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Qualitative Research Article Critique

The article I chose to critique is called "Traversing the Center: The Politics of Language Use in a Catholic Religious Education Program for Immigrant Mexican Children" by Patricia Baquedano-Lopez. For this article the researcher focuses on the politics of language use in a Los Angeles catholic parish church. Specifically Baquedano-Lopez (2004) analyzed the "development of educational policy for Spanish speaking Mexican immigrant children" within doctrina classes. Using ethnography and discourse analysis, Baquedano-Lopez's research questions focused on (2004) "the parish leaders' ideologies in the decision to eliminate the religious education program in Spanish in favor of English only instruction". Her research questions also appeared to focus on the local politics of language use within religious education as it reflected upon the larger public debate on immigration and language use.

The doctrina classes were part of a (Baquedano-Lopez 2004) "larger study done on the socialization of Mexican values and the maintenance of home language in the context of immigration to the United States" by the author.

Baquedano-Lopez was a participant observer at the church for 3 ½ years. She observed many different aspects of the church educational program including (Baquedano-Lopez 2004) "the dynamics of classroom interaction, parish and doctrina specific ceremonies, faculty and parent meetings, as well as interactions of children in and out of the classroom". Besides observing, Baquedano-Lopez interviewed many of the participants in both English and Spanish. For this study, I feel the method she employed by observing and interviewing were appropriate for the study. By spending the amount of she did collecting data via these methods, she was able to see the changes from one academic year to the next.

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Baquedano-Lopez's interviews sampled from individuals who either agreed or disagreed with the issue of whether or not the Spanish language doctrina classes should continue. The interview participants she highlighted in the article were church leaders who held opinions on both sides of the issue. In this article, by selecting those who either agreed or disagreed with the decision made by the church to remove the Spanish doctrina classes, she gave validity to her interview sampling. If she had chosen individuals from only one side of the issue to interview, than the validity of the study could be in question.

The selection of the Catholic Church in Los Angeles, California also brings validity to the data collection. Los Angeles is known to have a high immigrant population, many of which are Latino. As a church in an urban center such as Los Angeles, the probability is much greater that a population such as the Latino community would participate in their parish catholic church.

Baquedano-Lopez found that in an effort to create English only doctrina classes, the Latino community not only became greater participants in the church, but they also resisted the changes asked of them by the church leadership. This is based on the observations of doctrina classes continuing to be held in Spanish after the "merger" of catechism classes. It is also based on the actions of the director of religious education by allowing the continued practice of Spanish classes to continue.

Near the beginning of the article, the author discloses that she is also first generation Mexican immigrant with a catholic upbringing, part of the same group that she is studying. Due to this, the Kennedy made an assumption that she would participate at as a member of the community. What she did attempt to negotiate her presence at as a researcher in the community, the author was identified as a member of the community and did join Latino leaders (Baquedano-Lopez 2004) "in confronting

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exclusionary statements from non-Latino members". Her identification as a member of the community and that of her upbringing may present biases and how she analyzed the data.

By documenting the resistance to the change for English only doctrina classes, the author in part answered her research questions set out the beginning. I feel that Baquedano-Lopez concluded that the ideology behind the decision to eliminate the Spanish doctrina classes was because (2004) "parish officials created a rationale for an educational policy that was an accord with the norms of a majority". The majority that Baquedano-Lopez is referring to appears to be that of the larger public community. By rationalizing their reasons for closing the Spanish doctrina classes as being part of the norms of the society, the parish leaders are not hearing the arguments of the more local community. As a reflection of the larger debate, those who were in favor of the Spanish classes resisted the changes. Again this is a reflection of the greater community, who at the time of the study had passed Proposition 187, an exclusionary initiative that denied social services to undocumented workers. As a result of great public outcry and heated debate in the court system, the proposition was eventually deemed unconstitutional.

I agree with the author that her conclusion is at the local politics of language use dollars reflect on the larger public debate of immigration and language use. Simply because the majority in a larger community has made a decision to require English only classes does not mean that a more local community such as a church should follow. The resistance to the change by the teachers and director of religious education