Shenk, Elaine
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The City University of New York
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Puerto Rico’s Language Officialization Debates: Perspectives From a Mountain Corridor Community

ELAINE SHENK

ABSTRACT

Language officialization legislation in Puerto Rico inspires significant political and academic debate, and the will of the Puerto Rican people is frequently summoned as supporting either the sole officialization of Spanish or that of both Spanish and English. Applying Bourdieu’s legitimate language framework, this article examines perspectives on officialization articulated by members of a community located in the island’s central mountain corridor. Using a critical discourse analytical perspective, the study shows how participants legitimate particular language practices and ideologies, and identifies both contrasting points of view and common ground between the participants’ discourses and the broader discourses on the island.

[Keywords: language officialization, Spanish, English, Puerto Rico, legitimate language, Bourdieu, critical discourse analysis]
IN APRIL 2010, THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES PASSED THE H.R. 2499 PUERTO RICO DEMOCRACY ACT. Although focused primarily on the island's political status, the act also included specific language-related provisions, including the application of U.S. federal language legislation to the island (Congressional Research Service 2010). This move was the most recent in a series of U.S. efforts to control language policy on the island, actions that reach into the early twentieth century. Language legislation passed in Puerto Rico in the early 1990s echoes this intimate connection between language and political status, and suggests that debates on language officialization function, at least to some extent, as a barometer for political perspectives (Barreto 2001). Applying Bourdieu's (1991) legitimate language framework, this article examines perspectives on language officialization in Puerto Rico presented by members of a small community located in the island's central mountain corridor. Although English plays a more limited role in many mountain corridor towns than in the coastal areas of Puerto Rico, this particular community experienced significant contact with U.S. English-speaking voluntary service workers from the mid-1940s to the mid-1970s. Using critical discourse as an analytical framework, this article examines responses of a subset of the community to (a) the call for a recognition of the clear supremacy of Spanish, as per the 1991 Law No. 4 and subsequent proposals to reinstate Spanish as the sole official language, and (b) the call for a recognition of Spanish and English as indistinct, as per the 1902 Official Languages Law and the 1993 Law No. 1. The paper compares and contrasts perspectives of community members with those who have been identified as the island's intellectual elites, as well as examines the ways in which the legitimation of language is carried out through ordinary Puerto Ricans' collective memory and practices.

Language Officialization Debates in Puerto Rico (1990s—early 2000s)

Spanish-English contact in Puerto Rico has been significant throughout the 20th century and continues in the 21st (Barreto 2000; Fayer, et al. 1998; Nickels 2005; Pousada 1996). Advocates for all three primary political status options—those of commonwealth, statehood, or independence—support the preservation of Spanish (Rosselló 1991; Rúa 2002). It is the weight and role of English that cause controversy. Following the U.S. invasion in 1898 and subsequent occupation of the island, Spanish and English were legislated to be used “indistinctly” in the Official Languages
Law of 1902. Although the languages were designated as supposed equals, early U.S. administrators imagined that English would supersede Spanish on the island and set about eradicating it through processes of “Americanization” in which language policy figured prominently (Barreto 2000; Delgado Cintrón 1990). English was established as the primary language of public school instruction, although educational policies changed multiple times during the first half of the 1900s (Algrén de Gutiérrez 1987; Comisión 2004; Fayer, et al. 1998; Morris 2001). Arguments in favor of Spanish as a vehicle of instruction came to a head in the 1940s, when language-related debates helped to construct Spanish as “an essential component of Puerto Rican national identity as defined in opposition to U.S. identity” (Dubord 2007: 242; see also Duany 2002).

Language debates have not been limited to education. In 1991, the legislature passed Law No. 4, establishing Spanish as the sole official language, thus rejecting the “indistinct” use of both languages established in the Official Languages Law of 1902; in 1993, Law No. 1 officialized both languages, thus returning the island to the de facto scenario in place throughout the majority of the 1900s (Puerto Rico Legislative Assembly 1991, 1993). The debates continued through the turn of the 21st century, with efforts to reinstate Spanish as the sole official language with English in a clearly secondary role (Llorens Vélez 2003; Rodríguez Sánchez 2003). At the heart of the debate is the representation of the languages as indistinct versus the primacy of Spanish in relation to English (Rodríguez Sánchez 2002). Some nicknamed the 1991 law “Spanish only,” thereby indexing strident and conservative “English-only” movements in the United States. Proponents of co-officialization cited the prevalence of Spanish monolingualism more than a century after the island became a colonial territory as evidence of its lack of need for protection, and claimed that the sole officialization of Spanish emphasized linguistic differences between the island and the continental United States, potentially leading to a perception by others of Puerto Ricans’ unanimous desire for clear separation from the United States, even though most islanders do not support the island’s independence at the polls (Vélez and Schweers 1993).

In contrast, those who supported the sole officialization of Spanish pointed to the language’s role as a marker of Puerto Rican identity (Delgado Cintrón 1990; Fernández 1990). Indeed, the ongoing maintenance of Spanish in Puerto Rico can be attributed at least partly to the role of human resistance to both the loss of Spanish and the presence of English (Vélez 2000). Throughout the 20th century, the centrality of the Spanish language to a Puerto Rican cultural identity was affirmed in both political and academic discourse (Delgado Cintrón 1990; Dubord 2007; Fernández 1990; Vélez 2000). Spanish is generally considered one of several “hard ‘cores’” of a Puerto Rican identity (Duany 2005: 178). This centrality is evidenced through Puerto Ricans’ daily choices for language and in census data showing that at least 98 percent of island residents speak
Spanish (Barreto 2000; Fayer, et al. 1998; Pousada 1996). Van Dijk (2001) points out that daily actions related to everyday language are one way of exercising power. Political discourses in favor of the sole officialization of Spanish drew on the perceived inherent correctness of such a law, based on these reasons (Fas Alzamora 2003).

According to Vélez and Schweers (1993), a majority of Puerto Ricans did not support the sole officialization of Spanish, a claim supported by two 1990 polls in which 76 percent and 77 percent of the respondents supported co-officialization of Spanish and English. In June 1991, after Spain had awarded the Island the Premio Príncipe de Asturias for its clear affirmation of Spanish, public support declined for co-official status, with only 63 percent stating that Spanish-Only Legislation was a “bad idea” (Vélez and Schweers 1993). By 2003, the daily El Nuevo Día showed even more decline, with 48.9 percent supporting co-official status and 48.8 percent supporting Spanish as the sole official language, a disparity that potentially is attributed to the easy access of an Internet poll to persons both on and off the island (El Nuevo Día 2003). Other scholars have also claimed that the academic and political elites in favor of the sole officialization of Spanish, who have significant access to the media, have promoted a viewpoint out of touch with that of typical Puerto Ricans (Clampitt-Dunlap 2000; Kerkhof 2001; Schweers and Vélez 1992). In this way, the language debates presented in the media may not reflect accurately what is happening in Puerto Rico (Duaay 2002). Puerto Ricans articulate a range of perspectives, some of which coincide with the perspectives promoted by the elites, since bilingualism can at times be perceived in Puerto Rico as related to a loss of identity, of Spanish language skills, or of puertorriqueñidad (Pousada 2000). The values attached to the two languages on the island thus offer a rich area of exploration, particularly when going beyond the educational system (Pousada 2008).

Legitimate Language and Language as Practice

In language contact settings, the status of a language variety depends on various factors, including those related to legislation, educational policy, and the speakers' sociocultural identity. The process by which languages may be subject to such a hierarchical ordering can be explained as one of authorization or, in Bourdieuan terms, legitimation (Bourdieu 1991; Hanks 2005). Access to political or media discourse is one resource to legitimate particular behaviors (van Dijk 2001). Although legitimation is frequently perceived to be an official act, carried out through legislation or other forms of policy-making, official language recognition is not the only way to achieve legitimacy. Alternate means of legitimacy can be seen when forms such as linguistic hybrids involving code-switching and borrowing are assigned unconventional forms of legitimacy through their use in domains such as mass media and advertising.
(Swigart 2000). Legitimate language is also constructed in the classroom as bilingual students counter and resist standard language ideologies (Heller 1996; Jaffe 2001).

In like form, legitimation takes place through daily activities, whereby participants socially and discursively construct ideological perspectives in favor of or against a particular language variety. The collective story and memory of a given community can thus form and stabilize an overall orientation towards language issues, as “schemes of perception” (Hanks 2005: 69) help to shape what those issues represent within as well as outside the community. Bourdieu’s (1991) concept of legitimation, then, rests as much on a social evaluation of language by the “ordinary” speakers of that language as it does on official pronouncements. The authority to legitimate a particular language or languages ultimately rests in those who use the language, an authority outside official fields (Hanks 2005; van Dijk 2001). One source for the granting of authority may come from the weight of communal history. Omoniyi (2003) asserts that historical context is inextricably tied to the discussion of language ideologies and perspectives. This connection is particularly true when combined with the understanding of language as practice—that is, a focus not on task as completed, but rather on meaning as constructed through language (Hanks 2005).

The ways in which this legitimation is articulated and/or acted upon depend on whether society’s members speak on their own behalf or whether others speak in their name. Brubaker (2004) defines groupism as “the tendency to take discrete, bounded groups as basic constituents of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts, and fundamental units of social analysis” (Brubaker 2004: 8). Recurrent use of groupism, made publicly by individuals speaking on behalf of what they claim to be the majority of Puerto Ricans, raises the question of how successful this move has been with those outside the metropolitan area, especially in the central corridor of the island (Shenk 2011). The current study questions whether the political, cultural, and intellectual elites who promote their views through congressional hearings, academia, and the media, actually speak for Puerto Ricans or whether they are, in fact, promoting myths out of touch with the perspectives held by many (see, for example, Clampitt-Dunlap 2000; Kerkhof 2001; Schweers and Vélez 1992). In the next sections, a critical discourse analysis of the transcripts of interview data locates the ideologies articulated within a particular community in order to compare and contrast them with the viewpoints expressed in the media and political sectors from the metropolitan area.

**The Current Study**

This study focuses on a subset of members of a small religious community (SRC), with a focus on those members living in or near three towns in the central mountain corridor
of Puerto Rico. The three towns are located within twenty kilometers of one another in two neighboring municipalities. Members of the SRC do not live together communally, but rather as single or family units, and are a minority within the greater community. The SRC is comprised of a group of churches with a common denominational identity that has traditionally been identified as Protestant as opposed to Catholic, the latter being regarded as more typically Puerto Rican due to Protestant churches being started by U.S. missionaries on the island (Duany 2002). Members of the SRC share a regional denominational office and carry out outreach projects together, such as basic healthcare and education in the Dominican Republic. Although there are similar denominational churches in other parts of the island, the present study focuses on data collected from members of SRC churches in these three towns. Given the focus of the research agenda—to identify perspectives on language officialization expressed by Puerto Ricans living outside the metropolitan and coastal areas with regard to the “primacy” vs. “indistinct” legislative proposals—the SRC was chosen as the research site due to (a) its location in the island’s interior as opposed to the metropolitan capital and other coastal regions, and (b) its identity as a religious denomination with historical contact with a group of U.S. native speakers of English, a methodological choice discussed here in some detail.

The central mountain corridor runs west-east in the center of the island, surrounded by coastal regions with several urban areas, including metropolitan San Juan, Mayagüez, and Ponce. These cities, as well as beach resort areas such as Cabo Rojo, are a primary destination of foreign tourists. Visitors to the mountain corridor tend to move fairly quickly through the region on the Ruta Panorámica, a chain of roads that traverses the mountains. Return migrants live in both the urban and rural areas, providing a source of language contact in addition to that stemming from Puerto Ricans who have become bilingual through educational or commercial venues on the island (Clachar 1997; Kerkhof 2001; Uber 2000; Zentella 1990). The central corridor has long been associated with a romanticized version of the Puerto Rican jíbaro culture, with an emphasis on a rural self-sufficient lifestyle, as compared to a more urban outlook in the coastal areas. Although many mountain residents no longer work in agricultural jobs, the study’s participants confirmed that a significant contrast remains between typically urban and typically rural experience, especially regarding the level of contact with English, with less exposure to English being characteristic of the mountain corridor than that in San Juan or other tourist destinations. Contact with English in the mountain corridor has been changing due to the increasing availability of cable television, the Internet, and electronic games, and the ready availability of written texts in English in rural areas has been clearly documented (Mazak 2008). Nevertheless, interaction in English, in particular, is a less significant part of the daily
life routines for people living in this region than for residents in the capital or in other urban or tourist regions.

In addition to such distinctions drawn by the SRC members, the research site was also selected due to the SRC's history of relationships forged with native speakers of English. SRC history began in the 1940s, when U.S. volunteers arrived as participants in Civilian Public Service (CPS), a U.S. government program that allowed conscientious objectors to perform non-military service, in this case through Puerto Rico's Reconstruction Administration (National Service Board for Religious Objectors 1947; Selective Service System 1950; Sibley and Jacob 1952). Volunteers built latrines, dispensed parasite medicines, and later established a health dispensary and school for children whose families could not afford public school uniforms. Community documents marking the 60th anniversary of these early days state that the original intent of the volunteer work was specifically to address health-related and educational needs. Although early volunteers came precisely because of their religious convictions about military service, they were part of CPS, not sent by a religious organization from the United States. Additionally, many of them spoke little or no Spanish when they arrived, and for these reasons did not engage in overtly missionary activity. Nevertheless, the volunteers' strong religious convictions led them to meet together among themselves regularly for religious services beginning in 1944. Interest in these services in the local community grew partly due to the public access and connection to the health clinic, which later developed into a hospital. Puerto Rican children were invited to attend summer religious education classes, and adults participated in other programs such as sewing classes. The CPS program closed in 1946–1947 following the end of World War II in 1945, and the unit shifted to a volunteer program that lasted through the mid-1970s, as U.S. volunteer workers from the same religious denominations continued to arrive in Puerto Rico to work as doctors, nurses, hospital technicians, teachers, and administrators. Some of these came specifically to work with the developing church, which the volunteers formally established in 1946 with the completion of a chapel for meeting purposes.

Thus the presence of the North Americans during the 1940s–1970s made a lasting impact on the SRC in Puerto Rico even after most volunteers had returned to the United States. Puerto Ricans who associated closely with U.S. volunteers and their children experienced language contact in ways that shaped not only their acquisition of English but also their perspectives towards the language. Shared work in the hospital and the school provided space for both groups to become increasingly bilingual, although some U.S. volunteers never became proficient in Spanish and relied instead on bilingual Puerto Ricans to interpret for them in their work. Some
Puerto Rican children had regular access to English-speaking peers and/or attended the Boricua Academy, a school initially established and staffed by North American volunteers, although it is currently run by Puerto Rican administrators and faculty.

The legacy is most clearly visible among members over the age of 50, who remember that era. In spite of the fact that English instruction was not a significant part of public school education in the 1950s–1960s, some of the older SRC members achieved proficiency in English due to their interaction with the volunteers, and those who became bilingual described the linguistic contact in decidedly positive ways in terms of the relationships as well as the personal gains they themselves experienced in university or job settings where English was useful or necessary. The role of personal and collective memory in shaping the SRC’s perspectives cannot be overlooked. In contrast to the connections made by many participants, one member who had joined the community after most volunteers had returned to the U.S. minimized any lasting effect of their having brought English contact to the SRC, emphasizing that any impact would have disappeared in the present, since the few North Americans that remain in the region now speak Spanish very well and do not use much English.

Given the unique geographic, historic, and sociocultural identity of this community as distinct from the metropolitan and coastal regions, as well as from other mountain corridor towns, we return to the present study’s specific questions: How do persons involved in the life of this religious community respond to the officialization debates? Do they clearly identify with the call for a legislated recognition of the clear supremacy of Spanish at all levels, as per Law No. 4 of 1991 and renewed proposals in the early part of the 21st century, as articulated by the island’s intellectual elite? Or do they resonate more closely with the call for legislation mandating the indistinct recognition of both Spanish and English at all levels, as per the 1902 Official Languages Law and the 1993 Law No. 1? More broadly, how is language itself legitimated in this community through the discourses on language officialization?

**Methodology**

Several methods of data collection were used to triangulate the validity and reliability of the data and analysis, by comparing and contrasting data collected from a series of different sources (Cameron, et al. 1992). Sources included (a) semi-structured recorded interviews with 26 active SRC members, ages 18 to 81, (b) informal conversations with other SRC members combined with participant and non-participant observation of community events, (c) a brief written survey conducted with 19 interviewees about language officialization, found in Appendix A, and (d) the examination of historical and current SRC documents. The data examined in this article were gathered as
part of a larger study on language contact in Puerto Rico, including the question of officialization, as well as perspectives on language contact and contact phenomena on the island. Each semi-structured interview was transcribed and coded for themes specifically related to language officialization. Observational data and informal conversations served to confirm and clarify the themes emerging from the interviews. Content analysis of the relevant coded sections led to a more specific examination of rhetorical strategies and local meanings, as well as the structures of the text (e.g., repair or hesitation) that can help to identify perspectives through more indirect means (Fairclough 1992, 2004; van Dijk 2001, 2008, 2009). A critical discourse analytical perspective requires the examination of both linguistic features as well as the broader discursive practices; the analysis thus includes both text and context of the discourse in ways that draw on social, political, and cultural relevance in the explanation of discourse structures and meanings (Fairclough 2004; van Dijk 2001).

Two analytical constructs in particular guide the analysis—that of intertextuality, whereby the texts foster multiple voices as opposed to a single authoritative voice that reduces the potential for other voices, as well as the concept of legitimation, whereby participants find alternative ways to legitimate perspectives on language contact and officialization outside legislative means (Bourdieu 1991; Fairclough 2004). These constructs are particularly relevant in this study, first, because the community’s voices form the basis of the analysis and allow for themes to emerge from the data, and secondly because the analytical process searches for the underlying meaning grounded in the ways in which that data are presented. The representation of discourse is not a polished product handed over for analysis; rather, meaning is derived in the process of articulating and explaining a particular point of view. Although surveys can elicit preset responses and yield quantifiable data, the interview format provides participants with the opportunity to revisit, extend, and clarify the meaning constructed in the discourse. Discourse analytical methods then examine the extensions and clarifications to elicit common threads among and between various participants.

Interviewees were selected based on active involvement in the SRC beyond attending weekly services and were generally identified by other SRC members. They included bilingual school teachers, administrators, and board members, as well as congregational leaders, chaplains, denominational volunteers, and staff. Many participants were over the age of 50 years—old enough to be able to reflect on the effects of the historical language contact within the SRC. Younger SRC members were not necessarily able to reflect personally on the nature of this contact, although they had some access to the community’s collective memory passed on through storytelling and historical documents.
This research was conducted by the author, a native speaker of English who is not of Puerto Rican heritage and who lives in the United States. I initially learned about this community through eight people in the continental United States, several of whom had grown up in the SRC but were currently living in the continental United States, and others who were non-Puerto Ricans who had lived and worked in the community as volunteers (or in one case, whose parents were hospital personnel). These initial contacts facilitated a meeting with other persons who had also grown up in the community but were also living in the United States, who then suggested further contacts on the island. I first established contact with representatives from the denominational offices in Puerto Rico, and through that contact was given additional names and contact information to be able to conduct research within the community. Prior to, during, and after the period of data collection, I had telephone and email contact with various SRC members. The process of identifying participants continued throughout the period of data collection, as more names were suggested, and as I followed up on meetings and community activities. In addition to the semi-formal interviews set up with individuals, either in their homes or in public meeting places, I also attended weekly religious services, shared meals with SRC members, and participated in other activities organized by various SRC members (e.g., I attended a children’s summer camp, volunteered in a resource center staffed by the denomination, attended a high school graduation ceremony, and was interviewed about my research on a radio show hosted by a SRC member).

**Perspectives on Language Officialization within the SRC**

Analysis of the data coalesces into three related findings. First, SRC members do not identify language officialization legislation as a key concern, particularly because it is perceived to represent a political, as opposed to a personally relevant, issue. Nevertheless, when asked to identify a preference regarding officialization, this study shows that there is considerable support, sustained through practical and globalizing discourses, within the SRC for co-officialization of Spanish and English. Third, respondents asserted the primacy of Spanish vis a vis the secondary nature of English on the island. The following sections examine and discuss each of these related findings in detail through an analysis of interview data, supplemented with data recorded in the observations, informal conversations, and survey results.

**Delegitimizing the Importance of Shifts in Official Language Legislation**

When participants were asked to categorize their level of agreement with the statement, “I pay significant attention to language legislation,” nearly two-thirds (64
percent) acknowledged paying some level of attention to language legislation, as seen in Figure 1, when responses correlating to ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ were combined. Nevertheless, in spite of this declared attention to language legislation, numerous interviewees went on to clarify a decided lack of strong reaction—positive or negative—for themselves personally as well as what they perceived to be the level of attention given within the broader SRC to both the 1991 Law No. 4 and 1993 Law No. 1. Although this discrepancy seems at first incongruous, participants pointed to the fact that the legislation was widely perceived to be limited to governmental spheres with little impact on the everyday interactions of Puerto Ricans, as seen in (1) and (2):

(1) *No creo que para ese tiempo hubo ninguna— no mucha no mucha reacción. Todo el mundo lo tomó, pues. Si si es inglés nada más, este, pues, de alguna manera tienen que enseñar no van a— este este traducir no. Ajá. Y si es español pues lo tenemos. Ese es el oficial de aquí. No sé, ha sido el oficial por muchos años así que. ¿Sabe? No no no vi que hubiera mucha reacción.* [P14, female]

‘I don’t think that at that time there was any— not much not much reaction. Everyone just accepted it, so. If if it’s just English, then, well, in some way they’ll have to teach it they’re not going to— um um translate no. Yes. And if it’s Spanish well we have it. That is the official [language] here. I don’t know, it has been the official [language] for a long time, so. You know? I didn’t didn’t didn’t see that there was much response.’
This participant articulated the lack of response in terms of an inclusive perspective representative of a broader audience by using the phrase, *todo el mundo*, or “everyone,” but she clarified this assertion, as did other participants, by inserting herself as an interpretive agent, using phrases such as *no creo* “I don’t think” and *no vi* “I didn’t see” [much response]. Others used *no sé* “I don’t know,” and *no escuché* “I didn’t hear about [much concern]” to qualify their responses. This discursive move demonstrates visibly the intertextuality of the text and context in which this discourse is produced (Fairclough 2004). The tendency to speak on behalf of others yielded promptly to the recognition that other voices may well articulate differing perspectives, and that these participants did not presume to speak authoritatively from a communitarian point of view. In spite of such hedging strategies in which participants specified that they were responding out of their own individual perspectives, they repeatedly voiced a lack of concern about language legislation. A few participants also qualified their own region as opposed to that of Puerto Rico as a whole—for example, stating that if there had been much reaction in other parts of the island, it had not reached the area where they lived:

(2) *La comunidad [SRC] como tal no vi reacción. Pero por lo que se oye en los medios pues sí hubo reacción del pueblo de PR en cuanto a que prefieren el español. Que no se puede perder eso. O sea tal vez muchos de ellos están de acuerdo de que estén los dos idiomas pero no que se nos quite el español.* [P17, female]

“I did not see a reaction in the SRC community as such. But by what you hear in the media well yes there was reaction from the Puerto Rican people in that they prefer Spanish. That you can’t lose that. Or maybe that many of them agree that both languages should be here but not that Spanish should be taken away from us.”

This participant confirmed that perspectives articulated in the media had reached the SRC, even though the results of that coverage had not necessarily convinced SRC members to support either piece of legislation in any overt way. Even media reports about a broader public response to the legislation did not appear on the surface to have elicited active discussion or response within the SRC. Particular attention should be paid to this participant’s use of the third person, both through the use of the impersonal/passive “*se*” (*se oye* “one hears/it is heard”), third person verbal conjugations (*prefieren* “they prefer”), and the third person pronoun *ellos* “they,” to refer to how Puerto Ricans responded to the legislative moves and that “they” may agree that both languages should be officialized, as opposed to the way in which the discourse shifts into the first person plural when referring to “take Spanish away from us.” Once again we see
the intertextuality surfacing in the discourse (Fairclough 2004). Here, the response to the legislation is shifted outside of the participant and her own community, while still retaining connection to the Spanish language itself, regardless of how the legislation is viewed. The lack of elevated concern coalesced with the way in which respondents indicated that the legislation did not affect them personally in their daily lives. Less than one third (32 percent) agreed in the survey that language legislation had any effect on their own linguistic practices. During follow-up interviews, participants simply did not identify the laws as holding much, if any, practical effect:

(3) No tuvieron gran repercusión porque esas leyes tocaban a documentos del gobierno. Documentos de gobierno nada más. O sea no era que todo iba a ser en inglés, tenían que enseñar toda la clase en inglés sino documentos. Entonces pues que no tenían mucha—No sé si es un issue tan tan tan del pueblo. [P5, female]

“They didn’t have much of a repercussion because those laws had to do with governmental documents. Governmental documents nothing else. I mean it wasn’t like everything was going to be in English they had to teach the whole class in English but rather documents. So then they didn’t have much— I don’t know if it’s an issue [that belongs] so so so much to the community.”

This participant emphasized the limited nature of language officialization legislation by pointing out in three different ways that it only affected governmental documents. The repetition of this particular piece of information, accompanied by clarification, legitimates the extraneous nature of governmental documents in her life. Undergirding this point of view was a frequently articulated perspective that Puerto Ricans would continue to speak Spanish in spite of any legislative changes, as in (4):

(4) Yo creo que precisamente ese es el enfoque político. Que es el enfoque incoRRECto. [...] Y no creo que si nosotros por ejemplo nos convirtiéramos en un estado de los Estados Unidos vamos a empezar que overnight a hablar todo el mundo inglés. Yo no—eso no es cierto. Que ya tenemos una cultura y vamos a seguir hablando espaÑOL y podemos seguir comiendo las mismas COsas que nos GUSTan— [...] Lo que pasa es que quizás es que, él que le da más enfoque político precisamente político. [P8, male]

“I think that this is precisely the political focus. That it is an incoRRECT focus. [...] And I don’t believe that if for example we were to become a state of the United States we are all going to start speaking English overnight. I don’t—that is not true. We already have
a culture and we’re going to keep on speaking SPAnish and we can keep on eating the same things that we LIKE— [...] What happens is perhaps that someone gives it more of a political focus, precisely political [focus].”

In addition to confirming a relative absence of concern over either piece of legislation (1991/1993), this participant stressed the political nature of the issue. The intonational emphasis on a series of words in the discourse, incoRRECto “incorRECT,” espaÑOL “SPAnish,” and GUSTan, “LIKE,” focused the attention on key elements: the inherent wrongness of making a linguistic issue a political one, and the ability of the individual (or community) to choose things that are pleasing to them in spite of legislative moves to the contrary, thus legitimating the non-legislative arena as one of power in determining language use and status (Bourdieu 1991).

A number of participants negated the potential of the presence of English to displace Spanish on the island, and in fact, denounced this fear as political pandering based on political parties and their varying motives to keep or alter Puerto Rico’s political status. One participant clearly indexed those working towards statehood as major players in the debate by using the third person, thus indicating an external perspective to her own: Yo me imagino que si deciden ser parte de Estados Unidos [...] “I imagine that if they decide to be part of the U.S. [...]” (P6, female). However, she also pointed to the fact that she was not sure where Puerto Ricans in general stood on that issue, pointing to the existing conflict that frequently links political status with language issues. Other participants confirmed this link as one way to explain the community’s apparent lack of concern about the legislation. They pointed to shifting political parties and their responsibility for shifting language legislation, with effects that remained almost entirely within governmental circles, as in (5):

(5) Yo pienso que el el la idea de oficializar uno solo como el idioma oficial de Puerto Rico es más un asunto político y político y político quizás partidista que que que— otra cosa que el pueblo vea como una necesidad o le preste atención más a la realidad [...] Así que no creo que sea realmente un un asunto que tenga una trascendencia política más allá que la que realmente deba tener. [P9, male]

“I think that the the the idea of officializing only one language as the official language of Puerto Rico is more a political issue and political and political perhaps partisan issue than than than—another thing that the people might see as a necessity or that they might pay attention more to the reality [...] So I don’t believe it is really an an issue that has any political relevance further than what it really should have.”
In spite of the prominence of the political parties and their intent to shape the language debates toward their own purpose in terms of maintaining the status of commonwealth or becoming a state, the discourses above identify the political nature of the debate as external to what is important for Puerto Ricans as well as to their own reality. Participants portrayed the language debates as merely part of the switching that occurred with a new government. Although participants acknowledged that the issue of language itself, and even language legislation, was important, they continually asserted that they were simply not very invested in the political process by which language(s) were officialized:

(6) Creo que nosotros no estamos muy: muy interesados. Porque mayormente cuando se—en el noventa y uno se legisla para que sea el idioma oficial normalmente esto es un asunto de política. Claro. El que está dice vamos a [inaudible] esa ley. Entonces el otro dice no. [P19, male]

“I believe that we are not very: very interested. Because generally when—in ninety-one it was legislated that it be the official language—normally this is a political issue. Of course. The one that’s [in power] says we’re going to [inaudible] that law. So the other one says no.”

Participants thus articulated a clear relationship between political status and language. Notably, as seen above, this connection was made through relatively neutral means. Participants did not, for the most part, take strong positions on the status options but rather used the opportunity to discuss how language had become part of the national political divide. As seen above in (6), the desire to speak on behalf of the community was communicated through the use of the first person plural no estamos muy interesados “we are not very interested,” indicating that the SRC—and perhaps even Puerto Rico beyond this community—has not experienced itself overtly as being caught up in the linguistic consequences prescribed by each political shift.

These findings were confirmed through informal conversations with other community members, in which the legislation was not identified as a significant concern, either within the community or for other Puerto Ricans. Nor did community documents point to language officialization legislation as a rallying issue for the community. A majority of those interviewed showed a considerable detachment from the political process, demonstrating that language officialization legislation has not been a key issue within this community. This was combined with minimal voiced concerns about the threat that English might pose to Spanish,
either within the SRC or, more broadly, on the island. Negrón-Muntaner (1997) asserts that the 1991 law did not effect much change due to its focus on government, as opposed to education or business, a claim also supported by SRC members. Although arguments put forth in favor of the sole officialization of Spanish have often stated the need to protect Spanish from the threat and incursion of English, as shown in research by Clachar (1997), Clampitt-Dunlap (2000), and Kerkhof (2001), SRC participants did not express these concerns. Furthermore, when questioned specifically about these fears, participants uniformly rejected them in marked contrast to discourses favoring the 1991 Law No. 4 that legislated Spanish as the sole official language. Thus, although the existence of language legislation registered at some level with a majority of the participants, it has clearly been associated with the political process and its accompanying controversies, as opposed to being a linguistically-oriented issue.

**Legitimating Discourses on Co-officialization**

As seen above, reaction to the legislation in 1991 and 1993 was muted. However, SRC members showed a distinctive trend in response to the question as to which language(s) should be official. Figure 2 shows the results of participants’ survey responses to the following items: (1) Spanish should be the only official language in Puerto Rico; (2) Both Spanish and English should be official languages in Puerto Rico; and (3) English should be the only official language in Puerto Rico. Figure 2 shows a clear pattern, among those interviewed, of disfavor for only one official language in Puerto Rico—whether Spanish or English—and evidence of strong support for both as official languages. The majority of participants (79 percent) did not support Spanish as the island’s sole official language; 16 percent were uncertain. Only one person stated definitively that Spanish should be the only official language, which she attributed to the fact that she did not speak English. No participant supported English as the island’s sole official language. In contrast to politicians and academics who have voiced strong support for the sole officialization of Spanish, a majority of SRC participants (74 percent) supported the co-officialization of both Spanish and English when responses for the two categories, Agree and Strongly agree, as well as the two categories, Disagree and Strongly disagree, were combined (as shown in Figure 3). Sixteen percent of participants did not support co-officialization, and 10 percent were uncertain. Participants voiced support for co-officialization through both practical and globalizing discourses. They connected the utility of official English to highly practical needs, such as needing to use English in various agencies, in looking for a job, or being able to read product labels:
(7) Es necesario hablar los dos idiomas. Lo necesitamos aprender. Por eso los dos idiomas tienen que ser oficiales porque hay muchas agencias en Puerto Rico que lo que le ofrecen a uno son documentos en inglés. [...] Por eso yo creo que en Puerto Rico los dos idiomas deben ser oficiales y se acaba la polémica [P7, female]

“It is necessary to speak both languages. We need to learn it [English]. That’s why the two languages have to be official because there are a lot of agencies in Puerto Rico that what they offer you are documents in English. [...] That’s why I believe that in Puerto Rico both languages should be official, and that puts an end to the argument!”

Needing or being able to use English is clearly distinct from legislating its officialization. Nevertheless, participants frequently conflated the two into a practicalized discourse that made co-officialization the most reasonable and rational choice, as in (8):

(8) Yo entiendo que lo mejor es los dos idiomas. Es una—beneficio cuando vas a buscar trabajo lo primero es los dos idiomas. [...] Aquí mismo en Puerto Rico. Si no sabes los dos idiomas, va una secretaria y si no sabes los dos idiomas, al que tiene español van a coger al que tiene los dos idiomas no cogen al que sabe solo un idioma. O sea esto de lo—de que eSpanish Only eso e—eso mismo eso eso es partido político. Tienen sus hijos en el colegio aprendiendo inglés. Mira. Ve. (risa) [P12, female]

“I understand that the best thing is both languages. It is an—advantage when you go to look for work the first thing is both languages. [...] Right here in Puerto Rico. If you don’t know both languages, one goes to an office and if you don’t know both languages, the one who has Spanish they’re going to choose the one who has both languages they don’t choose the one who only knows one language. So this idea that that the Spanish-Only that even that that that is political party. They have their children in the private school learning English. Look at that.” (laughter)

Several participants referenced English texts that are used at the university as well as product instructions written only in English. When asked about these practices, participants pointed to them as justifying the need for two official languages in recognition of systems already in place, and that islanders need to know at least some English for academic and professional purposes. They also articulated awareness of a presumed need for official English in the context of Puerto Rico’s becoming a state in the future, although this was not stated as a pressing concern:
FIGURE 2. Survey responses on what the official language(s) in Puerto Rico should be. (N=19)

FIGURE 3. Survey responses on what the official language(s) in Puerto Rico should be (categories combined: Agree + Strongly Agree, Disagree + Strongly Disagree). (N=19)
Puerto Rico is also interested in being a state of the United States. A lot of people. That doesn't mean that I agree. (smiles) I don't have anything against that. But yes, it's not easy to maintain ourselves in that beautiful relationship that exists currently. Because if the United States has adopted us, that carries with it situations that must be analyzed. Because I'm not very political. I don't understand much about politics but to know what would happen if we become a state or if we don't.”

The ubiquitous nature of such highly practical discourses—the need for official English in response to existing requirements and realities at the university level, within a given profession, or to be able to read product instructions and labels—was undergirded by a broader, globalizing discourse that conveyed the need to officialize both languages in order to join more fully into a world in which multiple languages serve communication needs, as is seen in the following examples:

“Puerto Rico también interesa ser un estado de Estados Unidos. Mucha gente. Eso no quiere decir que estoy de acuerdo. (sonríe) Yo no tengo nada en contra de eso. Pero sí, no es fácil mantenernos en esa relación bonita que hay. Porque si Estados Unidos nos ha adoptado, eso conlleva situaciones hay que analizarlas. Porque yo no soy muy política. No entiendo mucho de política pero saber qué pasaría si nos convertimos en estado si no nos convertimos. [P7, female]

“Lo que es el inglés y el español son para mí este: los dos idiomas más importantes al nivel de mundial. Aún en Rusia en China estas superpotencias, hablando históricamente, después de su idioma, el el idioma oficial, es el inglés. Ahora, se está dando, nosotros estamos dando cuenta que, eh en América por decir así es un continente donde se habla prácticamente el español excepto Canadá y Estados Unidos e Inglaterra. Pero y a partir de allí para qué yo quiero hablar ruso, o chino. ¿Pa qué? Si mirando de aquí a Estados Unidos? La comunicación es—la comunicación a mí me fascina. Yo lamento por qué no practicamos más de un idioma. [P11, male]

“What English and Spanish are for me um: are the two most important languages at a worldwide level. Even in Russia in China these superpowers, historically speaking, after their language, the official language, comes English. Now, people are realiz—we are realizing that, um in America to put it that way is a continent where practically what is spoken is Spanish except in Canada and United States and England. But and from that perspective why would I want to speak Russian or Chinese? Why? If I’m looking from here towards the United States? Communication is—communication fascinates me. I regret that we don’t speak more than one language.’
Here it is evident that officialization is perceived in practical and global—but not necessarily legislated—ways. The speaker in (10) links superpowers such as Russia and China with the English language. His argument rests on the fact that English has a significant (although unofficial) presence in those countries as a second language. This discourse associates Puerto Rico with what the speaker perceives to be happening in nation-states that recognize the importance of being able to speak a second language. He references the fact that the languages of these superpowers are not considered as potential second languages for Puerto Ricans because Puerto Ricans look to the U.S. for linguistic models and because English has such hegemonic power worldwide. Given Puerto Rico’s unique sociopolitical, historical, and geographic relationship with the United States, he identifies the choice of English as a secondary language as the more appropriate choice for himself, although he regrets the lack of widespread bilingualism on the island.

Other interviewees subtly pointed to the protectionist discourses available on the island as backward thinking:

(11) Pero hay puertorriqueños que también son como ignorantes que se dejan ir, espérate que esa es nuestra lengua, que sé yo. Yo entiendo que entre más sepa una persona mejor beneficio mejor provecho tiene verdad? Y que es bien importante si podemos dominar los dos. [P12, female]

“But there are Puerto Ricans who also are a little bit unaware who allow themselves to go, wait that is our language, and whatever. I understand that the more a person knows the more benefit the more advantage s/he has you know? And that it’s very important if we can be fluent in both.”

Other Puerto Ricans concerned about protecting nuestra lengua “our language” were often positioned in these discourses as unaware, at best, of the value and status of bilingualism. Thus, the second finding shows support for co-officialization, articulated through both highly practical and globalizing discourses. In striking contrast to the efforts that have been made to link the dual officialization of both Spanish and English with U.S. hegemony and repression of Spanish, these SRC participants expressed a level of openness to the presence, as well as the official status, of English on the island. Conspicuously, no participant chose to articulate a preference for Spanish as the sole official language based on concern about potential shift or loss of the language.

**Legitimating the Primacy of Spanish**

Although the first two findings point to considerable differences between SRC members and the island’s political and academic voices that support the sole
officialization of Spanish, the third finding uncovers some common ground with the latter’s perspectives through the unquestionable assertion of a language hierarchy within the officialization process. As seen earlier, although language legislation itself has been perceived as relatively superfluous to daily life for these SRC members, multiple participants articulated the primacy of Spanish and the unmistakably secondary nature of English in their community. Although participants supported co-officialization based on practical and globalizing discourses, they did not perceive it in any way as support for the “indistinct” perspective spelled out in the 1902 Official Languages Law and the 1993 Law No. 1. Instead, the clear hierarchy of Spanish over English was repeatedly affirmed, yielding for either side a perhaps unexpected combination of perspectives present in the discourses:

(12) Pero yo entiendo verdad que nuestra lengua pues debe ser lo primero. Yo para mí mi lengua es español. El inglés secundario. Es importante claro tener—conocer otros idiomas y y desenvolverte si tienes que ir y y qué sé yo. Tú puedes desenvolvértelo pero cada—como Estados Unidos se les fue—el inglés pues es igual. Y si aprenden el español eso es secundario. Eso si quieren aprenderlo y si y si tienen todo tipo de trabaJO o amistades o qué sé yo tienen que aprenderlo. [P6, female]

“But I understand you know that our language should be first. In my opinion my language is Spanish. English secondary. Of course it is important to have—to know other languages and to develop yourself if you have to go and and who knows what all. You have to develop yourself but every—like it occurred in the United States—English is the same. And if they learn Spanish that is secondary. That is if they want to learn it, and if and if they have all kinds of work or friendships or whatever, they have to learn it.”

The ways in which this participant indexes language ideologies and policy in the United States sets up an unambiguous comparison with the island. Notably, in both settings, one language is recognized as primary and the other as secondary, for work, friendships, and beyond. This comparison situates the predominant discourse about the centrality of Spanish on the island as part of a larger framework in which the authority and legitimacy of the language are affirmed and constructed through the assertions of the people—a legitimacy which is taken to be self-evident; officialization is merely a derivative, and not the primary push behind, the legitimation process.

Another participant affirmed this relationship by avowing the primacy of Spanish but going further to emphasize her own and her compatriots’ agency in maintaining the hierarchy:
(13) Eso nos toca lo de patriotas. Nosotros somos latinos y nosotros hablamos español como nuestro primer idioma. Y hay quien dice que nosotros creemos que si un norteamericano, el americano debe saber español para comunicar con nosotros ¿verdad? En ese sentido cuando se trata de imponer yo creo que el sentir de todo el pueblo puertorriqueño es el mismo. Pero cuando se presenta el inglés como el segundo idioma con la ventaja que tiene que aprenderlo pues ya la idea del puertorriqueño cambia. Ya ve las ventajas que tiene una persona ser bilingüe. [...] Nunca le pongas el inglés sobre el español! No te lo vamos a aceptar. (risa) Sí en ese sentido somos muy patriotas. [P5, female]

“That affects us as patriots. We are Latinos and we speak Spanish as our first language. And there are those who say that we believe that if a North American the American should know Spanish to communicate with us, you know? In that sense when people try to impose I believe that the feeling of the entire Puerto Rican people is the same. But when English is presented as a second language with the advantage that you have to learn it well then the Puerto Rican’s idea changes. S/he sees the advantages that a person who is bilingual has. [...] Never put English above Spanish! We will not accept that from you. (laughter) Yes in that sense we are very patriotic.’

This participant places the strength of her comments in others’ words, hay quien dice “there are those who say,” when she is actually talking about what nosotros creemos “we believe,” indicating that foreigners should expect to need to learn Spanish to communicate with islanders, not vice versa. Serving as a hedge to soften the comments and to make her own perspective slightly more ambiguous, the phrase nevertheless communicates the crucial need for outsiders to recognize the implicit legitimacy conferred on Spanish on the island as opposed to mistakenly thinking the two languages are equal, or indistinct, as stated in the 1993 Law No. 1. Participants also stated that co-officialization did not change this essential aspect of how Spanish and English were perceived on the island and in their community—that is, English would continue to be secondary to Spanish:

(14) El inglés aunque lo damos como un segundo lenguaje y tal vez oficial no lo sé este: no predomina. Siempre se queda atrás. Y y el español predomina y no no veo que hay—que perjudica de ninguna forma. [P17, female]

“English, although we have it as a second language and perhaps official I don’t know, um: it is not predominant. It is always remains behind. And and Spanish is predominant and I don’t see that there is any harm of any kind.”
Bilingual school personnel affirmed that, although their curriculum was designed to teach English and to assist students in becoming bilingual, Spanish was primary and English was taught as a second language. Supporters of the Law No. 4 of 1991 had indicated the need to clearly index the supremacy of Spanish on the island and the establishment of a clear hierarchy was part of the push behind this piece of legislation. Although SRC participants did not support that particular piece of legislation, they did, however, support this underlying premise through repeated use of two sets of related words. In essence, *primero* “first/primary” and *primer* “first” were indexed with Spanish, whereas *secundario* “secondary” and *segundo* “second” were clearly associated with English in multiple interviews. Even the terms *sobre* “above,” in (13), and *atrás* “behind,” in (14), indicate hierarchy by referencing the placement of Spanish in a privileged position to English.

The previous two findings demonstrated that SRC members subverted the ideologies of language conflict that rejected English in the defense of Spanish. Nevertheless, the third finding shows that within co-officialization the *primacy* of Spanish must be unmistakably upheld alongside the clearly secondary nature of English. SRC members simultaneously affirmed the underlying hierarchical assertion that undergirds Law No. 4 and its clear designation of the supremacy of Spanish in relation to English. SRC members thus, in essence, combined perspectives favorable to co-officialization with an inherent and clear hierarchical valorization of Spanish over English.

This finding was confirmed through informal conversations with community members as well as in data recorded in the participant and non-participant observational logs. As referenced earlier, Spanish is clearly predominant in the community, both during its religious services as well as in daily communication among its members. Conversation with the researcher, a North American native speaker of English, took place almost exclusively in Spanish, although a few minimal examples of code-switching into English demonstrated significant proficiency in that language by several speakers. In other cases, speakers referenced their own bilingualism, prior residence or trips to the U.S., or education in English at the university level, but chose to carry out the conversation or interview in Spanish. Community documents were also evidence of the clear primacy of Spanish, given that all of the records reviewed—both in terms of historical record-keeping as well as materials produced for community events—were kept in Spanish. The denominational office is also working to obtain materials in Spanish from a related U.S. office in order to make the denominational connection more relevant for their own community members. The clear priority given to Spanish as the medium of communication in the community was thus evident through all sources available: interviews, questionnaire, informal conversations, and community documents.
SRC Perspectives within a Historical Context of Language Contact

A subtle result of the extended contact described earlier in this paper is the lasting inheritance that members of this community have regarding language contact as well as officialization legislation. At first glance the community does not display a higher level of language contact than do other parts of Puerto Rico, especially not in comparison with coastal regions where contact with English is omnipresent due to returning migrants as well as the presence of English-speaking tourists. As is true elsewhere, bilingualism is present in individuals to varying degrees. Bilingual members of the SRC typically did not code-switch into English with the researcher, a native speaker of English, with the same frequency as did some bilinguals from the coastal regions. Yet community perspectives regarding the officialization of English in Puerto Rico have likely been shaped to some extent by its history of interpersonal contact with U.S. English-speaking volunteers, particularly because the volunteers’ commitment to serve in the community sparked a widespread and frequently stated appreciation, even beyond the SRC itself. The community history, passed on to newer generations, has left its legacy in the SRC’s overall perspectives towards the officialization, or at least minimally towards the presence, of English. Barreto (2000: 14) points out that “daily contact and personal interaction foster bilingualism far more than any other single factor.” These same factors have great potential to shape the perspectives voiced in this community towards the presence of English.

As is true elsewhere, bilingualism is present in individuals to varying degrees.

Although contact with English is steadily changing in the community due to cable television, Internet, and other media sources, this kind of contact does not begin to parallel the daily personal interactions between adults and children in the SRC’s early history of contact with the English-speaking volunteers. The end of the volunteer program was a significant part of a shift that took place approximately half of this community’s lifetime ago. Nevertheless, the cultural and linguistic contact between Puerto Ricans and the U.S. volunteers has continued to be significant in this community, as seen in the retention of connections to individuals and even institutions in the United States as well as in the migration of community members and their families. Some SRC members have lived in the U.S., sometimes for 25 years or more, before returning to live in and participate in the SRC in Puerto Rico. Additionally, visits from prior volunteers preserve an ongoing connection for many community members.
This paper reveals that SRC participants articulate a perspective somewhere between the opposing viewpoints leading to Law No. 4 of 1991 and the Law No. 1 of 1993, viewpoints promoted by what Barreto (2001) has called “nested games” of vote-getting activity. Those interviewed clearly did not support the 1991 law officializing only Spanish, yet they confirmed the need to index in some way the hierarchical relationship between the two languages. Algrén de Gutiérrez (1987) has alluded to a potential benefit for bilingual elites who work to promote measures such as Law No. 4, since the role of translator, both culturally and linguistically, is thereby retained for a limited population that has access to private education. This benefit was highlighted by the SRC participant in (8) above, who commented on the irony that the politicians pushing the sole officialization of Spanish are often bilingual and/or register their children in private bilingual schools to learn English. This contrast may be an underlying reason for some participants’ rejection of Law No. 4, although it did not emerge as a major theme during the interviews.

One way to understand the Bourdieuan (1991) process of language legitimation taking place in the SRC, and perhaps more widely across the island, is that SRC members, due to their unique history, are articulating an alternative perspective that combines some of the ideologies presented in favor of both kinds of legislation. Present in the discourses analyzed in this paper is a stream that socially constructs both a receptive and open globalizing discourse in relation to the presence and contact of English with Spanish on the island, combined with a protective stance that does not yield on the issue of the clear primacy of Spanish, in a way that may “discursively challenge or resist” a more powerful set of perspectives articulated in the media or in political circles on the island (van Dijk 2001: 364). This intermediary, third-way perspective articulated by SRC members closely parallels what Torres González (2002: 391) has proposed as a “differential officialization,” according to which Puerto Rico would uphold an official Spanish-English bilingualism that clearly recognizes the primacy of Spanish, with English as a second language, a compromise that Torres González recognizes as imperfect but inclusive. In emphasizing such an additive bilingualism, he argues that such a proposal is also compatible with all three status options available: continued commonwealth, independence, or statehood. In this way, SRC participants legitimated both forms of language on the island for their own purposes, while retaining clear hierarchical structures to orient the relationship between the two. Spanish was thereby clearly delineated as the higher-ranking language in terms of regular daily interaction. Nevertheless, this perspective was almost entirely unaccompanied by fears that English was exerting undue pressure on the amount, or quality, of Spanish spoken on the island.
Overall, the SRC’s response to a very specific, interpersonal, and historical U.S. presence is striking within a broader island context, where the impact of English has been experienced much more significantly through military, governmental, and tourist contact between Puerto Rico and the United States. Although participants interviewed for the present study showed perhaps less overall resistance to English in comparison with the discourses constructed by those who supported the Law No. 4 of 1991, the SRC nevertheless is working actively to function within an authentically Spanish-speaking Puerto Rican identity, despite its beginnings as a community in contact with U.S. native speakers of English. To this end, SRC members have engaged in “micro-level contestation” (Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester 2000: 103) of the community’s origins as they sort through what it means to be an authentic Puerto Rican representation of the larger denominational identity both in terms of language as well as in other aspects of community life.

Conclusions
This paper examined the perspectives of members of a small religious community in the mountain corridor of Puerto Rico regarding language officialization by applying Bourdieu’s framework of language legitimacy and legitimating practices. In this community, significant historical language contact may well have shaped current perspectives on language officialization, although an analysis of this connection is beyond the scope of the data included in this study. SRC members articulated clear support for the co-officialization of both Spanish and English on the island, as reflected in Law No. 1 of 1993. However, they also clearly supported recognition of the supremacy of Spanish at all levels, as referenced in the underlying factors motivating Law No. 4 of 1991, and situated Spanish as an active and unmitigated component of Puerto Rican cultural identity by affirming Spanish as the language of choice in the home and beyond. It has been shown here that both contrasting points of view and common ground exist between SRC participants and the political and academic voices arguing in favor of either Law No. 4 or Law No. 1. The SRC members recognized the global and economic value of an official and truly functional bilingualism but also supported a hierarchical relationship that distinguishes the historical and primary role of Spanish on the island. The difference is most clearly seen in the lack of a protectionist discourse within the SRC regarding what an official English does or will do to the quality of Spanish or to the frequency with which Spanish is spoken in Puerto Rico. To the contrary, SRC participants articulated an open and globalizing discourse towards co-officialization.

This kind of legitimation—clearly supporting a hierarchical relationship while also apparently embracing the value of a functional bilingualism—is not uncommon
in other settings where language debates are intimately tied to national identity, whether or not such languages are official, as seen in Quebec, Corsica, and even the United States, with its recent Official English movement connected to the emphasis on a unitary national identity (Baron 1990; Crawford 1998; Heller 1996; Jaffe 2001). Language contact from the 1940s–1970s has contributed to shaping SRC perspectives, a reality that may be more clearly seen in the middle-aged to older generation, in particular among members who had regular contact with U.S. volunteers and/or their children. Future research will need to focus on the perspectives of younger generations to determine whether and how their language legitimation practices have been as significantly shaped by collective memory.

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NOTES
1 The legislative language did not clarify that currently (2011) there is no official language specified at the federal level in the United States.
2 Rúa (2002: 155) points out that the legislation to institute Spanish as the sole official language received strong support from both the Partido Popular Democrático and the Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño in a legislative alliance he calls “unprecedented.” Rúa also states that “la doctrina de la defensa del vernáculo” is the only perspective that works at decolonizing Puerto Rico (156). The Partido Nuevo Progresista also takes the stance of supporting the role of Spanish in Puerto Rico. In response to the claim that “el español no es negociable bajo ninguna circunstancia o cambio político,” former governor Pedro Rosselló confirms this as a position compatible with any political movement in Puerto Rico: “Nuestro vernáculo, el español, tiene que ser ente unificador del pueblo puertorriqueño. En esto todos estamos de acuerdo” (Rosselló 1991). In contrast with Rúa’s articulation however, Rosselló sees this non-negotiable status as allowing both Spanish and English as official languages.
3 The CPS volunteers’ work in Puerto Rico emerged through the interviews and informal conversations; community documents also provided dates and more specific details, but specific citations have been withheld here for reasons of anonymity.
4 The name of the school has been changed.
5 See Appendix A for a list of transcription conventions used in this paper.
REFERENCES
Baron, Dennis. 1990. The English-only Question. New Haven, CT: Yale University.


**APPENDIX A**

Transcript Conventions

ALL CAPS  Increased volume or emphatic speech

—  Interrupted or cut-off speech

:  Lengthened vowel

[...]  Segment deleted or inaudible

[ ]  Contains

( )  Contains information added by researcher to help the reader interpret manuscript by including paralinguistic information (*laughter*), (*smiles*)