native language that I think you can't in translation”. Elijah has also had the opportunity to view this concept within his social circle. Elijah confirmed that fluency in Italian, his ancestral language, would strengthen his cultural identity: it is the factor that would take his cultural identity to its most complete level. The certainty of Elijah’s response is, in part, due to his experiences with his two best friends. Both sets of his closest friends’ parents are born and raised Italy, and thus, his friends fluently speak both English and Italian. He reflected upon his experiences with them and their families, in contrast to his own:

Yes, I think so [that Italian fluency would enhance his cultural identity]. I look at my friends who speak Italian, but also their parents are from Italy. My friends

who fluently speak Italian and use it at home have at least one parent who might not be a U.S. citizen. I look at them and I see how Italian they are, and I think it would change my perception of how Italian we [his family] are.

Both Noah and Elijah have observed L1 maintenance and ancestral culture maintenance in action. Elijah delved more deeply into this idea during his interview.

Elijah further analyzed his own perceptions in contrast to that of his twin brother. He believed that his friendships with his Italian friends, and thereby exposure to his ancestral language and customs, has heightened his sense of his cultural identity. He recounted a conversation with this twin brother to further clarify this:

It's interesting. [My brother] and I were talking one day, and I told him where we went out to dinner and that stuff, and he goes, "God, I didn't realize you were so Italian." Oh, yeah, well, you are, too. I think it's by virtue of being friends with two Italians that maybe I'm living it a little more.

The juxtaposition between Elijah's experiences and his twin brother's allowed Elijah to realize the impact of his social connections on his own identity. Elijah's perception of *living his culture* was also mirrored in Olivia's responses.

Like Noah and Elijah, Olivia saw language as an inextricable part of culture. In her interviews, Olivia spoke about the connection between language and identity, and her frustrations with not being fluent in her ancestral language, Italian. She detailed the following:

I think speaking the language definitely is big. I think it's vital, I think it's essential. I think it's sad to go to Italy and be there with a room of 30 people and rely on one cousin who's the best at speaking English to translate for 30 people. It's so hard and you're missing out on so much. You're missing out on so many

stories, you're missing out on so many connections, and you're missing ... Just speaking the language, itself is, that is an inextricable part of the culture. It makes you feel different when you speak a different language.

In unpacking her feelings about this experience with her Italian family members on a family trip to Italy, she further described the link between culture and language as such:

It would be almost like a visible ... I know it's funny to say visible, but you see and hear me speaking that, and that is almost like a physical feature that's inextricable from my person. That people would be like, "Yeah, that brown-haired, curly Italian speaker," or whatever. Italian, not even Italian speaker, but just that assumption.

Whether it was described as a *different aura*, *living one's culture*, or a *physical feature*, Noah, Elijah, and Olivia all view L1 maintenance as a crucial factor in preserving and strengthening one's ancestral cultural identity.

***L1 maintenance is one of the various links to cultural identity maintenance***

Ava, Isabella, and Liam also saw the connection between L1 maintenance and identity maintenance, however they believed L1 maintenance to be one of the various factors that would have enhanced their cultural identities, rather than the leading one. While Ava directly stated that having fluency in her ancestral language, Italian, would enhance her identity, she acknowledged that “it doesn't totally affect me, but it ... It would be great to go to North Beach and talk to more people in Italian, and walk into a store, and [speak Italian]”. She also saw the appreciation of family histories and stories as particularly meaningful to preserving a culture. She stated:

I think being more familiar with the language [would enhance cultural identity], but also, I've heard these stories from my grandma about the old days in North



Beach [the Italian district of San Francisco]. What I'd love to do one day is go down there with her one day, and have her take me around the neighborhood, and point things out to me. I think visiting Italy, visiting family back there, but it definitely comes back to meeting family, and having an actual connection, as opposed to just visiting.

In addition to L1 maintenance, Ava viewed family and ancestral homeland connections to be an important factor in preserving ancestral cultural identity. She, like Liam and Isabella, also pointed out the importance of understanding family stories that were created in the United States within cultural communities.

Similarly, Liam acknowledged that speaking his ancestral language, Spanish, would help him connect to friends and family members who are born and raised in Spain. However, he also stated that maintaining his ancestral language is not only what gives him his Spanish-American identity:

I still have all of those other components. It's not the language that makes me feel Spanish. It gives me that attachment to the Spanish heritage, especially, it was really only a brief segment of time that I was able to speak it. But even in high school, I definitely realized how Spanish I was. Yeah, I don't know that it [L1 maintenance] would make me feel or perceive it [his ancestral culture] differently. It would reinforce it, more than anything.

Liam furthermore stated that speaking Spanish, specifically using the Spain-style accent, would have enhanced his culture identity. Like Ava, he valued family stories and histories as an important part of ancestral cultural maintenance.

Isabella recounted a similar testimony to Ava's and Liam's in stating that having a relationship with family members in Italy and Sicily, in addition to speaking Italian and

Sicilian fluently, would enhance her cultural identity. She distinctly pointed out that the preservation of language is the preservation of culture. Isabella additionally recognized that preserving ancestral language and culture while living in the United States becomes difficult:

I think language just goes back to preservation of the culture. I just think there's value in it. So, if you grew up, and you learned it, and you're learning English at the same time as you're learning Italian or Sicilian, then I think it would just be second nature. It would just be like embedded in your brain, almost... I guess I feel like you're one step closer to being directly from there. Directly from Sicily. Most likely, if there's preservation there, then maybe your grandparents were born there. I feel like there's more purity, almost. I think every generation, it gets filtered out a little bit because America is where you live and that's also a culture, I guess.

To a certain extent, although not always directly stated, Isabella's sentiment was echoed in the interviews of all the participants: through the generations, American culture, or the culture of the new home country, takes precedent over the ancestral culture if L1 is not maintained. Pertaining to her identity, Emma seemed the most influenced by this factor.

***L1 maintenance is a potential link to cultural identity maintenance***

Initially, Emma was conflicted and uncertain as to the extent that L1 maintenance would have impacted her identity. Eventually, after a clarifying interview, she concluded that it would have made her cultural identity stronger, but still sees the influence of Californian culture to be predominantly powerful to her identity. This confusion or conflict presented itself during Emma's interview:

I feel like at this point in my life, this is as much as I'm going to identify as Italian American, or Italian. Like, I'm Italian American. I feel like I've explored that part, I've explored my heritage enough, where I don't feel like I ... But, that's not true.... If I grew up speaking Italian at home, then my relationship to that culture would be stronger.

Emma concluded that part of exploring her heritage is also exploring the heritage language. Interestingly, Emma arrived at this conclusion two months following her first interview. She explained that she had not been forced to consider her identity regularly until taking part in this study, therefore, it left her wondering.

***Emerging theme one: The ability to choose one's identity is a privileged position.***

As White immigrant descendants, all participants referenced an Americanness within their identity; this *Americanness* was described as a White mainstream United States culture. Specifically, some participants preferred to focus on the California or San Francisco Bay Area nature of this described culture. But, despite the differences in naming it, it is clear that they understand this culture as the dominant, mainstream, and hegemonic United States culture.

As individuals who display White-ethnic physical characteristics, the participants described being able to freely choose their cultural identities. When deeply discussing this concept, it was observed that many participants chose when to *use or lose* characteristics of their ancestral culture. This occurred when an individual would draw until cultural characteristics in certain social situations in order to fit into a particular group or in order to stand out from it. The individual does not necessary regularly use these cultural characteristics in his/her daily life. In the instances of either *using or losing* the cultural marker, a positive outcome for the immigrant descendant occurs.

When using the cultural marker, several participants described moments when they intentionally placed an ancestral language word or phrase, or utilized an accent, into an English-speaking conversation. In most cases, the participants noted that they did this in order to draw attention to their ancestral cultural in the presence of non-ethnic Whites or individuals of color. For differing reasons, they wanted to be seen and understood as something other than White.

Further, the participants articulated that their desire to use elements of their ancestral language or culture was to distinguish themselves from negative notions of whiteness. Elijah expressed this as a *yes, but concept*: *Yes, I am White, but I have culture outside of my whiteness*. Elijah explained that he had a desire within certain social contexts to separate himself from being “just a White guy, with all that that brings with it: the privilege and the oppression and all of the things that White people – White men – have done to other cultures”. Elijah also acknowledged that this would be a more authentic reality if he had ancestral language skills.

Additionally, Noah articulated that privilege exists when *losing* a cultural marker. As a White immigrant descendant who cannot be easily ethnically identified and who lacks an ancestral language accent, blending into United States dominant society becomes simple. He stated, “If someone is just White, speaking English, and are of indeterminate ancestry as I am... You can hide behind that, and certainly being White helps you dodge any sort of bigotry”. Noah understood that *losing* an ethnic marker assists in blending into mainstream United States society in that discrimination does not exist.

### ***Summary of research question one***

All seven participants agree that L1 maintenance affects ancestral cultural identity maintenance among White immigrant descendants, however they view its role

differently. As outlined above, three participants see L1 maintenance as the direct inextricable link to ancestral cultural identity maintenance; three participants see it as part of a significant link to ancestral cultural preservation, but also acknowledge the importance of other factors, such as the connection to family histories created in the United States; and, one participant understands L1 maintenance to be an important factor in her own identity maintenance, but is rather conflicted to its role or impact. It is clear that White immigrant descendants see value in preserving the ancestral language, but also understand that value differently. Additionally, they see American culture as a major diluting factor to preserving their ancestral identities, particularly in the absence of the ancestral language.

***Research question two:***

***How do White immigrant descendants view their cultural identities in the absence of their ancestral languages?***

All seven participants described a degree of ambivalence in their cultural identities in the absence of their ancestral language. Six of the seven participants, Noah, Emma, Ava, Elijah, Isabella, and Liam, specifically mentioned their San Francisco Bay Area origins to be at the center of their identities. Five of these individuals identify as either Italian-American or Spanish-American respectively. Four of the seven participants, Ava, Elijah, Isabella, and Liam, directly attributed their cultural identities to be a product of their local Italian or Spanish, separately, cultural neighborhoods. One participant, Olivia, felt more connected to identifying as Italian, rather than as Italian-American, due to the stereotypes she associates with Italian-Americans. In short, three different categories of identity emerged from the data collection: detachment from the ancestral cultural identity, recognition of the ancestral cultural identity, and, finally,

recognition and realization of the ancestral cultural identity. Within two of the categories exists varying interpretations of cultural connectedness.

***Detachment from the ancestral cultural identity***

For the purposes of this study, *detachment from the ancestral cultural identity* is defined as complete and absolute disassociation with the ancestral cultural identity. While acknowledgement of the ancestral culture existed, it did not play a role in the participant's reported identity. Noah expressed detachment from his Italian ancestral cultural identity, including a limited feeling of pride associated with it: "Not so much [pride] because I know that it's not really my identity; it's someone else's identity". Without the ancestral language, Noah felt as though he was "borrowing another's identity" in calling himself Italian-American. He further elaborated that to inauthentically borrow this Italian-American identity is, in a sense, to romanticize the notion of being authentically Italian-American.

Noah explained his detachment from this identity by acknowledging his Italian ancestry, but purposefully distinguishing it from his personal cultural identity: "So beyond having, like having some understanding of the language, and by connection having an understanding of the culture a little bit, and having a long Italian last name, I don't really know what the connection is there". Not only did he articulate a general lack of connection to his ancestral culture, but he also communicated a confusion as to what that connection might be. Noah expressed that his cultural connection is to San Francisco, as being a native San Franciscan has been far more formative in his cultural identity.

In discussing his cultural identity formation and considering L1 maintenance, Noah deconstructed his identity based upon his lack of ancestral language skills. He

speculated on his cultural identity should Italian have been maintained through the generations and said, “I’m an American before all else and then the Italian is kind of buried down in there somewhere. I think I would have more of a bifurcated personality... a double-doored sense of myself [if L1 was maintained]”. Although this is speculation, Noah seemed to realize the importance of L1 maintenance in offering White immigrant descendants, such as himself, the opportunity to take ownership of their ancestral cultures. Without his ancestral language, Noah expressed detachment from his ancestral culture.

***Recognition of the ancestral cultural identity***

Within the context of this study, *recognition of the ancestral cultural identity* is defined as the acceptance of and association with an ancestral cultural identity, largely due to family connections and community. Both Ava and Emma articulated an awareness of their Italian-American cultural identities due to their close familial connections. These connections tie them to their ancestral roots, but do not foster a participation in Italian-American culture. Like Noah, both women said that being either a native San Francisco Bay Area-ian or a native San Franciscan is at the forefront of their personal identities and being Italian-American is an element of their family identities.

Ava communicated that pride in her identity comes from her San Franciscan legacy and the Italian-American community that evolved within the city. She stated:

I think for me it more comes back to I'm proud to be someone who is a native of San Francisco who goes back four or five generations, you know... The most Italian part about me is my connection to family, a large, loud family, and ... the reason I said San Francisco is because my grandma grew up in North Beach [San Francisco’s Italian district].

The connection to family and to a living family member's origin, such as North Beach, solidifies Ava's ties to her ancestral cultural identity. Noteworthy is the fact that she pointed to North Beach of San Francisco as her familial culture, not Italy. She went on to elaborate on the role being Italian-American plays in her life: "I don't think it plays that big a role, except for the fact that I am very connected to my family, and since I associate my family with Italian, I guess it plays more than none, but I don't often think about being Italian, I think about being a part of my family". Family connections and interactions are at the heart of Ava's recognition of her ancestral cultural identity.

Emma narrated a similar account regarding her ancestral cultural identity in the absence of her heritage language. While she identifies as Italian-American, she made the clear point that she identifies as American first and foremost, and that it is her membership in her family that links her to her Italian-American identity. She stated:

A big part of the reason I identify as Italian-American, is to appease my family because they probably identify as Italian-American and I want to belong. [To] feel like I belong with them... I identify more as being Californian. That's more of a stronger cultural identity than being Italian-American...

Emma conveyed a desire to belong to the cultural community of her family, even though that might not entirely represent her identity. This cultural community bonds her with her ancestral heritage, and additionally, creates a bond with generations of family members.

Outside of the bond between herself and her family members, Emma was somewhat uncertain as to her own feelings regarding her ancestral cultural identity. In response to describing her feelings about her Italian-American identity, Emma stated:



Honestly, I don't think so [have strong feelings about identifying as Italian-American]. That's not true. I guess I do, but I'm also kind of like... I know just deep down, like, I'm a person and I'm from California. Like, I'm a California girl at heart. I mean, I love being able to say that I'm Italian-American, but it's also like, I don't know... I don't know. I keep going back and forth. Yeah, no, I do. But, I also, I connect even with being Californian from America.

This vacillation in fully understanding her identity was mirrored in the testimonies of other participants. While Emma fully recognized her Italian-American identity, she hesitated to describe this recognition as strong.

***Recognition and realization of the ancestral cultural identity***

The category *recognition and realization of the ancestral cultural identity*, in this study, encompasses those individuals who associate themselves with a particular ancestral cultural identity and, in addition, actively participate within that cultural community. These participants carry on the traditions of their ancestral cultures within their own homes, engage in cultural activities outside of the home, and have all attempted to reconnect with relatives in the ancestral homeland. To varying degrees, Elijah and Olivia described feeling a sense of meaningful connection to their ancestral cultural identities, but also described feeling that this connection is unclear due to the absence of their ancestral languages. Even though these two participants reported similar feelings, they individually understand their cultural identities. Isabella and Liam reported feeling a strong sense of meaningful connection to his ancestral cultural identity, despite lacking ancestral language skills. They attributed this to being reared in strong cultural communities where community members frequently spoke the ancestral languages.

Although he regularly participates in cultural exchanges within his family and friend groups, Elijah was hesitant to call himself “fully Italian-American”. He stated:

If we're on a spectrum of Italian and American, I feel like I'm somewhere in the middle. If we have the language instruction, I think the scale would tip more towards the Italian side. I can't say that I'm fully Italian-American with that piece missing. We can adapt the rest of it, but the language is so authentic.

For Elijah, lacking Italian language skills presented itself as troubling in completely identifying as Italian-American. However, he further expressed, “I lead with it [Italian-American] when people ask me what I am. There's some pride in that for sure. It doesn't define much else about me, I guess, but I am proud of it”. Elijah did not feel as though his ancestral culture defined his daily existence within society, despite calling himself that and feeling a sense of pride in his culture.

This complex sentiment was further explained when he clarified, “I wasn't born in Italy. I need to be aware that we grew up here, and that I grew up here, so my culture is American and, ancestrally, we were Italian. The Americanness, I think, is important because it's so different from Italy”. Elijah communicated that he came to this realization within the last few years as he's been working with first-generation immigrant high school students. He said that working with this population of students called him to reflect upon his own cultural identity. He stated that in doing so, “I'm aware of my Americanness in a way that I hadn't been including before”. Elijah's testimony reveals the complexity of ancestral cultural identity when it is diluted with the new home country's culture. For Elijah, it presents a mild inconvenience that he has seemingly rectified by identifying as Italian-American and acknowledging his *Americanness* within that identity, however, Olivia's feelings are quite different.

As an individual of Italian ancestry, Olivia gravitated towards identifying as Italian, rather than Italian-American, because she felt that she has more in common with the traditions and values of her Italian (living in Italy) relatives rather than her Italian-American ones. She was clear in expressing the distinction between her identity and an individual living in Italy. She explained how her identity presented itself:

Just that I'm not Italian from Italy, but my family has some roots there and I think some of the traditions that are a part of my family have come from there. It's enriched my family's... Some of the things that we do when we get together, our interactions, our own traditions.

Additionally, she articulated that her *Americanness* appeared to her as separate from an Italian-American identity. She explained the complexity in her identity as such:

I don't know. I feel like it makes me who I am to an extent. I think that the more I... I don't know... I think ultimately, I'm American. I'm not Italian, but I think it's definitely a part of my story in how I ... It's a part of how I've been raised, it's a part of my identity, and the family that I have that still is deeply rooted in those places, and living that life there makes me feel proud of that.

Olivia conveyed a sense of two cultures existing in her identity: her ancestral Italian culture and her current American culture. Her interview suggested that these two identities are kept separate in the way she intellectualizes them.

As Olivia continued to unpack her identity, she recounted a privilege that exists within the choice to be able to separate her identity. Similarly, in discussing his *Americanness*, Elijah conveyed the same sentiment. When asked about the ability to choose how to label her cultural identity, Olivia reflected:

Yeah. I can choose, but it's more, I don't know. I am a typical American in that I have all these things that have jumbled together and my family has picked things that they like and have chosen to carry on. That's obviously privileged to be [doing]... All my family that came here came fleeing some worse situation. Just being here in America and keeping the pieces of the cultural identity that my ancestors before me selected, that is certainly privilege, but it's also... I guess it's sad in a way that... I don't know, I guess it's sad. I don't know. I guess it is what it is.

Olivia was keenly aware of the causes of immigration and the privilege that comes with having choice. She further said that she believes that having the ability to label her cultural identity would likely not exist if she was not a White immigrant descendant.

Although Olivia and former generations of her family have had the privilege to choose how to label their identity and what pieces of the culture to keep, she felt a sadness about the loss of certain aspects of the culture. The loss of her ancestral language was clearly one of her central concerns. She said, "I feel a loss that I already mentioned in not having that heritage language. I feel still connected to that cultural identity and I value it, and I feel like if I had the language, it would add a lot to that". This loss was quite troubling for her. To illustrate this point, Olivia drew upon the experience of learning Spanish as a young child:

I think that a lot of language learning is learning about culture and I think, for me, the direct instruction I had at that age was Spanish. And, I think I mentioned in the first interview, we had... I felt as if that was part of my own cultural heritage, even though I don't have any sort of Latino background or anything. I felt so much a part of that in everything I learned, and all the ways that I experienced

that culture and that language, and loved it so much. I think that it [L1 maintenance] would have increased my own knowledge of that, of my heritage language and culture and pride in it, and desire to be more connected with all of that.

Without L1 maintenance, Olivia depicted a cultural identity that was missing a meaningful piece. In comparing it to her experiences learning Spanish, she fully understood how L1 maintenance could have shaped her identity, therein lies the frustration and sadness for Olivia. Although she recognized and realized her culture, she was keenly aware of the impact of the absence of her ancestral language had on her identity.

Unlike Olivia, Isabella did not see the absence of her ancestral language as something that was particularly impactful on her ability to recognize and realize her culture. Despite not having maintained the Italian or Sicilian language skills of her ancestors, Isabella said that she was quite proud to call herself Italian-American and felt a connection to that adapted culture, despite wishing she had the language skill. She stated:

I feel strong in my roots. It [the absence of L1] doesn't bother me that much. I wish I would speak it fluently, I think. But, it doesn't bother me that much, it's minimal... It probably doesn't bother me that much because my dad's not even fluent. So yeah, it's just that dilution factor, I think. I think if everyone around me were speaking it fluent and I was the only one that didn't, then I would probably feel like it was more impactful. But it's not really.

Isabella saw this *dilution factor* as a natural part of adaptation, and specifically noted her father's lack of heritage language skills as an example. To Isabella, the absence of Italian or Sicilian seemed to have minimal impact on her cultural identity since she participates

in a strong Italian-American community. She described “feeling different” from people who don’t have that ancestral cultural identity and described feeling a sense of pride in her heritage.

Liam recounted a similar story in considering his sense of ancestral cultural identity. Although Liam, like Isabella, wished that he had his ancestral language skills, he did not see its absence as particularly impactful to his ancestral cultural identity. He described the many facets of his Spanish-American identity:

Yeah, I still feel very strongly about it [the ancestral cultural identity], because again, there's all of the other components. There's the food, there's the religious background, there's the everyday lifestyle. And then I still am dialed into Spanish politics and sports, and I still have friends that are Spanish that I communicate with regularly.

Liam felt as though these elements contribute to his identity in a way that offsets the cost of the ancestral language loss. Growing up in a predominantly Spanish and Spanish-American Bay Area city allowed him to learn about, appreciate, and participate in his ancestral culture. Furthermore, he maintained a close relationship to this community and its customs. He portrayed his childhood daily life stating, “It's just, I feel like that's how I grew up. Like I said, it was every day after school – I was at my grandparents’ house, on the weekends, every holiday, we were always doing something with the Spanish community. So it was just, that was how I grew up”. This Spanish-American experience was entirely normal to Liam and, thus, incredibly impactful to the maintenance of his ancestral cultural identity. Liam, like Isabella, was well-aware of the generational *dilution factor*, and explained that he hopes future generations of his family will continue

to feel this pride in their ancestral cultural identities as well, although it may be seemingly difficult.

***Emerging theme two: White immigrant descendants desire social and cultural belonging.***

The White immigrant descendant participants had a desire to reconnect with their ancestral cultures and, in most cases, had a desire to learn their ancestral languages. Some recounted ways in which claiming an ancestral culture as part of their own identity allowed them to enhance their relationships with family members. Emma noted, “Identifying as Italian-American with my immediate family helps us connect to the family that I never really got to spend time with”. Several of the participants echoed this sentiment and specifically understood their identities as vehicles to preserve and nurture family relationships, both living and deceased. Isabella further articulated this sense of belonging in stating, “I think it's [cultural identity] a little piece of your family, passed down from generation to generation, and you don't want to lose that. You don't want to go 20 generations down the line and [not] know where [you] came from”. Knowing one’s ancestral cultural identity and participating in that culture was important to Isabella’s identity construction. However, for participants who were only able to recognize a family ancestral culture, their own cultural identity was characterized by remorse, confusion, and ambivalence.

As discussed in Chapter IV, those participants who were classified into the categories *detachment from the ancestral cultural identity* and *recognition and realization of the ancestral cultural identity* reported much less ambivalence regarding their ancestral cultural identities. Additionally, these participants expressed a limited sense of remorse in not learning and maintaining their ancestral languages. As Liam

stated, “I definitely had that desire where I wanted to learn more [of the language] and I remember being jealous of the other kids in that neighborhood who were fully bilingual”. But, since these participants *recognized* and *realized* their cultural identities, this remorse minorly mentioned.

Alternatively, this was not the case for those participants who fell into the category *recognition of the ancestral cultural identity*. These participants consistently expressed sincere ambivalence when discussing their ancestral cultural identities, often answering identity-based interview questions with the statement “I don’t know”. Additionally, at times their testimonies contradicted prior interview question answers, and when attempting to clarify their responses, the participants would be unable to do so. These participants also expressed remorse in not knowing their ancestral languages, but found it a difficult task in doing so because generations before them had not maintained the languages as well. Moreover, they often reflected that reclaiming the ancestral culture would be a puzzling task since their immediate families do not *realize* that culture. The participants pondered if this could be authentically accomplished in light of their parents’ identities. Confusion characterized their own understanding of their ancestral cultural identities, even in the presence of a desire to reconnect, belong, and recognize their ancestral cultural identities.

### ***Summary of research question two***

Examining the White immigrant descendant participants’ views about their ancestral cultural identities in the absence of their ancestral languages yielded three categories of classification: detachment from the ancestral cultural identity, recognition of the ancestral cultural identity, and recognition and realization of the ancestral cultural identity. Despite this categorization, four of the seven participants had difficulty



expressing how they view and participate in their ancestral cultural identities. This suggested a sense of ambivalence regarding their ancestral cultural identities.

Interestingly, these same four participants – Olivia, Emma, Ava, and Elijah – possess multiple ethnic White identities, despite only identifying with one of them. Each of these participants described, to differing degrees, a sense of privilege in being able to choose their cultural label. Seemingly, unless fully engaged in a strong cultural community or experiencing a full detachment from the ancestral culture, the White immigrant descendant participants were like to experience a sense of ambivalence in regards to their cultural identities when the ancestral language was lost.

***Research question three:***

***How might educators encourage second language and culture acquisition, while protecting students' first languages and cultures?***

In order to protect students' first languages and cultures, all seven participants believed that education should focus on authentic and meaningful learning that encompasses both bridging the spaces of home and school and student stories. Five of the seven participants were given the opportunity to express their ancestral cultural identities with their school communities, while two did not have that opportunity. To different extents, all five of these participants reported feeling a sense of pride in their ancestral cultural identities as a result of this expression. In retrospect, the two participants who did not have the opportunity, felt a sense of loss. Additionally, some participants questioned the utility of learning ancestral languages (other than English) in the United States.

*Authentic learning: bridging home and school spaces*

All seven participants expressed their desire for educators to provide their students with authentic and purposeful learning that focused on combining the experiences of the classroom with those of the home. This, they claimed, would make ancestral language learning and cultural identity maintenance feel more purposeful, important, and honored. Noah, Liam, Elijah, Ava, and Isabella all recalled various instances throughout their school careers where they were allowed to share pieces of their cultural identities. Olivia and Emma were unable to point to any specific recollection of this.

Living in a diverse Bay Area city, Noah felt fortunate to attend an elementary and high school where culture and diversity were highly prized. Because he experienced such an authentic sharing of his ancestral culture in schools, he was able to bring that into his home as well, thus increasing his sense of cultural identity at that point in his life. He stated:

It just made me really proud, like I just felt this intense pride around it, which I think was also cultivated by my family members, especially my mom's very much an Italophile. But I guess it felt good because at least then it made me think I knew who I was a little more, even if maybe I didn't really.

Currently, as previously mentioned, Noah feels little to no attachment to his Italian ancestral identity, but as a child he was able to experience a sense of pride in his heritage because it was honored at school and at home. Liam also experienced this exploration of self by the honoring of his culture in both his school and his home.

Liam was able to cite a specific example to illustrate the sense of pride that cumulated when both his home and school world meshed. Recounting experiences in school, Liam said:

Talking about those historical landmarks in the town and me being able to discuss my family's origins and how they participated in it definitely was a point of pride for me, especially as half the class had moved to my town. It wasn't that they were born and raised there; they had moved there. They're learning about the origins of the town that they're new to and feeling like I'm part of the origins of that town... Yeah, I mean it was definitely a point of pride to be able to talk about [my Spanish heritage]. My great-grandparents even owned a boarding house for the Spanish migrant workers that would come over and tend to the fields and the orchards.

Liam's personal connections to his Spanish-American town allowed him to express his ancestral cultural identity within the classroom, thus building cultivating a strong sense of identity that remains today. The authentic learning that took place for Liam when bringing his own family's history to his educational experiences was extremely impactful on his identity development. Liam was able to see how the spaces of school and home united and complemented one another.

Like Noah and Liam, Elijah, Ava, and Isabella were also able to share pieces of their ancestral cultural identities in school. However, because this sharing was not integrated into the larger school culture, it fell short in uniting both the home and school spaces. Elijah described his experiences as such:

When we got to high school there were cultural clubs... I went to Italian Club because my friends were in the Italian Club. We did stuff, like we went to the

Columbus Day Parade, we had an Italian cook-off where we all brought in a dish that our families had made... It just becomes something you do at school. Like any other subject that you think you don't use in the rest of your life.

Despite sharing his ancestral culture in Italian Club, Elijah did not share this with his larger school community. The notion that it became a school subject was problematic for Elijah. As an adult, Elijah has worked to reclaim his ancestral cultural identity, but he felt as though his school had missed the opportunity to create a link between home and school cultures.

Ava shared a slightly similar narrative in that she could not understand the value of participating in a club that didn't have any tangible impact on the community: She stated:

Because I was busy with a lot of other things, and because I didn't ... I might have been a member of the Italian Club, but I went to a meeting where it was like, 'You guys don't do anything'. Like, I have to go finish a yearbook deadline or I have to go to rehearsal. So I found other ways ... I found other opportunities that were actually producing something, as opposed to just sitting around and talking about how Italian we were.

Ava perceived that Italian Club did not offer her the chance to explore her ancestral culture in a meaningful way. She believed that if the club had been linked to the culture of the school and her home, then she would have been provided a space in which to explore her own identity. She said, "It would have made me feel more connected to my peers who were not my family, which would have probably opened up a space for me to explore my cultural identity outside of my family". She further suspected that by

creating a cultural community outside of her family, she could have potentially fostered a better sense of her ancestral cultural identity.

Isabella detailed a similar story to Elijah's and Ava's in that she enjoyed sharing cultural components with classmates, but felt that this sharing fell short in being authentic or meaningful, therefore not uniting home and school spaces. She described this sharing as such:

You're not learning your heritage history and all that kind of stuff. I mean, I think they do a good job with projects and things like that to understand where you come from, or make a dish that relates to your culture or family tree or all that kind of stuff. Yes, I think that they try to make you proud of where you come from, but I don't know that that was an integral part of it.

Isabella made it very clear that these school projects gave her joy, but that they were not opportunities to investigate her larger cultural identity. This was not something that strengthened her understanding of her cultural identity. She said, "It just felt like I could share part of my family life and what I am. I don't think it strengthened anything or I don't think I felt overtly emotional about it. It was just kind of cool to learn about my family and share it with other people I guess". Because she was only sharing pieces of her ancestral culture at designated moments, Isabella did not see these projects as meaningful to her daily life. Like Elijah and Ava, these moments became random assignments that were separate from the cultural exchanges and experiences of home.

***Authentic learning: student stories***

Emma and Olivia directly pointed to a missing component of their educational experiences: the honoring of student histories or stories. While both participants claimed that they were assigned family history work, they also both felt that this was trivial to the

curriculum and did not enhance their educational experiences. Emma articulated the following:

Just because I think I would be thinking about it [her ancestral identity] more, and it would just be more naturally come ... It would more naturally be in my thoughts. I'd probably feel a little more connected ... Well, I guess it depends on the class and the project, but if it was about exploring my, integrating my ancestral culture with history, maybe feeling more connected to ancestors that I didn't know, or family that ... Yeah.

While Emma was speculating as to the impact of sharing her story within school, she did specifically note that she felt as though exploring her family story would have given her the ability to connect with her ancestral culture. She expanded upon this concept in greater detail when she considered the role that bilingual education may have had on her identity:

I mean, I think just having more knowledge on Italian history and culture. I think just being exposed to the language, but also if that were an option, if that were a class, I think a lot of that would be talking about the country where the language originated, so just feeling more educated, and therefore because my ancestors are from Italy, I would therefore have a connection, a stronger connection.

Emma recounted that “feeling more educated” about her ancestral homeland would have allowed her to feel more connected to her ancestors and her ancestral identity. She also articulated that if she would like to have had the chance to learn about the language and the country, hence immersing herself in her ancestral roots. In doing so, she felt as though she would have been melding the home and school spaces to connect to family that she was not personally able to meet.

Olivia responded passionately about the power of student stories in the classroom. She felt that she was largely deprived of this opportunity in school, which resulted in unpleasant school experiences. She reflected on student stories during her educational career:

It didn't seem to be viewed as too important, like what the students in the class were bringing to the classroom. I think today, that is viewed as more important by most educators. So, I think finding, I don't know, honoring the stories and the histories of the students in the classes is neglected largely... I wasn't offended by it as a child, but yeah, I think it probably took away from my own ownership of that learning. I don't know that I saw myself in what I was learning or saw any of what I was learning in me and my stories, or saw what I was learning and saw the relevance, especially in certain subjects. Like, how it was relevant to me and my family's story and my history?

Olivia described personally feeling that her own story was neglected in class and that the story the textbooks told were simply more important than her own. As she explained, she simply could not see how the textbook story mirrored her own human cultural experiences. Because she did not feel great ownership of her own learning, she struggled in some courses; she could not connect her experiences to those of her textbook.

She further communicated her belief that providing a space for students to take ownership of their learning is instrumental in a quality education. She passionately spoke on this topic:

I think history, largely, is just the stories, you know? That's what it is, and I think that every student comes to class with stories and I think they do relate to what's

in the textbook. And I think they make it more real and more understandable. And so, I think asking students to research stories and learn those stories and find where they fit into the history textbook is important. And I think just extending it to today and how it affected, how stories from our students' own past and family histories, affected the family story. And what happened with the families, and taking time to make it personal, and making it about real life, for me as a student.

Olivia reflected upon a very specific need for educators to honor the stories that students bring into the classroom. She called educators to listen, honor, and validate the stories of their students not only by connecting them to the curriculum, but also by creating a space where family stories and classroom stories can peacefully meet and respectfully coexist.

***Emerging theme three: Education is made of human stories.***

The final theme emerging from the data analysis is that education is truly transformative when it authentically values students' cultures and identities. The participants felt that they were most welcome in the classroom when they "saw" themselves in their education. Finding a place to express their own personal narratives was instrumental in loving school. When participants were unable to express their identities in school, they described feeling a disconnect between the content standards and their lives. They suggested that strong teaching should cross the boundary between home and school

Olivia described how she would feel if she had experienced purposeful and intentional education that transcended the boundaries between home and school when she stated, "I mean, it's just, in education that's ownership... it's a lot". All six other participants echoed this notion in describing that placing their personal stories inside the context of what they were learning would have given them a greater love of school and a



clearer understanding that their teachers care about their general well-being. This seems to suggest that when students feel that their teachers care, they are more likely to succeed and feel welcomed in the classroom. This could potentially be most important for bilingual education teachers whose students have personal stories to tell that may otherwise be disregarded by standards-based informational texts.

### ***Summary of research question three***

White immigrant descendants reflected upon their own educational experiences in order to suggest how educators might encourage second language and culture acquisition, while protecting students' first languages and cultures. It was clear that when these participants were given the opportunity to authentically bridge the divide between the home space and the classroom space, they found great value in the experience, and more importantly, in their own ancestral cultural identity. However, when this even did not have long-term meaningful implications, the impact was far less. These participants expressed the need for students' stories and histories to be at the forefront of their educational experiences in order for each child to take ownership of their own learning and to find value in themselves. They claimed that this could legitimize the experiences and cultures of students, particularly immigrant students living in the United States, inside and outside of the classroom.

### **Summary**

The seven White immigrant descendant participants' responses to research question one suggested that L1 maintenance is a factor in cultural identity maintenance. However, the participants were not unanimous in the degree in which L1 maintenance is a factor. Noah, Elijah, and Olivia all saw L1 maintenance as an inextricable link to cultural identity maintenance. They believed that ancestral languages offer a

metaphorical window to the ancestral cultural soul that cannot be found elsewhere. Ava, Isabella, and Liam communicated that L1 maintenance is one of the various links to cultural identity maintenance. They cited other impactful factors that have personally helped them to maintain their cultural identities. These factors include, but are not limited to: participation in religion, sports, politics, and large cultural communities. Emma viewed L1 maintenance as a possible link to cultural identity maintenance, but arrived at this conclusion after some thought. She initially suspected that her California culture would be more powerful in the development of her identity, even with the preservation of her ancestral language. However, after careful reflection, she determined that L1 maintenance could have potentially impacted the maintenance of her cultural identity.

The responses to research question two revealed three categories of classification by which the seven participants viewed their cultural identities in the absence of their ancestral languages: detachment from the ancestral cultural identity, recognition of the ancestral cultural identity, and recognition and realization of the ancestral cultural identity. Noah articulated that he felt complete detachment from his ancestral cultural identity. He was unable to concretely determine a meaningful connection to his cultural identity. Emma and Ava explained that they recognize their ancestral cultural identities as part of their family identities. Participating in their family traditions and nurturing strong familial relationships has allowed them to connect to their cultural identities. Olivia, Elijah, Isabella, and Liam all described a recognition and realization of their ancestral cultural identities. Despite participating in cultural traditions and customs, Olivia and Elijah expressed a sense of cultural identity confusion or ambivalence due to the loss of the ancestral language. Isabella and Liam did not share in this ambivalence

and reported feeling a strong sense of cultural identity likely because they were reared in strong cultural communities.

In reflecting upon their own educational experiences, the seven participants yielded passionate responses to research question three. All seven participants consistently made the argument for authentic and engaged student learning. The participants suggested that educators should encourage students to share and value their family histories as part of their educational experiences. Additionally, educators are called to create an environment that supports the praise and honor of family histories as important texts. In doing so, the gap between the home culture and the school culture ceases to exist, and students' ancestral identities no longer sit in opposition to that of the educational system, but instead resituate themselves in the heart of authentic learning.

**CHAPTER V**  
**SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS,**  
**IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Overview**

This chapter is comprised of five sections. The first section summarizes the findings of this study. The following section compares the emerging themes to previous studies. The third section proposes recommendations for future research aligned to this study's area of inquiry, while the fourth section notes some pragmatic implications for practice in the classroom. The final section reflects upon the conclusions derived from the study.

**Summary of Findings**

In order to address the three research questions, the researcher developed approximately thirty open-ended interview questions adapted, with permission, from the work of Dr. Martin Guardado. The first-round interviews explored the following three categories: participants' ethnic identity, participants' language identity, and participants' cultural identity and language skills. The second-round interviews reviewed the information gleaned from the first interviews and discussed participants' experiences with education and language learning. While interpretations of ancestral cultural identity and ancestral language maintenance differed, patterns among the seven participants' responses emerged.

In response to research question one, the White immigrant descendant participants believed that L1 maintenance would have fostered a better, more well-developed sense of their ancestral cultural identities. The degree to which L1 maintenance would have affected their ancestral cultural identities varied but could be classified into three

categories: L1 maintenance is an inextricable link to cultural identity maintenance, L1 maintenance is one of the various links to cultural identity maintenance, and L1 maintenance is a potential link to cultural identity maintenance. In short, the participants believed that L1 maintenance plays a notable role in the preservation of ancestral culture, and at times expressed limited remorse regarding their inability to communicate in their ancestral languages.

Three categories emerged in response to questions regarding the participants views of their cultural identities in the absence of their ancestral languages: detachment from the ancestral cultural identity, recognition of the ancestral cultural identity, and recognition and realization of the ancestral cultural identity. Despite this categorization, all the participants described some sense of a longing to connect to their families through their ancestral cultural identities. Belonging to a cultural community seemed to be of value to the participants, even to Noah who described being completely detached from his ancestral cultural identity.

Additionally, the second research question yielded interesting results in that if the participants were completely detached from their ancestral cultural identities or if the participants were deeply connected to their ancestral cultural communities, they did not struggle with their ancestral cultural identities despite not possessing the L1 language skill. Noah, who experienced complete detachment from his ancestral cultural identity, described being at peace without a strong connection to his ancestral identity. Liam and Isabella, who both were reared within strong ancestral cultural communities, reported feeling deeply connected to their cultural identities. However, when asked to describe or communicate their feelings or representations of their cultural identities, the other four participants frequently responded with, "I don't know". Generally, they were able to

answer the questions with some level of confusion or speculation, but largely could not give tangible examples of the ways in which their cultural identities impacted their lives. This interview data suggested that these participants felt a sense of ambivalence about their cultural identities in the absence of the ancestral language.

If educators are to encourage second language and culture acquisition, while protecting students' first languages and cultures, the participants believed that authentic learning should be at the heart of teaching pedagogies. In exploring the third research question, the participants all concurred that two important factors influence students' abilities to fully realize and appreciate their cultural identities: first, authentic and meaningful learning should connect the school and home realms; and second, that authentic and meaningful learning should honor and value student stories, including their family histories. Participants expressed feeling proud of their ancestral culture when they were allowed to share their stories in class. They also wished that educators would have opened the space for school and home to exist together. Based upon their interviews, the participants felt that real education should be authentic, honest education for each student.

## **Discussion**

This section discusses the findings of the qualitative study and compares the emerging themes to previous studies in order to situate this study in a broader body of research.

### ***Findings of qualitative data analysis***

The need for this study arose from a lack of literature surrounding the effects of ancestral language maintenance on the cultural identity of White immigrant descendants. In understanding this phenomenon, the researcher aimed to better understand the

importance of preserving the L1 for individuals who, through the generations, can be assimilated into the hegemonic United States society. The research data produced three noteworthy themes: first, White immigrant descendants are privileged to choose their cultural identity; second, belonging to a cultural connected social group is meaningful to White immigrant descendants; and finally, students are contributors, not spectators to their education.

### *Current findings and previous studies*

Some elements of the study's thematic findings are supported by existing research in the field.

In studying the experiences of Romanian immigrant descendants, Craciun (2013) found that for White immigrant descendants, ethnicity has become symbolic as "whiteness comes to replace it as an unspoken marker of identity" (p. 733). Because Romanian immigrant descendants racially identify and appear to be White, they are secured a place in the hegemonic United States social hierarchy. However, because they also have ethnic roots, they can claim additional cultural components. Craciun stated:

Romanian immigrants [descendants] have an ambivalent relationship with Americanness: on the one hand, they see themselves as similar to white Americans because of their skin color and dedication to hard work, while on the other, they construct moral narratives which distinguish them from the white and non-white Americans. They had a similarly fraught relationship to Romanianness: they embraced some characteristics they associated with being Romanian, but strongly disavowed others. These narratives seem to converge on one goal: to paint a picture of themselves as particularly worth of success in the United States. (2013, p. 735)

Like Craciun's participants, the present study's participants enjoyed a similar form of privilege by being allowed to choose when to claim their ancestral cultural identity and when to disregard it. Noah pointed out that this resulted in a *romanticized* notion of the authentic identity, in which White immigrant descendants could pick and choose which parts of the cultural identity to show and when. The cultural identity of one's heritage is therefore transformed into something that benefits the White immigrant descendant's social standing. Looking ethnically White benefits White immigrant descendants in their social interactions. Mu (2016) found that physical looks also impacted the perceived identity of Chinese immigrant descendants, and thereby influenced their language learning aspirations.

In a mixed-methods study, Mu (2016) found that "Chinese looks, Chinese identity, and Chinese language are interwoven and entangled. They form an interdependent and coconstructed triad, with none of them primary, dominant, or individually existing" (p. 300). The Chinese Australian participants reported feeling uncomfortable and ashamed that they could not speak their heritage languages, in conjunction with the fact that they were physically perceived as Chinese by other members of their society. This racialized assumption and a desire to reconnect with their ancestral cultural identities caused them to learn their ancestral languages. Mu (2016) asserted that "this research gives rise to the conclusion that CHL (Chinese heritage language) learning is neither fully dependent on, nor completely free of, Chinese looks. CHL learning is a complex process associated with subtle, multilayered identity constructions and nuanced, interested social orders" (p. 303). In juxtaposition to White immigrant descendants' privilege to choose to use or ignore their ethnic identities, those immigrants with physical ethnic characteristics cannot access this choice. This suggests



that racial hierarchy and categorization is deeply socially embedded and benefits the White immigrant descendant.

Despite the overwhelmingly positive racial position that White immigrant descendants situate themselves within, they still described yearning to belong or reconnect with their ancestral culture. Largely they felt that maintaining the ancestral language would have offered them the ability to do so. Shin (2016) found that “heritage language learning is not only a linguistically and cognitively oriented process but also a highly complex social and cultural process that HLLs (heritage language learners) have to constantly negotiate as part of their identity construction” (p. 33). These findings among participants of Korean Canadian descent mimic the findings of the present study’s participants in so much as they assert the need for ancestral language learning to be understood as a process by which individuals can develop and re-develop their ancestral cultural identities. Furthermore, Morales’s (2016) work investigating the heritage language use among immigrant descendant Latino children found that use of the ancestral language was valued as social capital because it sustained intergenerational ties. Without the ability to maintain those community ties, immigrant descendants risk losing their ancestral cultural identities, and thus access to membership in their ancestral cultural societies.

Without membership in these communities and with the ability to be easily accepted into a hegemonic society, White immigrant descendants quickly lose the ability to nurture and express their cultural identities. According to the participants, our educational system should be a space for students to understand the value of their identities and a space to explore that identity by taking ownership of their education. In his study, Morales (2016) found that particularly troubling for students of color:

However, schools and educational programs aimed at educating non-English speakers of color consistently deny students opportunities to draw upon out-of-school experiences and practices. This practice negates students' identities and realities of living in multiple worlds, and of being citizens of more than one society. (pp. 386-387).

If we are called to educate in the twenty-first century, then we are called to make global students and citizens who can see beyond physical boundaries and exist in multiple worlds. In partnering with parents, as Kim (2011) suggests, schools should honor the parents as the primary educators and should honor the students as historians of their own lives. Their stories should be placed into the curricula and given a home inside and outside of the classroom.

### **Conclusions**

Ancestral language maintenance and its effects on ancestral culture maintenance is a crucial area of research for all educators.

Three important conclusions are drawn from this study. First, White immigrant descendants who lost their ancestral language and who do not belong to strong ancestral cultural communities described identity ambivalence. These participants often could not directly or concretely describe the way in which they participate in cultural exchanges. Additionally, they seemed to be content with labeling themselves as hyphenated American, despite their lack of participation within those cultural communities. All of these participants reported a sense of remorse that their ancestral language had not been intergenerationally maintained. This suggests that ancestral language maintenance and ancestral cultural communities help in preserving the ancestral cultural identities of White immigrant descendants.

Second, the participants articulated their need to belong to their ancestral cultural communities as a means to connect to their living and deceased family members. Participants who reported identity ambivalence particularly emphasized this point. Social belonging and acceptance seemed to be most critical to this group of participants. The authenticity of this connection, especially given the lack of intergenerational cultural identity maintenance, seems questionable for this group. For the participants who were reared in strong ancestral cultural communities, neither identity ambivalence or acceptance by their cultural communities was problematic. They fully participated in their cultural communities and understood their connections to prior generations of family members. These two findings suggest that ancestral cultural communities play a significant role in maintaining and nurturing White immigrant descendants' ancestral cultural identities.

Finally, this study concluded that education, particularly bilingual and heritage language education, needs to be an authentic experience. It needs to foster the inclusion of students' histories and stories, create a safe space for the exploration and sharing of students' cultural identities, and incorporate parents and valuable primary educators. Educators are called to teach students how to take ownership of their own learning so that they can better read the world in which they live. An authentic education that includes students' perceptions, voices, and identities is key to a well-rounded education.

One important gap drawn from this study is that research around the reclamation by White immigrant descendants of an abandoned ancestral cultural identity needs to be completed. While all of the participants who experienced identity ambivalence described a remorse and longing to reclaim the ancestral identity, none knew if that was possible given its abandonment by their parents. Indeed, learning the ancestral language is likely

a good place to start, but it is uncertain as to whether or not this would result in a true realization of the ancestral culture. Further research needs to be conducted in order to understand if this would be a romanticized or imagined ancestral culture without the participation of previous generations.

Another significant gap drawn from this study is the impact of social and political privilege and power that comes with being a White immigrant descendant. For this group of people, the practicality of maintaining the ancestral cultural language is questionable. They lose their ancestral cultural identity when it is necessary to blend into the hegemonic social norms but use the ancestral cultural identity when they perceive it to be socially advantageous. Thus, the degree to which maintaining the ancestral language is practical is unknown. The privilege that comes with whiteness seems to suggest that using the ancestral language would not serve an authentic purpose if it had not been intergenerationally maintained.

The study relied upon the theoretical underpinnings of the Whorfian Hypothesis (Whorf, 1956) and the Language Maintenance Hypothesis (Fishman, 1991). This study found that the lack of intergenerational ancestral language maintenance shifted the perceptions of White immigrant descendants in that they perceived their identity differently than their ancestors. Without use of the ancestral language, as linguistic relativity suggests, these participants have a completely different identity than that of prior generations. Furthermore, the study found that the participants did indeed experience cultural identity ambivalence in the absence of their ancestral language, as Fishman's hypothesis suggests. In lacking the ancestral language, the participants largely lacked the vehicle in which to connect to their ancestral cultures and their ancestral cultural identities.

The study's findings support the need to better understand the impact and effects of ancestral language maintenance on ancestral cultural identity maintenance among White immigrant descendants. This becomes particularly important when examining the social and political sentiments of this group of people. There is an inextricable link between language and culture, which may have impacts on the social and political identifications of White immigrant descendants. As generations of immigrant families continue to function in the United States, it is important for educators to understand how to honor the ancestral culture so that *symbolic ethnicity* is limited (Craciun, 2013). In doing so, the hope is that empathy, diversity, and engaged citizenship would emerge for all students.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, this study's findings highlight the need to approach bilingual and heritage language education as an educator-parent-student endeavor. Educators are called to create a space that focuses on the inclusion of students' cultural identities by fostering and teaching empathy. Parents are encouraged to see the worth and value of themselves as the primary educators in their children's lives. And students are called to take ownership of their educational experiences. Authentic teaching of the new language and culture is possible if authentic respect of the ancestral language and culture is present. Through this approach, students are afforded the opportunity to critically examine the world in which they live and to develop a position for themselves within it while honoring their ancestral roots.

### **Implications for Practice**

Three major implications for practice emerged from this study: first, students' histories are of educational worth; second, learning takes place inside and outside of the classroom; and finally, parents are valuable assets to their children's education. This

study revealed the need for teachers to be mindful of students' histories and stories, particularly when they potentially conflict with contents-based texts. The participants in this study all revealed that they responded best to education that presented them with the opportunity to explore their own identities and cultures. As such, educators are called to exercise sincere and authentic empathy towards their students and their experiences. This empathy must be role modeled and practiced in diverse classrooms so that students learn to carry it forward into their social interactions.

Second, educators and administrators need to acknowledge the learning that takes place inside and outside of schools (Morales, 2016). So, while inside the classroom, education cannot avoid a critical discussion of students' realities. This is particularly true for immigrant children and immigrant descendants who often find little connection to contents-based texts that differ from their own identities (Morales, 2016; Shin, 2016). Shin (2016) stated, "Students should be encouraged to make collaborative critical inquiry and to analyze and understand the social realities of their own lives and of their communities" (p. 41). If education does not cross the boundary between school and reality, it fails its students. For bilingual and heritage language educators, this is particularly important because of the diverse realities their students bring into the classroom. Students need to feel safe and accepted, and their realities need to be safe and accepted.

Finally, this study reasserted the need for schools and parents to partner together in children's education. Similarly, for adult heritage language learners, schools must partner with students' families in order to be successful. Parents must be made to feel as though they are a valuable asset to their children's educational future (Kim, 2011). In the bilingual classroom, parents are the primary educators of the ancestral language and

ancestral culture, therefore their role is essential in the preservation of their cultural identities. It is important that the parents and the students understand the social capital and worth of their ancestral languages and cultures (Kim, 2011).

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Existing research supports the need to better understand how ancestral language loss impacts White immigrant descendants and, alternatively, how ancestral language maintenance affects this population. In particular, it is necessary to determine if White immigrant descendants who have experienced ancestral language loss are capable of reconnecting to that ancestral culture or if that would simply be an imagined culture. Furthermore, it would be interesting to investigate whether or not these individuals are capable of reclaiming a culture that has not been intergenerationally maintained.

Additional research needs to be conducted around the implications and influence of whiteness. For this group of participants, their White identification made it easier for them to assimilate into the hegemonic social values of the United States. They used their *symbolic ethnicity* (Craciun, 2013) when it was socially advantageous, but lost their ethnic identity when it served no purpose. When compared to other ethnic groups of immigrant descendants, this is a privileged position (Craciun, 2013; Morales, 2016; Mu, 2016). The privilege that exists for White immigrant descendants needs to be more fully examined within the context of their ancestral cultural identification.

In addition to examining this privileged social position, more research needs to be conducted on the social and political effects of White immigrant descendants' ancestral language and cultural maintenance. This inquiry should focus on investigating whether or not maintaining the ancestral language and culture would alter political and social perceptions. Craciun (2013) stated:

Lastly, self-identification has implications for one's attitudes toward policy decisions, and future research can seek to link immigrants' emerging racial frameworks with their political attitudes, particularly on issues such as immigration and race-based policies. (p. 743)

Ancestral language and cultural maintenance for White immigrant descendants needs to be better understood in the context of engaged and authentic diversity. This population's tolerance of other immigrant communities should be better explored.

Finally, bilingual education, and heritage language education, should take a deep look into the realities of its students and parents. There is a need for additional research on the placement and use of student histories, cultures, values, and cultural identities within the language-learning classroom. Additionally, pedagogies that invest in both the parents' and the students' well-being need to be better investigated so that schools can partner with parents to support the needs of the students and families. Determining how to create a safe space for both the student and the parent, where ancestral cultures and identities are valued as much as the language and culture being taught, is essential for a well-rounded education, and thus needs to be critically evaluated and understood (Morales, 2016).

### **Concluding Thoughts**

In reflecting upon the process of conducting this study, analyzing the findings, and preparing this dissertation, the researcher has drawn three conclusions. First, this study illuminated the power of White privilege among White immigrant descendants. Although the participants had some level of understanding regarding their privilege, none seemed to find this exceptionally noteworthy. The researcher believes that there are deep



social and political complexities that exist in this gap between *knowing* and *understanding* the implications of one's privileged position.

Second, based upon the findings of this study, the research believes that all schools would benefit from a curriculum that includes identity exploration for its students. During the interview process, it was striking that all the participants experienced some sense of befuddlement when attempting to describe and elaborate on their cultural identities. In large part, this was due to the identity ambivalence explained by Fishman's Language Maintenance Hypothesis (1991), but it was also clear that these participants had not been given the opportunity to closely examine their heritage and their own identities. It is interesting that a standards-based education includes an investigation into world cultures, but excludes positioning its own students within that dialogue.

Lastly, going hand-in-hand with the incorporation of students' identity exploration into their education, is the idea that teachers need training and room for their own reflective experience. The researcher believes that this study hinted at the notion that socio-emotional training and education for all teachers would greatly benefit students. For bilingual educators this is perhaps a more necessary requirement, as much of their teaching time is spent with students of diverse cultures with differing world views (Whorf, 1956). If teachers are given the time and resources required to understand their own identities, privileges, and belonging, they might be more likely to create that needed space in their own classrooms, thus creating equitable and authentic education for teachers and students.

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## APPENDIX A

### Consent Form



### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Below is a description of the research procedures and an explanation of your rights as a research participant. You should read this information carefully. If you agree to participate, you will sign in the space provided to indicate that you have read and understand the information on this consent form. You are entitled to and will receive a copy of this form.

You have been asked to participate in a research study conducted by Micaella Colla, a graduate student in the Department of International & Multicultural Education at the University of San Francisco. This faculty supervisor for this study is Dr. Sedique Popal, a professor in the Department of International & Multicultural Education at the University of San Francisco.

#### WHAT THE STUDY IS ABOUT:

The purpose of this research study is to investigate the experiences and perceptions of White immigrant descendants regarding the loss of their ancestral languages. This means that the study will attempt to understand the attitudes and beliefs that White individuals hold about their cultural identities in the absence of their ancestral language.

#### WHAT YOU WILL BE ASKED TO DO:

During this study, you will be asked to answer interview questions that directly relate to this topic, as well as provide demographic information about yourself. You will be asked to answer honestly and express your own individual opinions. During this process you will also be asked to be audio recorded and to review the transcription of these recordings.

#### DURATION AND LOCATION OF THE STUDY:

Your participation in this study will involve a minimum of two one- to two-hour interview sessions with the researcher, and a minimum of one-hour transcript review. The study will take place in a location that is most convenient to you, such as your own home.

#### POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS:

The research procedures described above may involve the following risks and/or discomforts: the emotional discomfort of discussing and expounding upon cultural disconnect. However, this discomfort will be limited. If you wish, you may choose to withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation at any time during the study without penalty.

#### BENEFITS:

You will receive no direct benefit from your participation in this study; however, the possible benefits to others include a better understanding of the importance of bilingualism among White immigrant descendants in preserving their cultural identities.

**PRIVACY/CONFIDENTIALITY:**

Any data you provide in this study will be kept confidential, unless disclosure is required by law. In any published report, information that will make it possible to identify you or any individual participant will not be included. Specifically, all data will be kept on a personal, private, researcher owned laptop. This includes: audio recordings, transcription of recordings, researcher field notes, demographic information, and any materials relevant to your interview process. Please note that audio recordings will enable the researcher to remain attentive during the interview process, while preserving the authenticity of the interviews. Additionally, they enable both the researcher and participant to validate the interviews. Consent forms and all research data will be destroyed five years after the date of dissertation approval.

**COMPENSATION/PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION:**

There is no payment or other form of compensation for your participation in this study.

**VOLUNTARY NATURE OF THE STUDY:**

Your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits. Furthermore, you may skip any questions or tasks that make you uncomfortable and may discontinue your participation at any time. In addition, the researcher has the right to withdraw you from participation in the study at any time.

**OFFER TO ANSWER QUESTIONS:**

Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you should contact the principal investigator: Micaella Colla at 415-317-2824 or [mecolla@gmail.com](mailto:mecolla@gmail.com). If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the University of San Francisco Institutional Review Board at [IRBPHS@usfca.edu](mailto:IRBPHS@usfca.edu).

**I HAVE READ THE ABOVE INFORMATION. ANY QUESTIONS I HAVE ASKED HAVE BEEN ANSWERED. I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT AND I WILL RECEIVE A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM.**

---

PARTICIPANT'S SIGNATURE

DATE



## APPENDIX B

### Permissions to Adapt Dr. Martin Guardado Interview Guides (2008; 2002)

4/5/2017

Gmail - Research request: Interview questions



Micaella Colla &lt;mecolla@gmail.com&gt;

#### Research request: Interview questions

7 messages

**Micaella Colla** <mecolla@gmail.com>  
To: martin.guardado@ualberta.ca

Sun, Mar 12, 2017 at 11:13 AM

Dear Dr. Guardado:

I hope this email finds you well. I'm writing in the hopes that you might be willing to assist me in my doctoral research. I am currently enrolled as an Ed.D. student at the University of San Francisco, where I am investigating the link between heritage language loss and cultural identity ambivalence for White immigrant descendants. I'm utilizing a phenomenological approach and hope to conduct semi-structured interviews with research participants this summer. I came across your 2002 article, *Loss and maintenance of first language skills: Case studies of Hispanic families in Vancouver*, during my literature review and was struck by the similarities to my own research. I'm wondering if you would be willing to share some of your interview questions with me? I would, of course, cite my source and attribute all credit to you. Any guidance is very much appreciated.

All the best,  
Micaella

**Martin Guardado** <guardado@ualberta.ca>  
To: Micaella Colla <mecolla@gmail.com>

Sun, Mar 12, 2017 at 3:10 PM

Dear Micaella,

Thank you for reaching out. I can share the interview guide that I used as a basis for my 2002 study. However, I'm about to leave on a trip (to China) and won't be in the office until March 23. I don't have access to these files remotely.

In the meantime, I should mention that building on the 2002 project, I subsequently conducted a 2-year ethnography on similar and related issues. Different aspects of that study have been reported in a number of publications over the years (between 2008 and 2014). If you happen to review those publications and feel that the interview guide(s) for that study may be of help, do let me know. I can look into those as well when I get back.

Your dissertation research sounds exciting. I wish you all the best with it and look forward to reading it in the near future.

Best,  
Martin

-----  
Martin Guardado, PhD  
Associate Professor  
Academic Director  
English Language School (ELS)  
Faculty of Extension  
University of Alberta

[martin.guardado@ualberta.ca](mailto:martin.guardado@ualberta.ca)  
Ph (780) 492 - 5063

Web site: [uab.ca/ELS](http://uab.ca/ELS)

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4/5/2017

Gmail - Research request: Interview questions

**Micaella Colla** <mecolla@gmail.com>  
To: Martin Guardado <guardado@ualberta.ca>

Mon, Mar 13, 2017 at 3:57 PM

Hi Dr. Guardado:

Thank you so much for your kindness, willingness to help, and your quick response. All are so incredibly appreciated as I undertake this dissertation process.

I must admit that I have reviewed several pieces of your research and have found them all so fascinating! I greatly enjoyed your 2010 piece, *Heritage language development: Preserving a mythic past or envisioning the future of Canadian identity?*, and I would be so appreciative of that interview guide as well. (I became even more excited when I realized that you looped Cosmopolitanism into your research as well!)

Again, thank you so much for your guidance and kindness. I hope you have a lovely trip to China.

All the best,  
Micaella  
[Quoted text hidden]

**Micaella Colla** <mecolla@gmail.com>  
To: Martin Guardado <guardado@ualberta.ca>

Mon, Apr 3, 2017 at 4:33 PM

Hi Dr. Guardado:

I hope this email finds you well and that your trip to China was pleasant! I'm in the midst of crafting my research study and was hoping to review your interview guides soon. If that's a bother I completely understand. I'm simply so excited to have the guidance! Many thanks to you!

All the best,  
Micaella  
[Quoted text hidden]

**Martin Guardado** <guardado@ualberta.ca>  
To: Micaella Colla <mecolla@gmail.com>

Tue, Apr 4, 2017 at 10:47 AM

Dear Micaella,

Good to hear from you. Sorry for the long silence. I've been back for about a week but things have been intense for me with all the accumulated work and ongoing things demanding my attention. It's not a bother whatsoever.

I'm attaching the interview guide that I used as the basis for my 2001-2002 data collection. I should mention that I used follow up probing questions based on their initial responses. The interviews were conducted in Spanish. What's the heritage language of your participants?

I'll look for the rest and will be in touch soon.

Best,  
Martin

-----  
Martin Guardado, PhD  
Associate Professor  
Academic Director  
English Language School (ELS)  
Faculty of Extension  
University of Alberta

[martin.guardado@ualberta.ca](mailto:martin.guardado@ualberta.ca)  
Ph (780) 492 - 5063

4/5/2017

Gmail - Research request: Interview questions

Web site: [uab.ca/ELS](http://uab.ca/ELS)

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**Martin Guardado** <guardado@ualberta.ca>  
To: Micaella Colla <mecolla@gmail.com>

Tue, Apr 4, 2017 at 3:10 PM

Hi again,

I just realized that my other interview guides are included as three different appendices in my dissertation (attached). As with the previous interview guide, these only served as the basis for the initial interviews. With many of the 34 participating families, I conducted multiple interviews and observations over two years so those were prepared specifically for each family building on the previous ones.

You will also notice that there aren't questions related to cosmopolitanism specifically, because these findings emerged inductively from the interviews.

I hope this helps.

All the best with your work.

Cheers,  
Martin

-----  
Martin Guardado, PhD  
Associate Professor  
Academic Director  
English Language School (ELS)  
Faculty of Extension  
University of Alberta

[martin.guardado@ualberta.ca](mailto:martin.guardado@ualberta.ca)  
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Web site: [uab.ca/ELS](http://uab.ca/ELS)

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**Micaella Colla** <mecolla@gmail.com>  
To: Martin Guardado <guardado@ualberta.ca>

Wed, Apr 5, 2017 at 4:52 PM

Hi Dr. Guardado:

I can't tell you how much I appreciate your assistance. Saying thank you just doesn't seem like it's enough! You have made my dissertation process that much less stressful. Thank you for your willingness to help and your guidance. A

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?ui=2&ik=0fe6a70258&view=pt&search=inbox&th=15ac3b9fef99db55&siml=15ac3b9fef99db55&siml=15ac49386d43f13e&siml=...> 3/4

4/5/2017

Gmail - Research request: Interview questions

million thanks to you!

All the best,  
Micaella  
[Quoted text hidden]

**APPENDIX C****Demographic Questionnaire**

1. What is your full name?

---

2. What is your gender identity? Please select from the list below:

Female

Male

Non-conforming

Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Please select your age range:

25 – 30 years-old

31 – 35 years-old

36 – 40 years-old

41 – 45 years-old

4. Please select your highest level of education:

High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent

Some college credit, no degree

Trade, technical, or vocational training

Associate degree

Bachelor's degree

Master's degree

Professional degree

Doctoral degree

Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

5. What is your occupation?

---

6. In what city and state were you born?

---

7. In what city and state did you grow up?

---

8. What is your ancestral ethnicity (for example, Italian-American):

---

9. What is your ancestral or heritage language (for example, Italian):

---

## APPENDIX D

### Interview Guide

Questions	Time (minutes)
<b>Warm-up Questions</b>	<b>15 minutes</b>
<b>Introductory questions:</b>	
1. How are you today?	5
2. How was work/school/family this week?	
<b>Baseline assessment questions:</b>	
1. What is your understanding of heritage or ancestral language?	
2. What is your understanding of heritage or ancestral ethnic/cultural identity?	10
3. Are there any aspects of these terms that you do not understand?	
<b>Probe Questions</b>	<b>45 – 95 minutes</b>
<b>Ethnic identity:</b>	
1. What is your ethnic/cultural identity?	
2. Can you describe what that means to you?	
3. Do you have any traditions that you feel exemplify your ethnic identity?	
4. How much of a role does your ethnic identity play in your daily life?	
5. How much of a role does your ethnic identity play in your family life?	15
6. Do you have strong feelings about your ethnic identity?	
a. Can you describe your feelings about your ethnic identity?	
7. What would enhance your ethnic identity?	
<b>Language identity:</b>	
1. What is your ancestral language?	
2. Do you use any of your ancestral language words?	
a. If so, in what context are they used? Can you describe this context?	
b. Why do you use these words rather than English words?	
c. Do you associate any feelings with these words?	
d. Do you feel pride when using these words?	
3. Have you ever tried to learn your ancestral language?	30
4. Have your ancestors ever tried to speak to you in your ancestral language?	
a. If so, what feelings emerge when they do/did?	
5. How do you feel about your ancestral language proficiency (or skills)?	
a. How do you feel about not being able to fluently communicate in your ancestral language?	

**Cultural identity and language skills:**

1. How do you feel about your cultural identity in the absence of your heritage language?
  - a. Do you feel more connected to your cultural identity when you use your ancestral language?
2. Do you feel that fluency in your ancestral language would change your perception of your cultural identity?
3. Do you think that your cultural identity would be more fully realized if you spoke your ancestral language fluently?
  - a. Do you think that your cultural identity would be more fully realized by society if you spoke your ancestral language fluently?

**30****Bilingual education and identity maintenance questions:**

1. Do you think that direct instruction in your heritage language would have changed your cultural identity?
  - a. If so, can you describe in what ways?
  - b. How would this shape your identity?
2. Do you think that bilingual education would have better supported the continued use of your ancestral language within your family?
  - a. If so, can you describe in what ways?
  - b. How would this shape your identity?
3. Do you feel that your ethnic culture was neglected in school?
  - a. If so, how?
  - b. What did that feel like?
4. What could educators have done to honor and promote your ancestral culture?
  - a. Do you think that would have changed your identity?
5. In terms of language and cultural identity, what would you like to see for future generations of you family?

**20**

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**Wind-down Questions****15 minutes**

---

**Post-probe questions:**

1. At this time, would you like to clarify any information you provided?
2. Are you comfortable with this process?
3. Do you have any questions for me?

**10****Conclusion questions:**

1. How are you feeling?
2. What will you do with the rest of your day?

**5**



## APPENDIX E

### IRBPHS Approval

10/25/2018

Gmail - Expedited Review Approved by Chair - IRB ID: 890



Micaella Colla &lt;mecolla@gmail.com&gt;

---

#### Expedited Review Approved by Chair - IRB ID: 890

1 message

Christy Lusareta <noreply@axiommentor.com>  
 Reply-To: Christy Lusareta <calusareta@usfca.edu>  
 To: mecolla@usfca.edu

Mon, Jul 24, 2017 at 2:19 PM

*IRBPHS - Approval Notification*

To: Micaella Colla  
 From: Terence Patterson, IRB Chair  
 Subject: Protocol #890  
 Date: 07/24/2017

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) at the University of San Francisco (USF) has reviewed your request for human subjects approval regarding your study.

Your research (IRB Protocol #890) with the project title **Ancestral Language Loss and Cultural Identity Maintenance Among White Immigrant Descendants** has been approved by the IRB Chair under the rules for expedited review on **07/24/2017**.

Any modifications, adverse reactions or complications must be reported using a modification application to the IRBPHS within ten (10) working days.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRBPHS via email at [IRBPHS@usfca.edu](mailto:IRBPHS@usfca.edu). Please include the Protocol number assigned to your application in your correspondence.

On behalf of the IRBPHS committee, I wish you much success in your research.

Sincerely,

Terence Patterson, EdD, ABPP

Professor & Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

University of San Francisco

[irbphs@usfca.edu](mailto:irbphs@usfca.edu)

