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Not mere abstractions: Language policies and language ideologies in U.S. settler colonialism

Malathi Michelle Iyengar
University of California – San Diego

Abstract
This paper seeks to contribute to scholarly understandings of the multiple uses to which settler colonialism has historically put language – that is, *the circuitous and synthetic history of language policy and language ideology in the settler-colonial project*. I will focus here on the role of language in the construction of the U.S. settler state. Building on concepts from Indigenous studies and settler colonial studies, I argue that language policies and language ideologies have been foundational to U.S. settler-colonial activities – both in relation to the *displacement* and attempted *elimination* of the original inhabitants of the place, and in terms of the *creation* of the "White America" that would supplant those Native inhabitants. As Patrick Wolfe notes, "Settler colonialism destroys to replace." In U.S. settler society, language ideologies and language policies have been *fundamental*, both to the destruction and to the replacement. The present paper – written by a member of U.S. settler society, in the institutional context of a university constructed on occupied Kumeyaay land – will discuss some historical aspects of language ideology and language policy in U.S. settler colonialism, and offer some reflections upon the question of why *language in particular* has been so important to the formation of the U.S. settler state.

Keywords: *settler colonialism; language; language policies; common school movement*

Languages are not mere abstractions or replaceable products; language issues are always 'people issues.'

- K. Tsianina Lomawaima
& Teresa L. McCarty (2002, p. 296)

Wanted: Free white persons

This paper seeks to contribute to scholarly understandings of the multiple uses to which settler colonialism has historically put language – that is, *the circuitous and synthetic history of language policy and language ideology in the settler-colonial project*. I will focus here on the role of language policies and language ideologies in the construction of the U.S. settler state. Building on concepts from Indigenous studies and settler colonial studies, I argue that language policies and language ideologies have been foundational to U.S. settler-colonial activities – both in relation to the *displacement* and attempted *elimination* of the original inhabitants of the place, and in terms of the *creation* of the "White America" that would supplant those Native inhabitants. As Patrick Wolfe (2006) notes, "Settler colonialism destroys to replace" (p. 388). In U.S. settler society, language ideologies and language policies have been *fundamental*, both to the modes of destruction and to the modes of replacement. The present paper – written by a member of U.S. settler society, in the institutional context of a university constructed on occupied Kumeyaay land – will discuss some historical aspects of language ideology and language policy in U.S. settler colonialism, and offer some reflections upon the question of why *language in particular* has been so important to the formation of the U.S. settler state.

In 1790, the U.S. Congress established that any "free white person" who had resided in the United States for two years was thereby eligible for citizenship in the growing settler nation.

Before going further, let me clarify the term "settler nation." The settler-nationalist rhetoric of the American Revolution claimed that the whites of North America were compelled to fight against their "colonial" status and to free themselves from the "slavery" of taxation-without-representation. In reality, of course, white settlers were neither colonized nor enslaved – but the separation from Britain did allow them to take charge of a nation-building project that would be firmly rooted in both slavery (perpetrated against Black peoples) and colonization (of Native land).[1] But the colonization of North America by whites (particularly after separation from Britain) differed significantly from the type of extraction-oriented colonialism, or "franchise colonialism," practiced by – for example – the British in India. Patrick Wolfe, in an interview with J. Kēhaulani Kauanui (2012), explains the difference thusly: "Franchise colonialism required a situation where [w]hites oversaw a system in which natives worked for them.… Europeans in franchise colonies like India, they go to sit on top of native society.…

[1] For a discussion of the use of "slavery" as metaphor in the rhetoric of the American Revolution, see Dorsey (2003). For a discussion of the role of slavery and genocide in the construction of the United States, see Takaki (1979), Chapter 4.

[British] colonizers didn't go [to India] to get rid of Indians and import English people in their place. Quite the contrary, the colonizers went to sit on top of native society and set it to work for them" (p. 247).

Settler colonialism differs structurally from franchise colonialism. Veracini (2011) succinctly explains: If the colonial message to Native populations is "You, work for me," the *settler*-colonial message is "You, go away." In other words, "Colonizers and settler colonizers want essentially different things" (Veracini, 2013, p. 1). Though the white settlers of North America also extracted a significant amount of forced labor from Native people, the primary aim of the settler nation was not to "sit on top" of Native societies, but to *eliminate* them. U.S. settler society did not primarily envision Native communities as labor pools or captive markets; settler society envisioned Native communities as *disappearing*. Wolfe (2013) formally defines settler colonialism as "an inclusive, land-centered project that coordinates a comprehensive range of agencies, from the metropolitan centre to the frontier encampment, with a view to eliminating Indigenous societies" (p. 393), and notes that this "drive to elimination" is the foundational impetus of settler states (Kauanui & Wolfe, 2012, p. 248). The Naturalization Act of 1790 issued a prescription describing the type of settler who would come to occupy North American land as its Indigenous inhabitants were being eliminated: the "free white person."

What was the legal significance, in 1790, of the expression "free white person"? For at least a century prior to the penning of the 1790 Naturalization Act, European settlers in the "New World" had used the term "white" to distinguish themselves from the Indigenous populations they meant to displace, as well as from the Black people whom they brought to the Americas in chains. Wolfe points out that the term "white" was used in legal discourse as early as 1691, when the Virginia assembly passed a statute designed to prevent "that abominable mixture and spurious issue which hereafter may increase in this dominion, as well by negroes, mulattoes, and Indians intermarrying with English, or other white women, as by their unlawful accompanying with one another" (qtd. in Wolfe, 2001, p. 883). Despite the difficulty of conclusively identifying the precise historical moment of the emergence of the category of whiteness, we know that this category had already been well established within the settler imaginary by the time of the 1790 Naturalization Act – otherwise the Act would not have been legible or actionable. And, despite the fact that the social construction of whiteness has always been unstable and contested, we know that this 1790 U.S. settler conception of whiteness had most definitely been constructed over and against the notions of blackness and Indian-ness. Black people were not legally regarded as persons, but as property – and I should note that the linking of blackness to slavery meant not only that enslaved Black people were treated as property under the law, but also that *all* Black people, including "free Blacks," were ultimately deprived of personhood (that is, of the status of human beings) since *blackness itself* was associated with enslavement. Frank Wilderson explains racial slavery this way: "…as an ontological position, that is, as a grammar of suffering, the [Black] Slave is not a laborer but an anti-Human, a position against which [white] Humanity establishes, maintains, and renews its coherence, its corporeal integrity." As to the status of the Native in the U.S. racial order, Wilderson points out that "the Indigenous position is one for

which genocide is a constitutive element, not merely an historical event, without which Indians would not, paradoxically, 'exist'" (Wilderson, 2010, pp. 10-11). Even the lowest-status whites (Jews, Irish peasants, indentured servants) were *legally white* – i.e. Human – by virtue of *not* being Black (i.e. Slave) or Indian (i.e. Savage-to-be-vanquished). This was the racial paradigm that allowed the U.S. Congress to establish that any "free white person" who had resided in the United States for two years was thereby eligible for citizenship in the growing settler nation.

No language requirements were placed upon the "free white" migrants arriving from Europe to take advantage of this unprecedented land-grabbing opportunity. Neither migration itself, nor the acquisition of citizenship two years after arrival, entailed any legal or social imperative to stop speaking the language of the "old country," or to learn English, or to engage in any other type of linguistic self-modification. Free white persons were free to continue speaking their European languages… and their free white descendants continued to speak these languages for many generations, and to establish institutions (churches, secular clubs, newspapers, schools) in the languages. The European and Euroamerican settlers of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries (up until World War I) generally encountered an "atmosphere of linguistic tolerance, where bilingual education, ethnic press, and mother tongue literature, entertainment, and religious service were the order of the day" (Pavlenko, 2004, p. 60). The most significant aspect of this linguistic "atmosphere" for European settlers was the availability of schooling – both private *and publicly-funded* schooling – in their mothertongues. And not just "immigrants" utilized such schools: mothertongue-medium education allowed European-descended families to maintain their heritage languages across multiple generations.

This particular racio-linguistic arrangement, whereby language accommodation enabled the physical and ideological recruitment and incorporation of huge numbers of "free persons" – i.e. whites – into the expanding United States of America, would fundamentally structure the formation of U.S. settler society. But why was specifically *lingusitic* accommodation of whites so important to the construction of the U.S. settler state? Let me examine this point more closely.

Language loyalties and the recruitment of settlers

Why should we attend to the linguistic heterogeneity of the white supremacist settler society being constructed on expropriated Native land during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries? Why should we note the fact that, while "whiteness" was required for participation in the benefits of settler society, language shift was not? The answer is simple: If language shift had been required, it is unlikely that European migrants would have flocked to the "New World" in such large numbers, as a prominent strain of European thought during this era featured passionate attachments to languages.

The conception of "a language" as embodying and re/producing "the genius of a people" – most famously associated with eighteenth and nineteenth-century thinkers like Johann Gottlieb Herder and Wilhelm von Humboldt – actually has a genealogy stretching back to a much earlier

period in European history. As Paola Gambarota (2011) notes, conceptions of "the genius of language as a function of national character" were in evidence as early as 1635, when Amable de Bourzeys presented a speech on the subject before the Académie Français. After maintaining a vague presence within intellectual circles for several decades after Bourzeys' speech, the idea of a constitutive connection between language and national character "burst onto the European scene like thunder" when the dialogues *Entretiens d'Ariste et d'Eugene* (1671) and *La manière de bien penser dons les ouvrages d'esprite* (1687) – both written by the Jesuit Dominique Bouhours, a member of the Académie – "began to circulate in numerous editions and translations" (Gambarota, 2011, p. 59).

Bourzeys, one of the Académie Français' founding members, advocated the study of the *génie de la langue* as a product of the unique temperament of its speakers and the special characteristics of their environment. Differences between languages, according to Bourzeys, were related to innate differences between *peoples*; the special génie of each language reflected the temperament "of the region and of the people" (2011, p. 256). Bouhours, writing three decades after Bourzeys, took this line of thinking in a chauvinistic direction by "connect[ing] French cultural superiority to the French language and, ultimately, to the character of the French nation" (Gambarota, 2011, pp. 61-62). Gambarota identifies Bouhours' late-seventeenth century dialogues as "articulating, for the first time in an extensive way, the rising interest of European scholars in the relationship between language and nation" (p. 62). The notion of a constitutive link between the properties of a language and the identity and character of a people/nation was then taken up with a vengeance by the European intelligentsia, sparking a conversation that would span the next two centuries. The terms of this conversation are exemplified by statements like this one, in which the famous Italian political philosopher Giambattista Vico explains that "[national] genius is a product of language":

> [W]e must recognize that the French are the only people who, thanks to the subtlety of their language, were able to invent the new philosophical criticism that seems so thoroughly intellectualistic, and analytical geometry…We Italians, instead, are endowed with a language that constantly evokes images. We stand far above other nations through our achievements in the fields of painting, sculpture, architecture, and music… (qtd. in Gambarota, 2011, p. 103)

"Languages," Vico wrote on another occasion, "are, so to speak, the medium by which the spirit of the nations is transfused in those who learn them" (qtd. in Gambarota, 2011, p. 106). Like Bourzeys, Vico positioned the natural environment as a factor in the development of each language, thus positing a relationship between the natural environment, the language, and the character of the People. The French Enlightenment philosopher Étienne Bonnot de Condillac likewise wrote extensively about the relationships between language, environment, the character of "a people," and the intellectual development of the individual persons constituting the "people." Condillac argued that the "progress" of the arts and sciences in any country was tied to the level of "development" of the country's language – hence, he wrote, "[S]uperior geniuses

cannot arise in nations until their languages have already made considerable progress" (qtd. in Hobbs, 2002, p. 121). French Royalist writer Antoine de Rivarol declared in a celebrated 1784 essay that, "If one can judge a man by his words, one can also judge a nation by its language" (qtd. in Thom, 1995, p. 195). The Abbé Gregoire, French revolutionary and constitutional bishop of Blois, repeated in a 1794 report to the National Convention that "language is always the measure of the genius of a people"; he declared French the language of liberty and enlightenment, but noted also that the nation-state of France was home to more than thirty additional linguistic codes, whose "disappearance would be very regrettable." Gregoire concluded that, "The important thing is that all Frenchmen understand and speak the national language, without forgetting their individual dialects" (qtd. in Beer & Jacob, 1985, p. 113).

"He who was raised in a language," the famous Johann Gottfried Herder wrote in 1795, "and learned to pour out his heart in her, express his soul in her, he belongs to the people [*Volk*] of this language … a nation is built and reared by means of language" (qtd. in Benes, 2008, p. 45). Described even today as "a philosopher of the first importance," Herder, along with his teacher Johann Georg Hamann, influenced European philosophy and politics to a degree that would be difficult to exaggerate.[2] "What a treasure language is," Herder proclaimed in one of his most prominent essays, "when kinship groups grow into tribes and nations. Even the smallest of nations … cherishes in and through its language the history, the poetry and songs about the great deeds of its forefathers. The language is its collective treasure" (qtd. in Barnard, 1969, p. 165).

By the turn of the nineteenth century, language loyalties had taken center stage in Europe. Writers issued forth deeply-felt declarations of love for their natal tongues. Collections of folk tales, traditional songs, legends, fairy stories, and other slices of oral tradition were transcribed, collected, published and distributed in the spirit of mothertongue-celebration. In Germany, for example, the brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm – linguists, librarians, and lexicographers – roamed the countryside collecting folk stories, developing a working method that would be adopted by collectors of folklore throughout Europe. Reading publics embraced the retold folktales of the "Brothers Grimm" (stories like "Hansel and Gretel," "Rumpelstiltskin," and "Snow White") as distillations of the uniquely German spirit manifested in the language of the peasant *Volk*. Conceptions of the importance of language in constituting character, intellect, spirit, and identity, both for individuals and for collectivities such as nations, were not confined to an isolated scholarly class. Linguistic pride and linguistic loyalty became matters of "common sense" for Europeans of the rising middle classes. For instance, as Tuska Benes (2008) notes, the emerging German middle class of the late eighteenth century relied upon language loyalties and language-related activities – reading groups, literary journals, societies and clubs organized around linguistic nationalist sentiment – to build a public sphere that "challenged aristocratic and court culture. …Devotion to the vernacular enabled German intellectuals to define a public sphere of middle-class activity" (p. 15). Such processes were not confined to German speakers. Benes recalls Benedict Anderson's discussion of how "the emergence of print culture enabled disparate populations to imagine themselves as a community partaking in a collective fate."

[2] Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/herder/

Concurrent with the rise of print culture, the "linguistic conception of community" came to fundamentally structure affects, sensibilities, and identities, as well as economies and political constituencies (p. 15).

In many communities, language loyalties possessed religious as well as secular valences. Benes points out that the widespread phenomenon of mothertongue-loyalty within European Christendom harkens back to Biblical references both to *languages* (multiple) and to *language* (in the abstract). In the paradigmatic Judeo-Christian myth of origins, the world is created by a performative speech act by the God of Genesis. The Gospel of John tells us that "In the beginning was the Word." Man's first act in the Garden of Eden, as Benes reminds us, "was to name the animals of creation and his female companion." Language is also constitutive of the "most enduring account of the history of nations" within this Judeo-Christian worldview. The Pentateuch "defines the tribes that descended from Noah's three sons by tracing the genealogy of their national tongues" (Benes, 2008, p. 10).

European interest in the benefits of migration to the growing U.S. settler state did not mean that individuals, families, and communities suddenly divested themselves of their deep-rooted religious and secular language-loyalties. European settlers brought their languages, and their language ideologies, with them to the "New World"; European language ideologies became part and parcel of the U.S. settler colonial project. Europeans who remained in Europe often anticipated that their countrymen who migrated would promote their shared language by extending its presence across the Atlantic. Jacob Grimm, for instance, expected German emigrants to the U.S. to "reinforce" the German language so that it would "live forever forth" in America (qtd. in Benes, 2008, p. 147).

In fact, speakers of languages that were repressed or declining in Europe often viewed the U.S. settler state as a place where they could revitalize and expand their linguistic communities. Sollors (1998) notes "the idea frequently expressed in the nineteenth century, that America might be a better home than Wales for the Welsh language." As Welsh was increasingly denigrated and stifled by the Anglican Church and British authorities, Welsh poets and writers began to refer to "America" as representing "the possibility of a better place for the Welsh language. They imagined that if the language were to fail in Wales, a renaissance was awaiting it in America" (p. 99). The settler writer R.R. Williams, a frequent contributor to Welsh journals in the United States and author of the award-winning Welsh-language novel *Dafydd Morgan*, focused many of his narratives around the figure of the Welsh-speaking American, celebrating the idea that America offered a home and a future, not only for Welsh immigrants, but for the Welsh language itself. Williams was not alone in imagining this future. "The nations flow westward," declared another writer in a Welsh newspaper, "And perhaps our own nation will bloom again there, strong and successful; and perhaps the sweet sounds of the Welsh language will be heard on the shores of the great Ohio, or mingling with Niagara's thunder…" (qtd. in Sollors, 1998, p. 99). Of course, what this writer perceived as the natural westward "flow" of the settler state with all of its diverse European languages was actually accomplished through the violent displacement of Native peoples.

Interestingly, while today's U.S. settler narratives regularly portray European migration as a quest for "religious freedom," less attention is paid to the fact that many European migrants were also seeking *linguistic* freedom. Large numbers of Poles and Ukrainians set sail for the U.S. because of Russian repression of their languages. Similarly, Bohemians and Slovaks, unhappy with Magyarization policies in Hungary that forced them to send their children to "schools that emphasized the Magyar culture and language," found that migrating to the U.S. settler state allowed them to pursue the ideal of "Our own church, our own school, and worship in our own language" (Walch, 1994, p. 149). In fact, language can be seen as analogous to religion in terms of migrant-settler motivation: Europeans and Euro-Americans expected, and received, both the ability to practice their religion *and* the ability to usurp Native land; they did not intend to exchange one for the other. Similarly, these settlers expected to keep their languages *and* gain land. They did not intend to trade language for land, any more than they expected to exchange their religious beliefs.

Given these circumstances, we can see very clearly that the "atmosphere of linguistic pluralism" for white settlers during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was not an accident; it was a necessity for the construction of the settler state. Again, settler colonialism destroys to replace. As Euroamerican settler colonialism undertook the elimination of the Native, it simultaneously pursued a particular vision of the replacement. The construction of that replacement required the importation of a particular type of subject, as described in the 1790 Naturalization Act. The settler nation was in need of "white" bodies, and the occupants of those bodies had to think of themselves as "free." If the legal, social, or economic structures of the expanding settler state had restricted European languages – or, more to the point, if they had failed to *support* European languages – the desired masses of "free white persons" *would not have been available* to settle the expropriated Native land.

The settler nation and the languages of education

If we think about the biopolitics and necropolitics at work in the construction of U.S. settler-colonial society during the nineteenth century, we see that the actors involved understood very well the connections between *language* and *life*. The expanding settler state sought to increase "white" life and eliminate Native life, and many of the policies enacted towards this increase and this elimination worked via language. The common school movement – the biopolitical project of establishing tuition-free schools for all white children in the United States – is a prime example.

The advent of public schooling was a patchwork affair, with different states and municipalities establishing publicly-funded schools at different times. Nevertheless, historians of education pinpoint the 1830s as the beginning of the "Common School Era," the period of widespread implementation of publicly-funded schooling in America. The successful mobilization to provide free education, consisting primarily of literacy instruction, for all white children, thus coincided temporally with a number of other significant events related to language,

education, the social construction of race, and the theft of Indigenous land. In 1824, the Bureau of Indian Affairs was established within the War Department. In 1828 Andrew Jackson was elected president, and in 1830 he passed the Indian Removal Act. Beginning in 1831, a slew of laws took effect in various states making it illegal for Black peoples to read and write. Also in 1831, George Gaines, appointed by Secretary of War Lewis Cass, oversaw the first phase of the Choctaw removal, the beginning of the Trail of Tears. 1832 was the Seminole removal, 1834 the Creek removal, 1837 the Chickasaw removal and the appointment of Horace Mann, "Father of the Common School Movement," as the first Secretary of the Board of Education of Massachusetts. In 1838 Mann founded the Common School Journal and the Cherokee were removed from the Southeast on a death march to Oklahoma, the culmination of the Trail of Tears.

My point here is that the period described by historians as the "Common School Era" was also a crucial phase in the development of white supremacist settler society, with language and education playing key roles in the process of consolidating the categories of w*hiteness* (i.e. human-ness), *blackness* (i.e. non-human-ness, or, in the words of Dennis Childs, "an anthropology of metaphysical deficit"), and *Indian-ness* (i.e. primitiveness, savageness, and necessary eliminability).[3] It was no coincidence that the drive to *universalize literacy among whites*, through the establishment of tax-supported schools, took place simultaneously with the drive to *eliminate literacy among Blacks*, and the drive to *eliminate Indians altogether.* Written language was one of the most important technologies – arguably t*he* most important technology – of the era; hence, a white supremacist society built upon a material production-base of Black enslavement and Indian removal had perforce to make this technology the universal property of whites, and keep it out of the hands of Black peoples, while pushing Indians out of the picture entirely. Here we see language – in this case, written language – being called in to fortify the distinction between the white and the black, the human and the non-human. Similarly, as I will discuss in greater detail later, language was at the center of settler society's ideological project of separating the human from the Savage Indian. For now, we might simply note that it was in 1834 that the bilingual *Cherokee Phoenix* – the official newspaper of the Cherokee Nation, printed both in Cherokee (using Sequoya's syllabary) and in English – was attacked by the Georgia Guard, the offices sacked and *the printing press destroyed*… a prelude to the Cherokee Trail of Tears, which would take place just a few years later. In short, the white common school movement, the crackdown on Black literacy, and the genocidal Jacksonian Indian Removal actions constituted simultaneous and mutually-enabling processes.

The white common school movement was fundamentally multilingual in character. Prior to the common school movement, private and parochial schools already offered instruction in and through a variety of European languages, with German being the most widespread (Feinberg, 2002; Ramsey, 2010; Toth, 1990). Since the common schools largely continued the

[3] For Childs' (2009) discussion of blackness as an anthropology of metaphysical deficit, see "You Ain't Seen Nothin' Yet": *Beloved*, the American Chain Gang, and the Middle Passage Remix, p. 278.

practices of these already-existing private schools, it makes sense that "[b]ilingual education… became a staple of the common school experience" in many regions (Ramsey, 2010, p. 2). In some cases, the establishment of "public schools" simply meant that the state and/or municipality began financing local private schools, which then became accessible to all of the local children instead of just to those whose families could pay. Thus, with the advent of the common school era, some of the German-English private and parochial schools (for example) were simply turned into public schools – per receiving state funding and ceasing to charge tuition – and continued to implement the same bilingual curricula they had been using all along. As a result, as Carolyn Toth (1990) notes, many of the early public schools "became *de facto* German or German-English schools, by virtue of the fact that all the children living in the area were German, and the same teacher who had taught in the parochial or neighborhood school was kept on when the school fell under state supervision" (p. 35). In cases where the establishment of public schooling entailed the construction of new schools and the hiring of new teachers, local communities largely decided what type of education they wanted these new schools to provide – which means they also decided in which language(s) the education should be provided. Whether by default, as in rural "ethnic enclaves," or by design, as in large cities where non-English ethnic groups lobbied for public education in their languages, settler society's early public schools "often became institutions for maintaining the linguistic and cultural heritages of ethnic communities" (Toth, 1990, p. 2).

Bilingual public education for white settlers particularly flourished from around 1837 (three years after the Georgia Guard's confiscation and destruction of the bilingual *Cherokee Phoenix* press) until World War I. The languages of instruction in a region's public schools reflected the languages spoken by the Europeans who moved into the area, and by their descendants who stayed there. In the mid-Atlantic, for instance, the presence of large German and German-American settler populations meant that many of the region's common schools "emerged naturally as [German-English] bilingual institutions" (Ramsey, 2010, p. 43). In Pennsylvania, one of the first states to institute public education, German-English bilingual schooling "became the norm in many districts" simply because "the local German-speaking population demanded that the common schools maintain their mothertongue" (Ramsey, 2012, p. 8). Many German and German-American settlers lived within *Sprachinseln*, or "language islands," the largest of which covered fifteen thousand square miles in eastern Pennsylvania (Crawford, 1992, p. 34). Residents of such areas would not have consented to send their children to the common schools, had instruction not been carried out in German.

The Pennsylvania Common School Fund, established in 1831, derived its revenue principally from the sale of unpatented lands and from land office fees. In other words, the theft of Indigenous lands not only gave white settlers the *space* to build their schools; it also provided for the *financing* of the common schools, via governmental sale of such lands. German and German-American settlers were a heterogeneous lot – Anabaptists, Lutherans, Catholics, "freethinkers" and secular intellectuals – but they all agreed upon one thing: the desirability of bilingual education, in English and German, for their children. The early public schools of

Pennsylvania, supported by the sale of "unpatented" land, accommodated this desire, this attachment to the *Muttersprache.* In other words, Pennsylvania schools' accommodation of the languages and language ideologies of "free white persons" both (1) depended upon the displacement of Native people and (2) aided in the construction of a loyal white citizenry for the setter state. In this regard, Pennsylvania's common schools are metonymic of the common school movement as a whole.

The annual reports of the county superintendents of Pennsylvania's public schools provide some insight into the development of bilingual education in that state over the course of the nineteenth century. In 1895, Superintendent R.K. Buehrle of Lancaster, in his annual report to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, noted that German-English bilingual schooling in Lancaster was in its twenty-seventh year.

> As may be inferred from their increase these schools are popular.… Such of their pupils as enter the high school generally reach it younger than those from schools exclusively English, thus showing that the extra time required to receive instruction in two languages is compensated for in some other way, for the pupils of these schools must pass the same examinations and attain the same standard. Several of them have graduated from the high school and are now serving as teachers in these bilingual schools.[4]

As demonstrated by this report, the educators and educational bureaucrats of nineteenth-century U.S. settler society grew to understand that the use of non-English mothertongues as mediums of academic instruction did not inhibit students' acquisition of English or interfere with their general academic progress. Though not equipped with the specific jargon employed today by researchers and theorists of multilingual pedagogy and language socialization, nineteenth-century educationists such as Buehrle knew from observation that students who learned in and through German (for example) during part of the school day performed just as well (or better) on English tests as did students whose entire education was carried out exclusively in English. Buerhle notes in his report that the students from the German-English schools must "pass the same [English-medium] examinations and attain the same standard" as students from the monolingual English schools, and that the bilingual students in fact reach this standard sooner than the monolingual students. Somewhat mystified by this phenomenon, for which he possesses no theoretical or research-based explanation, he simply concludes "that the extra time required to receive instruction in two languages is compensated for in some other way."

German-English bilingual education also developed in New Jersey and Maryland. Nineteenth-century Baltimore was, as Toth (1990) puts it, "teeming with bilingual schools,"

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[4] Pennsylvania, State of. *Common Schools of Pennsylvania: Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for the Year Ending June 3, 1895.* (Clarence M. Busch, State Printer of Pennsylvania, 1896. History of Education Archive, Collection 120. Courtesy of University of California Riverside Libraries, Special Collections and Archives.) pp. 173-174

including "the Wacker-Schule founded in 1851, the Knapp-Schule founded in 1853, the Diesterweg-Institut, a Hebrew German-English school, the Reinhardt-Schule for girls founded in 1861, Fräulein Küster's school for girls, a number of German Catholic schools, and several public German-English schools as well" (p. 49). The process of establishing public bilingual education in a large mid-Atlantic city such as Baltimore necessarily involved more conscious planning than the organically-occurring rural bilingual schools of the region. Baltimore's large and influential German population had long favored the private schools, which "not only maintained the religious and linguistic traditions of the immigrants, but also … could make use of the progressive methods found in the schools of Germany" (Ramsey, 2010, pp. 46-47). If middle-class German-Americans were to be enticed to send their children to the common schools, these schools would have to incorporate German as a language of instruction. Furthermore, Baltimore politicians and public school officials realized that Germans and German-Americans, who constituted nearly a quarter of the city's population, "represented an important voting bloc that needed to be conciliated" via governmental backing of their language (Ramsey, 2010, pp. 46-47). Baltimore was just one of many cities in which "the German population had reached a 'critical mass'…. In other words they now had the potential to lobby for bilingual education with a necessarily large and influential voting bloc" (pp. 46-47).

The mid-Atlantic region received large numbers of German intellectuals fleeing from political persecution in Germany during the 1830s. These migrants became known as the *Dreissiger*, or "Thirtiers," and they founded schools that reflected their "fervent love for their ancestral language," as well as "an enlightened republicanism, and … deep distrust of the more orthodox Church groups" (Toth, 1990, p. 43). The failure of the March Revolution of 1848 in Germany led to another mass migration of German intellectuals to the U.S. settler state; these highly-educated migrants – doctors, lawyers, professors, writers and editors – became known in U.S. settler society as the *Achtundvierziger*, or "Forty-Eighters." Like the Thirtiers, the Forty-Eighters became extensively involved in education. In addition to founding their own private schools – bilingual and generally secular – the *Achtundvierziger* "were equally involved in promoting and improving standards in public German bilingual schools, and in agitating for the inclusion of German as a course of study in American schools" (Toth, 1990, p. 44). The German-English common schools in cities like Baltimore were heavily influenced by the ideas and ideals of these educated German migrants. While U.S. schooling had traditionally revolved around rote memorization, the Forty-Eighters favored the "progressive" pedagogical practices in vogue in Germany at the time: hands-on activities, experiments, and lively discussions, carried out in classrooms equipped with "realia such as plants, maps, charts, stuffed animals and birds, rocks, scientific instruments, and other items" (Toth, 1990, p. 47). Furthermore, the academically-privileged Thirtiers and Forty-Eighters were "disturbed by the condition of the German language in the new land," and "felt it was their mission to cultivate and preserve Germandom in the United States and to impose their academic and literary form of High German for the remainder of the German Americans, who spoke 'common' German, 'often with bad grammar'" (Ramsey, 2010, p. 33). The newcomers insisted that basic German literacy and the study of the German

Bible were not enough; students should also read Goethe and Schiller, explore the masterpieces of the German literary tradition. As the private German-English schools established by these migrants began to demonstrate the feasibility and desirability of progressive teaching methods and advanced German literary studies, pressure mounted for the local common schools to provide the same type of instruction. As Paul Ramsey (2010) puts it, "The public schools had to be pedagogically progressive, allow for dual-language instruction, and introduce the 'treasures of the German literature' in order to find favor among middle-class German intellectuals," and so the Baltimore city schools "did just that; by 1876, the city operated five fully bilingual schools." These first five schools served three thousand pupils, and the number of students and schools "continued to climb for the remainder of the century" (pp. 46-47). By 1893, ten per cent of Baltimore's total school population was enrolled in public German-English schools (Toth, 1990, p. 49).

In 1868, Dr. Adolf Douai, a Forty-Eighter who had participated in promoting the idea of the Kindergarten (originally a German conception) in the United States, and John Straubenmueller, President of the German Teachers' Society of New York, co-wrote an article explaining the "causes and reasons" behind the "several hundreds of German schools" operating in the U.S. settler state at the time. Douai and Straubenmueller were referring specifically to private schools in which German was the primary medium of instruction, but their explanation also captured some of the reasons for the popularity of German-English bilingual public schools. The authors maintained that intergenerational language loss "sadly disturbs the family relations, the efforts of parents toward the education of their children, and the respect due to the parents from the latter." They also argued that German in particular was "the language of the greatest poets of modern times, of the most profound science and philosophy, and of a nation, destined to become, in no distant future, the foremost in Europe," and further added that German was spoken in the U.S. settler state "by about five million men – a number rapidly increasing" (qtd. in Ramsey, 2012, pp. 9-10).

The common school movement was slower to develop in the South than in the mid-Atlantic, but in the few Southern cities where public schooling was widely available, large non-English settler groups were able to obtain schooling in their mothertongues. Kleber (2001) notes that the significant German presence in Louisville, Kentucky, "influenced Louisville schools in two ways: the introduction of kindergarten and bilingual education" (p. 338). New Orleans also established common schools earlier than most of the South – and, as Jay Gitlin (2010) notes, "a progressive bilingual school system flourished" in the city (p. 160). In 1847, Louisiana formally authorized bilingual instruction in common schools throughout the state.

As the settler nation expanded, pushing westward – disregarding various treaties and implementing a range of ethnic-cleansing policies to remove the Natives, with the initial settlers' acts of frontier homicide continually paving the way – common schools sprang up across the continent. The Midwest became a greenhouse for cultivating settlers' bilingualism and bi-literacy in English and other European mothertongues. Bilingual public schooling "planted its roots deep in the American soil and proliferated" most extensively throughout "the area that spanned along

and east of the Mississippi and north of the Mason-Dixon line" (Ramsey, 2010, p. 54). Midwestern cities such as Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, and St. Louis became focal centers of bilingual settler education. Bilingual schooling was also available in small towns and rural enclaves throughout the region.

Cincinnati, the first city in Ohio to establish a public school system, became the "model city" for German-English public schooling, and school districts from other Midwestern municipalities sent observers to the city's schools to study the acclaimed "Cincinnati model" of bilingual education in order to glean ideas and strategies for the improvement of their own bilingual programs. Cincinnati opened its first bilingual schools in 1840-1841, serving a total of 327 pupils that first year. Enrollment in the bilingual schools grew rapidly. By 1875, enrollment in the Cincinnati German bilingual schools had grown to 15,119 students. That number represented 53.2% of the city's schoolchildren (Toth, 1990, p. 60-61).

Not only could Cincinnati students continue their bilingual education at the high school level, they could also, if they wished to pursue teaching careers within the rapidly-expanding network of Midwestern German-English public schools, continue on to the German bilingual division of the Cincinnati Normal School. Founded in 1871, the bilingual teacher-training program, according to supervisor J.F. Wisnewski, helped to "emancipate the German-English Department of the city from the dependence upon European German teachers for sustenance, the supply of whom is very fluctuating and by no means sufficient and regular enough to fill our wants." Cincinnati's bilingual teacher-training program provided a "steady supply" of teachers who not only possessed high levels of literacy in both languages, but also had taken special courses on German pedagogy and had completed bilingual student-teaching in grades one through four (Toth, 1990, pp. 60,70).

As in the mid-Atlantic and the South, observers in the Midwest – notably school superintendents and other educational bureaucrats – remarked upon the fact that the provision of academic instruction in two languages did not hamper students' acquisition of English literacy. As Cincinnati School Board President Hooper wrote in 1847: "It has been remarked that the children acquire both languages with equal facility as the English alone… which leads to the very interesting question of the effect of the study of language upon the development of the mind." Hooper suggested that the city's English-mothertongue students might benefit as much from bilingual education as the German-mothertongue students, and noted that while enrollment in the bilingual schools consisted primarily of German and German American students, there was nothing to prevent Anglos from "availing themselves of the same privileges." Shortly thereafter, Anglo parents did indeed begin enrolling their children in the German-English bilingual schools (Toth, 1990, pp. 71-72).

The first city Superintendent of Cincinnati Schools, Nathan Guilford, agreed that the "experiment of teaching English and German at the same time" had been "found to succeed admirably well," and speculated that the process of alternating between English and German as mediums of instruction created an element of "novelty" and thereby maintained "a constant interest and spirit of active industry among the pupils, favorable to their progress in each

[language]." Regarding the English acquisition of German-mothertongue students in the bilingual programs, Guilford noted in his 1850 *Annual Report* that, "A person, hearing classes recite in English, would with difficulty discover anything in their language or accent by which to detect their German origin." He also noted that a number of Anglo students had "joined these classes for the purpose of learning German."[5]

As one city after another sought to emulate Cincinnati's successful bilingual programs, and German-speakers continued to set up schools in small towns and rural enclaves, a pattern of German-English bilingual settler schools emerged throughout the Midwest. By 1886, of the twenty-five states and territories with publicly-funded German-English bilingual schools, the states with the largest enrolments were in the Midwest: Ohio, Missouri, Illinois, and Wisconsin (Toth, 1990, p. 76). According to Paul Ramsey (2010), bilingual education particularly flourished in the Midwest "not only because of the enormous number of foreign-language speakers who settled there, but also because it was a developing area when the immigrants arrived, thus allowing them to become 'co-founders and partners' in the region's affairs" (p. 54). In reality, the region was not a "developing area"; it was an area from which Native peoples were being removed in a series of ethnic-cleansing campaigns. But the *settler* society – the replacement for what was being eliminated – *was* just "developing" at this point; hence, speakers of a variety of European heritage languages were indeed "co-founders and partners" in this settler educational endeavor.

As the nineteenth century wore on, and westward expansion continued, the necropolitics of settler-colonialism's logic of elimination became ever more tightly imbricated with the biopolitics of its logic of education. The Homestead Acts provided more land for "free white" settlers and their languages. Historian Heinz Kloss (1977) notes that "Several times between 1867 and 1870 Congress had printed in various languages of the European mainland the annual report of the General Land Office about the free government lands that were open to immigrants" (p. 32). Language was no barrier to the recruitment of "free white" settlers.

"As the public school system developed in the Dakotas," says Ramsey (2010), "bilingual education emerged naturally, as in rural areas of the Northeast and Midwest" (p. 75). As in the Midwest, Germans and Scandinavians in the Western states ensured that their mothertongues were ultilized in the common schools. German, Spanish, and Czech came to be utilized as languages of public education in Texas (Blanton, 2004). German-speaking settlers were also able to utilize their mothertongue in the public schools of California. In short, bilingual public schooling for settlers stretched across the continent, from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

The common school movement sought not to *coerce* settlers into sending their children to the public schools, but to make the schools *attractive* to these "free white persons"; and, as we have seen, for many nineteenth century parents, a school was only attractive if it offered instruction in their mothertongue. As Superintendent J.S. Ermentrout of Berks County, Pennsylvania, wrote in the 1860s,

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[5] *Annual Report of the Trustees and Visitors of Common Schools to the City Council of Cincinnati for the School Year Ending June 30, 1850*. p. 31

> [Germans and German-Americans], once convinced that… they will not be called upon to ignore their original [German] character, the last vestage [*sic*] of opposition to the public schools will have disappeared.… in order to learn English, it is not necessary … to ignore the German, and wage a war of extermination against the customs and modes of thought that characterize the German counties of the State. (qtd. in Ramsey, 2010, pp. 45-46)

A "war of extermination" was, of course, what was precisely being waged against *Native peoples*. If English speakers had attempted to wage a war of extermination against *European languages*, it would have become impossible to continue building the "free white" settler society that was so manifestly destined to occupy the continent.

Welcome, the growing settler state said to its "free white" immigrants and their descendants. *Come in! Make yourself at home! And by all means, bring your languages with you!* Europeans – with all their various languages – would fill the stolen land with homesteads, towns and schools. But there's another connection here between *land* and *language*. To understand the importance of this connection, we must think back again to the 1790 Naturalization Act, the planning of a "free white" nation, and the settler-colonial imperative: *destroy to replace*.

To unsettle the natives: Colonialism's philologic of elimination

> The spiritual particularities and the linguistic structure of a people stand in such an enmeshed proximity to one another that were one of them given, the other could be completely deduced from it. (Wilhelm von Humboldt)

> In the 1790s, no question was more pressing for the new national government than that of deciding the future status of Indians. In the main, the policy issue could be reduced to this fact: Indians possessed the land, and whites wanted the land.… For early policymakers, then, a major priority was the creation of a mechanism and rationale for divesting Indians of their real estate. (David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction*)

How to "decide the future status of Indians"? Or rather, how to rationalize the massive land-grab required for the construction of the settler society? Recall the eighteenth and nineteenth century view of language: a language was the "genius of a people" – indeed, a language was the *essence* of a people; a language *defined* a people. It should come as no surprise, then, that nineteenth century American ethnology – the handmaiden of U.S. settler colonialism's logic of elimination – should place "philology" at its center.[6]

Nineteenth century American ethnology not only rationalized the destruction of Indigenous peoples; it both physically contributed to and intellectually fed off of that destruction.

[6] "Philology," in nineteenth-century parlance, referred to much of what we now call "linguistics," including comparative and historical morphology and grammar, and could also encompass some literary studies.

The role and attitude of the field is epitomized in a statement by Edward Palmer (1831-1911), a collector for the Smithsonian Institution. In this anecdote, Palmer recounts his efforts to obtain the body of an Apache child, killed in an Army raid, as a "specimen" for the Smithsonian:

> The females of the camp… laid it out after their custom & covered it with wild flowers and carried it to a grave…. They hid it so completely that its' body [*sic*] could not be found, as I had a wish to have it for a specimen… no amount of persuasion could induce them to tell the secret, so I did not get the specimen. (qtd. in Hinsley, 1981, p. 70)

But while Palmer's *disposition* towards Native people is highly representative of nineteenth century American ethnology, his exclusive interest in the physical is less so. In fact, the directors of the Smithsonian and related institutions, for all their collection and display of bodies and artifacts, did not consider these items to be their primary sources of "knowledge" about the Natives. The most important thing to study, for many of the leading settler scholars, was *language*.

In an extensive examination of the activities of the Smithsonian Institution during the nineteenth century, Curtis Hinsley (1981) notes that Smithsonian-affiliated researchers pursued three main areas of inquiry in line with the "national and religious quest" to explain (or to explain away) the existence and nature of the Natives. Those three areas of inquiry were archaeology, physical anthropology, and philology. Why would philology have been the most important among these three? For one thing, in the early nineteenth century, archaeology had not yet come to be viewed as a respected "scientific" endeavor: "Not until the 1860s would archaeology begin to attain the theoretical respect and academic establishment that philology had enjoyed since the eighteenth century" (Hinsley, 1981, p. 23). Even when archaeology did attain this "theoretical respect," it was actually not entirely separate from philology – for instance, in 1863, the Smithsonian's George Gibbs "expanded his 'Instructions for Archaeological Investigations in the U.S.' (1861) to include directions for philological observations, rules for recording sounds, and a short vocabulary list" (Hinsley, 1981, pp. 47-48). Thomas Jefferson, who would be posthumously dubbed "Father of American Archaeology" for having dug up Indian burial sites near Monticello, noted during his lifetime that, despite his interest in excavating such "mounds," the best form of "proof" regarding the histories of the Indians lay in language (Hinsley, 1981, p.23). As for physical anthropology, we should note that the analysis of American Indian languages was considered a "natural sciences" endeavor – the study of Indian languages was thought to reveal information about the Indian brain and body and about the land that had given rise to them – hence, philology, in addition to constituting a field of study in its own rite, was indispensable for physical anthropology. Philology borrowed its terminology from biology, a discursive tendency which further connected the idea of Indian *languages* as inferior to the idea of Indian *brains* as inferior.

The religious conception of the divine origins of language also made philology well-suited for nineteenth century American ethnology's "national and religious quest." The ability of

linguistic analysis to satisfy both the religious and the scientific imperatives of settler intellectuals, while simultaneously rationalizing the elimination of the Native and retaining the trace of indigeneity as complement to a uniquely "American" settler identity, is reflected in the words of comparative philologist William W. Turner, in an 1851 letter to Smithsonian Secretary Joseph Henry, recommending the publication of Stephen Riggs's Dakota dictionary and grammar. The scientific examination of Native American languages, Turner wrote, disclosed "new and curious phases of the human mind." Since every language was the "spontaneous growth" of the minds of the people who spoke it, the study of Indian languages provided for the comparative philogogist the same "delight and instruction" that the naturalist derived from the study of a new species of plant or animal. Even the most primitive languages provided new insights into the work of the "Great Fashioner" (Hinsley, 1981, pp. 49-50). Interestingly, Turner goes on to suggest that the only people "qualified by education and sustained by motives of benevolence" to spend the necessary years collecting the linguistic data required for the study of the "mental idiosyncrasies of our rude red brethren" were missionaries like Riggs.

A milestone moment for American philology was Duponceau's 1819 elucidation of the principle of polysynthesis. Duponceau, a French-born immigrant and future President of the American Philosophical Society, suggested that all Indian languages had very high morpheme-to-word ratios. In other words, multiple units of sound-meaning (what grammarians refer to as "nouns," "verbs," etc.) were combined into single "words." Duponceau's assertion that *all* Native American languages demonstrated polysynthesis was actually incorrect, but his attention to morpheme-word ratios had a lasting impact in linguistics. The term "polysynthetic" is still used today to describe languages with high morpheme-to-word ratios. For nineteenth century philologists, however, polysynthesis "was more than a description"; it entailed a value judgment about speakers' levels of intellectual development. When Duponceau "announced his discovery that all American Indian languages appeared to demonstrate a uniform grammatical structure and underlying plan of thought" – i.e. polysynthesis – he "implied as well a single stage of mental development, thus subtly shifting the question of Indian identity from the realm of historical affinity to one of developmental stages" (Hinsley, 1981, p. 23). Following Duponceau, researchers increasingly deployed linguistic data to support the idea that the Natives represented some prior stage in a course of "development" through which Europeans had already passed.

"Philology," wrote Henry Rowe Schoolcraft in 1823, "is one of the keys of knowledge which… although it is rather rusty, the rust is … a proof of its antiquity. I am inclined to think that more true light is destined to be thrown on the history of the Indians by a study of their languages than of their traditions, or any other feature" (qtd. in Hinsley, 1981, p. 23). This conviction that the secrets of Indian origins and histories could be discovered through linguistic analysis remained with Schoolcraft throughout his career. In 1846, he advised the Smithsonian Regents to focus their support on studies of language. Smithsonian Secretary Joseph Henry agreed with Schoolcraft; and, under Henry's direction, the Smithsonian "promoted American philology primarily through lectures, circulation of instructions, and collection of vocabulary lists" (Hinsley, 1981, p. 47). Instructions and lists were particularly important, as many of the

language "collectors" were not language professionals. The collectors, moving west, would send their data back east to be analyzed by the professional linguists. "Circulating instructions and vocabulary lists," writes Hinsley, "became the Smithsonian's means of connecting linguists established in eastern universities with observers in the western regions – explorers, soldiers, missionaries, and settlers" (1981, p. 48).

When George Gibbs IV took his place as Joseph Henry's chief linguistic advisor at the Smithsonian in 1859, he advocated not only the collection of "words," but also the transcription of myths and folktales. Gibbs had grand ambitions for American philology; he sought to organize the creation of "a complete collection of all languages west of the Rocky Mountains" (qtd. in Hinsley, 1981, p. 52). Hinsley succinctly characterizes Gibbs' attitude towards the Natives whose languages he sought to "collect":

> While he watched their steady attrition from White disease and greed, Gibbs served as interpreter to treaty parlays and himself frequently visited young Indian maidens in their villages. Later, with apparently few second thoughts, he attributed the epidemic proportions of syphilis among the aborigines to their 'erotic temperament,' moral laxness, and fish diet. (pp. 51-52)

Gibbs advocated greater cooperation among different settler groups in North America. He "urged that the Smithsonian take the initiative by ignoring language differences and publishing Mexican as well as American work in archaeology," and "even contacted the Governor of the Russian colonies in Alaska, providing him with vocabulary blanks for each of the principal languages of Russian America" (Hinsley, 1981, pp. 52-53).[7] Cooperation among settler-scholars of various nationalities, said Gibbs, should be the "first step to an extended Americanism of which the future is boundless."

The common school and the Indian school: Linguistic non/coercion and the meanings of assimilation

The knowledge-power expansion that Gibbs envisioned may have been boundless, but by the later nineteenth century the U.S. government had to contend with the fact that the physical westward expansion of the settler society was coming up against its own inherent boundedness: "In the end … the western frontier met the one moving back in from the Pacific, and there was simply no space left for removal. The frontier had become coterminal with reservation boundaries" (Wolfe, 2006, p. 399). A policy shift was needed in regards to Indigenous populations – from elimination-via-expulsion to elimination-via-absorption. But one thing remained the same: the logic of elimination, in its new guise, would still advance its purposes by working on language.

[7] Note the expanded definition of "archaeology" to include linguistic data-gathering.

In 1871 "Indians" were declared "wards of the state," and in 1877 Congress began appropriating funds for "Indian education." But whereas the common schools for white students often became vehicles for heritage language maintenance, the schools for "Indians" were expressly designed to destroy Native languages and everything they represented: "Established for the sole purpose of severing the child's cultural and psychological connection to his [N]ative heritage, this unique institution [the Indian school] figured prominently in the federal government's desire to find a solution to the 'Indian problem,' a method of saving Indians by destroying them" (Adams, 1995, pp. x-xi).

Among the cases advanced in support of Indian education was the argument that it was less expensive to educate the Natives than to kill them. Forty-Eighter Carl Schurz, Secretary of the Interior from 1877 to 1881, "estimated that it cost nearly a million dollars to kill an Indian in warfare, whereas it cost only $1,200 to give an Indian child eight years of schooling." His successor, Henry Teller, "calculated that over a ten-year period the annual cost of both waging war on Indians and providing protection for frontier communities was in excess of $22 million, nearly four times what it would cost to educate 30,000 children for a year" (Adams, 1995, pp. 19-20).

We can instructively juxtapose such arguments with the justifications given by the promoters of public schooling for whites. In order to carry out a comparative cost-benefit analysis of "educating" Indians versus killing them, one has to have considered both possibilities. The promoters of the white common school used a range of arguments to advance their cause, but they never argued that investing in education for white children would avert the greater financial expense of killing them.

While the strategy for drawing Euro/American settlers into the common schools consisted of implementing curricula to their liking – i.e., in their mothertongues – the strategy for ensuring that the Natives sent their children to (settler-controlled) schools was brute coercion. Oral histories and official archives are replete with stories of Native children forcibly removed from their homes and placed in boarding schools. Yes, some Native parents sent their children to boarding schools voluntarily, and some children even enrolled themselves. Note, however, that while some Native families were able to exercise a choice about whether or not to send their children to the schools, they were not given any choice about *what these schools should do* for (or to) their children. Euro/American settlers could say, "I'll send my children to the common school, if and only if that school provides education in our mothertongue." Native parents could say, "I'll send my children to the off-reservation Indian boarding school," but did not have the option of adding, "only if you agree not to beat our language out of them while they're there."

In contrast to the biopolitical project of state-funded education for settler children, the schools for Indigenous children constituted an explicitly necropolitical endeavor. As Commissioner of Indian Affairs Henry Price proclaimed, "Savage and civilized life cannot live and prosper on the same ground. One of the two must die" (qtd. in Adams, 1995, p. 15). I have already noted the line of thinking that said it was less costly to educate the Indians than to kill them but, in fact, boarding schools sought to do both. As Lieutenant Richard Henry Pratt,

founder of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, explained, the aim was to "Kill the Indian and save the man." The statement is well-known, but the question here is: How did such a statement translate into practice, and why was *language* so important to that practice?

To address this question, we first recall Wolfe's (2006) critique of the term "cultural genocide." As Wolfe notes, this expression can all too easily be misconstrued as suggesting that genocide is *either* biological (i.e. "real" genocide) *or* "cultural" (i.e. directed only at "culture" and not at human bodies, therefore not real genocide). "In practice," Wolfe points out, "it should go without saying that the imposition on a people of the procedures and techniques that are generally glossed as 'cultural genocide' is certainly going to have a direct impact on that people's capacity to stay alive" (pp. 398-399).

Wolfe's point here bears multiple layers of relevance to the question of language policy. Remember that "a language", a "mothertongue," in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was commonly viewed as constitutive of the spiritual and biological essence of "a people," as well as a "natural" feature of a landscape. From a twenty-first century perspective, a language *is* in fact a biological (though not inherent or inherited) trait, to the extent that a language resides in the neural pathways of the brain of a speaker (as well as in the inter-mental space between speakers). Either way, if we *were* to speak of "cultural" and "biological" genocides, linguicide would constitute *both* of the above. Wolfe's point, of course, is that terms such as "cultural genocide" might misleadingly suggest an absence of "biological" destruction. In fact, the issue of linguicide epitomizes two arguments made by Wolfe: one, that the relationship of the "cultural" to the "biological" is not an "either/or," but a "both/and"; two, that the policies "generally glossed as 'cultural genocide'" will obviously have an adverse impact upon people's literal "ability to stay alive."

Moving away from the vocabulary of "cultural genocide," Wolfe uses the more integrated term "structural genocide" – a phrase that reflects the fact that, under settler colonialism, genocide is a structure rather than an event. The attack on Indigenous languages is a central component of structural genocide. In referring to the impact of linguicidal policies upon people's *basic ability to stay alive*, I refer not to the idea of "cultural genocide," but to the relationship – once again – between *language* and *life.*

Language resides in the body. It is not an object – like a garment – that can simply be removed from the body and replaced with something else. Of all the things boarding schools sought to do in order to "kill the Indian," none required so much action upon the body as the killing of language. Language cannot be simply separated from the body, or snipped off in one fell swoop. Language *resides in the body.* What this means is that the only way to decisively kill the language is to physically punish the body each time a bit of the undesired language emerges from it. And language often emerges involuntarily, because it is *in-grained* in the body, it is part of the very "grain" of the brain and therefore of the body.

Many boarding school survivors recall being physically abused for speaking their languages. Settler children in many nineteenth century schools were also physically punished for misbehavior. The difference (apart from severity) was that for Indian students, unlike for most

settler students, simply *speaking in their languages* constituted a form of "misbehavior." Hence, for Indian students, their very being was defined as "misbehavior." This point becomes particularly salient when we recall the connection, in nineteenth century European thought, between language and Being. Language was considered an inherent constituent of identity. As Humboldt had influentially proclaimed, "The language is as it were the external appearance of a people's spirit; its language is its spirit and its spirit is its language; the two cannot be thought identically enough" (qtd. in Bush, 2009, p. 11). Language, as Humboldt put it, was the "spiritual exhalation" of the nation. The use of a bodily metaphor – "exhalation" – is telling. To *kill the Indian* (nation), this exhalation had to be prevented, suffocated. But that act of suffocation of language could not actually take place upon the "nation," as a "nation" is an abstract concept and as such cannot be literally "suffocated." That act of suffocation of language/nation had to be enacted upon the bodies of individual children.

The word "nation" calls attention to another facet of why linguicide was a central component of the boarding school project. What made a "nation," in much nineteenth-century European thought, was the organic linkage of "blood," "soil," and "language." A group of people, linked (at least in theory) by common ancestry ("blood"), living on their native "soil," and speaking a common "language": this was a Nation. And *language was the most important* defining point in this blood-soil-language triad. Johann Gottlieb Fichte, considered one of the fathers of German nationalism, asserted in 1808: "It is incontestably true that, wherever a particular language is found, a separate nation exists which is entitled independently to take charge of its own affairs and govern itself" (qtd. in Crowley, 1996, p. 125). Humboldt wrote in 1823 that, "our historiography nowhere justifies the assumption that a nation ever existed prior to its language"; in 1830 he declared that "the concept of a nation must be based especially upon language… Language by its own force proclaims the national character" (qtd. in Coulmas, 1988, p. 9). The ever-poetic Herder rhetorically demanded, "Has a nation anything more precious than the language of its fathers? In it dwell its entire world of tradition, principles of existence, its whole heart and soul" (qtd. in Oakes, 2001, p. 22).

In short, as Oakes (2001) notes,

> So strong was this tendency to link language and nation in the nineteenth century that Europe witnessed the advent of the *Sprachnation* (language nation), that is, a nation which uses language to justify its right to an independent state. Norwegian, Romanian, Bulgarian, Ukrainian, Finnish and Turkish were all used as grounds for the formation of new nation-states in what has been termed the 'second ecolinguistic revolution' in Europe. (p. 23)

The separation of Angloamerica from England, of course, had no recourse to any linguistic justification. Benedict Anderson (2006) notes this difference between settler nationalisms and the ethnolinguistic nationalisms of Europe: "…whether we think of Brazil, the USA, or the former colonies of Spain, language was not an element that differentiated them from their respective imperial metropoles." These settler states were initiated by "people who shared a

common language and common descent with those against whom they fought" (p. 47). Angloamerica, as a settler state, had no originating claim to a distinct language, but this lack posed no problem since settler states did not originate in the same way as ethnolinguistic nations. Hence it was no problem that the founding documents of the United States were written in English, nor was the U.S. state threatened by European settlers maintaining their heritage languages in America. Because the U.S. was a *settler state*, there was no need for a blood-soil-language link. But the threat arose because there *were* groups of people who *did* appear to have a blood-soil-language link in/to various regions of the "United States." Those people were the Indigenous nations.

If ethnolinguistic nationalism presaged state-formation, and if a nation could be thought of in terms of the triad blood-soil-language, with language being the most important, then the Indigenous peoples, by European standards, clearly were nations. Seen this way, Indigenous languages linked People to Land. This connection between Native people and land had to be *disarticulated*. Disarticulation required the destruction of language.

While the erasure of Indigenous languages prior to "wardship" had taken place through denial (the languages were less "developed" and therefore didn't count), after wardship this erasure was enacted upon the bodies of children. The deaths of Native children in boarding schools were the result of malnutrition, exposure to disease, lack of medical care, and a range of other causes. Some deaths also resulted from severe physical abuse that was directly language-related. Of course, since one of the major purposes of removing children from their families and sending them to off-reservation boarding schools in the first place was to eliminate Native languages, we might as well note that *all* boarding school deaths were language-related. In this sense, boarding schools were engaged in what John Mugane (2005) calls, "murdering the corporeal in order to destroy the linguistic" (p. 165).

The policy of "murdering the corporeal in order to destroy the linguistic" is common in colonial and settler-colonial societies. Mugane discusses apartheid South Africa: In 1974, hundreds of students were shot by police during demonstrations against a decree making Afrikaans a compulsory medium of instruction in Black schools. "In a very real sense," writes Mugane (2005), "languages were being shot at" in the streets of Soweto (p. 165). Mugane also writes of "linguistic Orientalism" and "linguistic incarceration." Linguistic Orientalism involves the application of the practices and attitudes that Said famously termed "Orientalism" to the study of the *languages* of the colonized. Referring to "Afrolinguistic Orientalism," Mugane notes that "What has been said about African languages… has been an important part of the arsenal that has been used to repress, stymie, and eventually destroy these languages" (2006, p. 12). Further, "Experts were important contributors to linguistic racism….Though colonialism was cast in [terms of 'race' and 'culture'], an important part of its execution was the demonizing of native languages… a clear case of linguistic racism" (Mugane, 2005, p. 163). The reference to "experts" immediately recalls the American philologists. The phrase "linguistic incarceration" also bears a compelling relevance to the U.S. settler-colonial context. As Mugane notes, the "confinement of languages in people's minds is the initial step in erasing them" (2005, p. 161).

"Subduing Africans," Mugane writes, "required simultaneously arresting the body and containing the language and remanding it into custody within the person" (2005, p. 161). The connection with Indian boarding schools is clear. The child is incarcerated in the boarding school and the language is incarcerated in the child. This incarceration compromises the survival of both the language and the child. Boarding school linguicide (including its inseparability from the murder of the corporeal) represents the epitome of Wolfe's "structural genocide": settler colonialism's arrangement of institutions in ways that (1) are explicitly directed at the elimination of the Native, (2) express themselves in terms of something like "culture" (e.g., "civilize the savages," etc.), and (3) are inseparable from biological destruction.

Histories of the white common school movement generally note that "assimilation" of European immigrants was a major goal of nineteenth century public schooling. Indian boarding schools are also described as attempts to "assimilate" Indian students into white society. Here, there are two different meanings of "assimilation." For European and Euroamerican settlers, "assimilation" meant *accommodation*; that is, the common school would accommodate settlers' wishes by offering instruction in their mothertongues, thereby accomplishing the goal of getting these settlers to utilize the common schools, for the larger purpose of supporting and building the settler colonial project. For Indigenous peoples, "assimilation" meant *elimination.* As we have seen, language ideologies and language policies played a fundamental role in this drive to elimination.

Conclusion: Not mere abstractions

Language policies and language ideologies have been central to U.S. settler colonialism. The linguistic accommodation of "free white persons" was fundamental to the construction of the settler nation during the long nineteenth century, and this linguistic accommodation of white settlers consisted not merely of laissez-faire "tolerance" or non-interference with European mothertongues, but of *active support* for these languages and their speakers – through, for example, the provision of publicly-funded education in these languages. Many European populations during the nineteenth century were passionately – often religiously – devoted to their mothertongues; hence, the U.S. settler society's support of these languages was crucial to the construction of a large and loyal "free white" settler population. Given European ideologies of the connections between mothertongue, collective spirit, personal character and intelligence, and even religion, any expectation that European settlers would transform themselves into monolingual English speakers upon arrival to the United States would have been considered by many to be unreasonable and even unnatural.

While the U.S. settler economy was built upon land usurped from Native peoples, it also depended upon labor extracted from enslaved Black peoples. Settler society's racial project of delineating the category of "free white persons," over and against the constructed categories of blackness (slave-ness) and Indian-ness (savageness), relied heavily upon language-related

policies. Hence, the rise of the multilingual common school movement for universalizing literacy among whites coincided with the criminalization of literacy among Black peoples. Settler society sought to shore up the distinction between citizen and slave – between white and black – by aligning these categories with the markers of literacy and illiteracy. Language ideologies were also called in to help construct the racial distinction between *white citizen* and *savage Indian*, via the knowledge-production work of institutions like the Smithsonian. Since languages were seen as embodying and representing the innate spiritual and intellectual qualities of their speakers, settler scholars' pronouncements on the supposed "primitiveness" of Indigenous languages served as ideological justifications for U.S. settler colonialism's program of structural genocide. The discourses deployed by these nineteenth-century settler-scholars drew upon tropes established by the European intelligentsia over the course of the previous century – tropes of language and nation, language and mind, language and spirit, tropes asserting that the analysis of a language could enable scholars to pass judgment upon the character and intelligence of its speakers, and to place those speakers within a hierarchy of peoples.

The historical record of bilingual schooling for settler children of various European backgrounds in the U.S. demonstrates that settler educationists understood that children could study in and through their non-English mothertongues *and* learn English. But when the U.S. settler state set up "Indian schools" during the late nineteenth century, these schools subjected Native children to subtractive measures aimed to *replace* their Indigenous languages with English. As the Indian Peace Commission of 1868 stated in recommending the establishment of these Indian schools, "Schools should be established, which children should be required to attend; their barbarous dialects should be blotted out and the English language substituted" (qtd. in Crawford, 1992, pp. 43-44). The subtractive language policies imposed upon Native children in boarding schools cannot be explained away by suggesting that nineteenth-century educationists "didn't know" about bilingual academic development. These attacks on Indigenous languages in schools were not based upon a belief that Native languages would interfere with students' English acquisition; they were based upon the settler imperative that Native languages had to be destroyed. The attempt to eliminate Indigenous languages was a crucial component of the attempt to eliminate Indigenous nations.

In short, then, language policies and language ideologies have been central to the U.S. settler-colonial project. This history highlights the importance, for anyone attempting decolonial work in settler-colonial contexts, of continually bearing in mind the testimony of scholars Lomawaima and McCarty, in the epigraph which initiated this essay: "Languages are not mere abstractions or replaceable products; language issues are always people issues."

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