

**BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN THE PUBLIC EYE:
A CASE STUDY OF NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT**

*Kenji Hakuta
Yale University*

in collaboration with

*Mario Chang, Maria Fernandez-Gimenez, Laurie Gould
Jean Hendrickson, Tracy Hiser, Kathryn Hoh, Sally Kim,
Margaret McNutt, Michelle Navon, Margaret Perrow,
Judith Suben, Susan Rakowitz and Luz M. Ramos*

Yale University

A telephone survey of 179 randomly selected individuals in New Haven was conducted in order to assess perceptions and opinions about the local bilingual education program. An additional 37 Spanish-speaking individuals, representing the language group serviced by the bilingual program, were interviewed in Spanish. Results showed that people had few misconceptions about the bilingual education program in terms of its goals, the average length that children remain in the program, and the proportion of the Hispanic children who are in the program; that more people favored a transitional model over maintenance of Spanish, but that there was still considerable support for maintenance; that a large proportion of the people felt bilingual education to be the best way for Spanish-speaking children to learn English, and that funding should be increased; that negative attitude towards bilingual education was related to being male, being in the generation currently in their fifties or older, and being from a home background in their childhood where a non-English language was used; and that while the Spanish-speaking group of respondents seemed slightly more favorable towards bilingual education than the general sample, there were no great differences. Some

anecdotal evidence is presented that strong negative opinions are voiced by individuals who do so on the basis of their personal experience.*

INTRODUCTION

Bilingual education, broadly defined, is an old concept in American education (see Kloss, 1977; Schlossman, in press). While debate has always accompanied the issue of how an educational system is to service children who might not adequately profit from instruction exclusively in English, the controversy in the past two decades has reached unprecedented proportions (see American Institutes for Research, 1977; Epstein, 1977; Gray, 1981; O'Malley, 1978; Baker & deKanter, 1983; Ridge, 1981).

The current debate over bilingual education extends well beyond the academic circles and specialists in education such as those individuals cited above. It is a controversy that is solidly within the public domain. Any researcher in bilingual education who has had the experience of describing their profession to the average person on the street knows that the public is not without opinion.

This paper is concerned with documenting this public opinion, and with exploring the basis of these opinions. Unlike the few surveys conducted at the national level (Cole, 1983; Padilla, personal communication, 1984), this survey is restricted to one geographic locale, New Haven, Connecticut. While the findings from this study cannot be generalized to the nation at large, it is presented in the hope that it can serve as a prototype study of a local area that can be refined and replicated in other areas, by other investigators.

In many instances, locally conducted surveys can be more useful than national ones. For example, such survey data can be used in local school board discussions about the bilingual program, allowing concepts that are often casually invoked, such as "community support", to be given concrete meaning. Such data can also be used to inform politicians about support for bilingual education in their constituencies. Furthermore, data about public opinion can also be used to make teachers and administrators in the bilingual program more aware of the local perception of their program. The study reported here has been disseminated in all of these ways, such that local impact is maximized.

* The project was conceived and executed in the context of a course that I taught at Yale University during the Fall Semester, 1983, titled "Societal and Individual Bilingualism." While the students should receive full credit for the hard work, I bear full responsibility for any misrepresentations and misinterpretations of the data collected. We thank Patricia Cucuzza, Lisette Bernier-McGowan and Kay Hill of the Bilingual/Foreign Languages Office of the New Haven Public Schools for helpful ideas in constructing and interpreting the survey. Inquiries should be addressed to Kenji Hakuta, Department of Psychology, Box 11A Yale Station, New Haven, CT. 06520 (203-436-1273).

It can be argued that the public concept of bilingual education is an undifferentiated one, and therefore that the value of conducting a study of attitudes towards bilingual education would be limited by the fact that respondents are reacting to an idiosyncratically defined construct. But whether we like it or not, when school board members and lawmakers talk about community support for bilingual education, they are in fact talking about a construct for which there is little consensus. From a pragmatic standpoint, it is critical to understand the nature and basis of the public attitude towards bilingual education as seen through the public eye.

Through a telephone survey, we attempted to understand how the bilingual education program in New Haven is perceived by the community, what their attitudes were towards it, and what these perceptions and attitudes represented.

BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN NEW HAVEN

Before the full technical description of the study, a brief sketch of the bilingual education scene in New Haven is in order. The population of the city, as of 1980, was 126,109, of whom 10,042 (7.95%) were of "Spanish origin", mostly from Puerto Rico (U.S. Census, 1980). Spanish is the only language for which there are bilingual classes in the New Haven Public Schools. The bilingual program is transitional, with a modal period of three years until the child is mainstreamed. The program receives Title VII funds.

As of October, 1983, the racial composition of the entire New Haven Public School system was as follows: 61 percent Black; 20 percent White; 18 percent Hispanic; 1 percent Asian or other (total number of pupils was 16,981). Of the total Hispanics in the schools, 45 percent were enrolled in bilingual education classes, which are provided from K to 12.

The preliminary results of a home background study of Hispanic students in the New Haven Public Schools suggest the following population characteristics, based on a sample of 261 cases randomly selected from all responses to a questionnaire distributed to all Hispanic students. The parents were mostly (87%) born in Puerto Rico, and moved to the United States mainland when they were under 20 years old (54%) or when they were between 21 and 30 (33%). Twenty-eight percent of the parents reported that they received their schooling mostly in the United States mainland, while 68% received most of their schooling in Puerto Rico. Twenty-six percent of the mothers and 32% of fathers completed high school. Thirty-nine percent of the heads of household are currently employed. The language used at home is predominantly Spanish. Among adults, 62% report that they use only Spanish or mostly Spanish at home; for children in the household, the corresponding figure is 30%. Fifty-three percent of the parents report that they have considerable difficulty with English. Twenty-six percent of the sample say that their next move would be to return to Puerto Rico.

There are predictable differences between the home backgrounds of the Puerto Rican children who are in the Bilingual Program and those who have never been in the program. The parents of children in the Bilingual Program are more likely to be younger, to have moved to the mainland as adults, and to have received less years of formal education. They are less likely to be employed, and are more likely to report that they have difficulty speaking English.

The Survey Questions

The questions for the telephone survey were generated through discussion with the supervisor and staff of the Bilingual/Foreign Languages Office in the New Haven Public Schools. Three goals were identified for the survey: first, to determine what people presumed to know about the existing bilingual program of New Haven, i.e., how their perceptions match reality; second, to assess their attitudes about bilingual education; and third, to obtain information on the backgrounds of these people in order to determine the basis of their perceptions and attitudes.

The questions were ordered and streamlined to make conditions optimal for obtaining valid and reliable responses. Thus, the questions were not grouped according to the original areas of inquiry. In presenting the questions below, for expository convenience, they will be grouped by area.

Background Characteristics of the Respondent

- 1) Sex of the respondent (in no case did we have to resort to asking);
- 2) Which age group do you belong to? (under 30/in thirties/in forties/fifties and older)
- 3) Are you a high school graduate? [if yes] Have you ever attended college? (less than high school/high school graduate/have attended college)
- 4) Which of the following ethnic groups do you identify yourself with? (Hispanic/Italian/Other). The number of categories was kept minimal to keep the interview short. The Hispanic group was targeted because they constitute the group serviced by the bilingual program; the Italian group was targeted because they are the largest standard ethnic group in the New Haven population according to Census figures. A few respondents saw the humor in this grouping strategy.
- 5) When you were growing up, did anyone in your home use a language other than English? (Yes/No)
- 6) Right now in your home, does anyone use a language other than English? (Yes/No)
- 7) How knowledgeable do you consider yourself to be about the Bilingual Education Program in New Haven? (knowledgeable/somewhat knowledgeable/not too knowledgeable)
- 8) What is the primary source of what you know about bilingual education? (direct experience/newspapers/television/neighbors and friends)

Perceptions about Bilingual Education

- 1) Is a major emphasis of the currently existing program to encourage the students to enter English-only classes as quickly as possible? (Yes/No)

- 2) Is a major emphasis of the currently existing program to maintain the Spanish language and culture of the children? (Yes/No)
- 3) Is a major emphasis of the currently existing program to teach basic skills such as arithmetic in Spanish while giving the children time to catch up in their English-language skills? (this question yielded much confusion among the respondents, and we did not consider the responses valid, thus excluded it from analysis).
- 4) There are about 2700 Hispanic children in the New Haven Public Schools. Of these, what percentage do you think are currently in Bilingual Education classes? (less than 25%/25% to 50%/50% to 75%/more than 75%). The actual figure is about 45 percent.
- 5) When a child enters the bilingual program in kindergarten, about how many years do you think that the child is in the program before entering regular, English-only classrooms? (number of years). While precise figures are not readily accessible, the Bilingual Office gives 3 years as the modal length in the program.
- 6) In terms of the teachers in the bilingual education classes, how qualified do you think they are? (less qualified/equally qualified/more qualified)

Attitudes about Bilingual Education

- 1) Should the major emphasis of bilingual programs be to encourage students to enter regular, English-only classes as quickly as possible? (Yes/No)
- 2) Should the major emphasis of bilingual programs be to maintain the Spanish language and culture of the children? (Yes/No)
- 3) Do you think that bilingual education is the best way for a Spanish-speaking child to learn English? (Yes/No)
- 4) Should the amount of funding for bilingual education classes be increased, decreased, or kept the same? (decreased/kept the same/increased)

Sampling Procedures

Two samples were drawn for this study. The first sample, which constitutes the major part of the study, attempted to be representative of the general population in the New Haven area. The second sample targeted Hispanics, who would otherwise be poorly represented. The poor representation was anticipated particularly because a large percentage of this group does not have telephones (by Census figures, 32.42 percent of the Spanish-speaking households in New Haven do not have telephones compared to 8.21 percent for all households). With the second sample, the decision was also made to interview them in Spanish. There were two reasons for this, one practical, and the other substantive. The practical reason was that one of the interviewers who could spend the most amount of time making calls was uncomfortable in conducting interviews in English. The substantive reason was that we felt that by insisting on interviewing people who could speak Spanish, we were maximizing our likelihood of obtaining respondents whose communities are serviced by the Bilingual Program.

In this paper, the first sample, drawn from the general population, will be referred to as the "general sample", and the second sample drawn from the Hispanic population will be referred to as the "Spanish-speaking sample."

All of the calls were made during the 6-day period between December 8 and 13, 1983. For the general sample, telephone numbers were selected at random from the telephone directory book of names for the greater New Haven area. Randomization was attempted as follows. It was determined that the telephone directory contained 413 pages, each page being divided into four columns, each with a row of names. Numbers to call were uniquely determined by a combination of random numerical assignments to each of these three variables (a randomly selected number between 1 and 413 for page, a randomly selected column number between 1 and 4, and a randomly selected row number within column. For convenience, selection of row number was restricted to among the top 10 rows of each column). If the selected number was a business phone, the next residential number was selected.

If the number was disconnected or not in service, it was abandoned. If a call resulted in a busy line or no answer, the number was tried again later. Even with the persistent calling, however, only an estimated 59 percent of the attempted calls resulted in an answer. The remainder were busy whenever called, never answered, disconnected or not in service. It is unclear to what extent this biases the findings of the study; nevertheless, since the alternative calls were based on a random selection of numbers, unsuccessful calls are unlikely to have influenced the representativeness of the sample in any substantive way.

When we reached an individual, we requested cooperation using the following protocol: "Hello, my name is _____. I'm sorry to bother you, but I'm conducting a telephone survey of public opinion about bilingual education in the New Haven Public Schools. Can you spare a few minutes to give us your opinions about this important issue in public education?" If they agreed, we immediately began with the questions. If they indicated that the time was inconvenient, the interviewer said, "Oh, I'm sorry. Can I call you back at a more convenient time," and made a second attempt at the time provided.

Of the people who answered the call, about 55 percent agreed to cooperate. We considered this response rate to be within acceptable standards. The willingness of people to answer questions perhaps reflected the concern of the community towards educational issues, which have received considerable media attention in recent months. A total of 179 people answered the questions.

For the Hispanic sample, an initial location within the telephone directory was made using the identical procedure as for the general sample. From that location, names were scanned sequentially until a Hispanic name was encountered. Although this is not an ideal procedure, it was the most practical choice given the resources available for the study. The caller initially identified himself/herself in English, and asked if they could interview in Spanish. Of the people who answered the calls in the Spanish-speaking sample, about 37 percent said they did not speak Spanish. Of those who said they spoke Spanish, 64 percent agreed to the interview, while 36 percent declined. In considering the response rate, one must of course consider the possibility that some of the original 37 percent

who claimed not to speak Spanish were simply using this as a convenient excuse to decline the interview. If this were the case for all the cases, which is highly unlikely, the response rate would drop to 40 percent. The fairest estimate of the response rate for the Spanish-speaking sample is that it was between 40 and 64 percent. A total of 37 people answered the questions.

The results will be reported separately for the general sample and the Spanish-speaking sample. Since the general sample is considerably larger than the Spanish-speaking sample, it allows for more detailed analysis. These results will be reported first. The results from the smaller, Spanish-speaking sample will be reported subsequently, using the results from the general sample as a reference point.

DESCRIPTION OF THE GENERAL SAMPLE

Table 1 gives some descriptive background information of the respondents. Variables included are the (1) sex of the respondent, (2) age group, (3) educational level, (4) ethnic group, and (5) whether a non-English language is used in their home. For comparative purposes, estimates of the values of these variables in the population in the greater New Haven SMSA obtained from the 1980 United States Census is included.

Sixty-four percent of our respondents were women. The sample clearly overrepresents women, who constitute 54.8 percent of the population according to the Census estimate. One reason for this had to do with the topic of the interview. Several interviewers reported cases where a man would answer the telephone, but upon hearing that the interview had to do with education, would defer to his wife. Another reason was the greater likelihood for men to hang up or refuse the interview. Unfortunately, however, we do not have the exact figures that compare men and women answerers in this way. Perhaps a third reason is that women are more likely to answer the telephone, principally because they are more often home.

The age distribution of the respondents matches quite closely with the Census estimates. Thirty-two percent were under 30, 23 percent were in their thirties, 13 percent in their forties, and 32 percent in their fifties or older. (The age categories used in the Census report did not perfectly agree with ours, so the Census information was modified with the assumption that each age range, such as "25 to 34", contained an equal number of people between 25 and 29 as between 30 and 34).

The self-reported educational level was higher than the Census estimates. Only 13 percent (compared to 30 percent for the Census) reported that they were not high school graduates; 19 percent reported that they had completed high school; and 68 percent (compared to 36 percent for the Census) reported that they had attended one or more years of college. This overrepresentation of the higher

TABLE 1

Characteristics of the sample with respect to sex, age, educational level, ethnic group, and whether a non-English language is currently used in their home. Estimates from the 1980 Census for New Haven are provided for comparison.

SEX	SURVEY	CENSUS
Men	35.8%	45.2%
Women	64.2%	54.8%
AGE GROUP	SURVEY	CENSUS
Under 30	32.2%	28.8%
In thirties	23.2%	18.5%
In forties	13.0%	14.5%
Fifties and older	31.6%	38.2%
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	SURVEY	CENSUS
Less than high school	13.1%	29.6%
High school graduate	18.9%	34.7%
Have attended college	68.0%	35.8%
ETHNIC GROUP	SURVEY	CENSUS
Hispanic	1.7%	8.0%
Italian	24.3%	19.2%
Other	74.0%	77.6%
NON-ENGLISH LANGUAGE SPOKEN IN HOME?	SURVEY	CENSUS
Yes	17.1%	13.5%
No	82.9%	86.5%

educational level warrants a careful look at the effect of this variable on the responses to the survey items. Estimates of the population values on the basis of the survey data would be biased to the extent that educational level is a factor.

The ethnic group representation is a crude measure, since we only asked specifically for identification as Hispanic or Italian. However, it does appear that the representations are roughly comparable to those reported in the Census. The underrepresentation of Hispanics most likely had to do with the greater proportion of households without telephones in this group compared to the population at large (32.42 percent according to the Census).

Finally, 17 percent of the respondents reported that a non-English language is used in their home. This compares favorably to the Census estimate of 13.5 percent for New Haven.

In sum, the general sample is a reasonable representation of the people residing in the greater New Haven area with respect to age, ethnic group, and language

used in the home. There is a greater representation of women than men; there is an overrepresentation of people with at least one year of higher education.

RESULTS FROM THE GENERAL SAMPLE

This section will be divided into three parts, according to the major topical divisions of the survey outlined earlier. In the first part, the patterns of responses from the sample as a whole will be described. In the second part, it will be shown how these patterns of responses vary when they are analyzed separately for respondents of different backgrounds (e.g., men as compared to women; older people as compared to younger people). In the third part, some characteristic patterns of responses to different questions will be reported.

The General Sample as a Whole

The questions are organized into three groups that focus on: (1) the background characteristics of the respondents (most of which were covered in the section above on the description of the sample); (2) the perceptions of the respondents about the bilingual program in New Haven; and (3) respondents attitudes about bilingual education.

Background Characteristics

Just those background characteristics that were not discussed in the sample characteristics above will be discussed.

As can be seen in Table 2, the majority of the respondents (75 percent) reported that they were "not too knowledgeable" about the Bilingual Education Program in New Haven. Twenty-two percent reported that they were "somewhat knowledgeable", and only 3 percent claimed to be "knowledgeable". In general, one can conclude that the respondents saw themselves as poorly informed about the bilingual program.

The primary source of information about bilingual education indicated by the respondents was through newspapers (43.5%), followed by "neighbors and friends" (26%). Television (17%) and direct experience (14%) were lowest.

The Loss of Non-English Languages

In the section on sample characteristics, it was mentioned that 17 percent of the respondents live in a home where a non-English language is used. In contrast,

TABLE 2.

Summary of responses to the survey for all respondents (N = 179).

BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENT

1. Sex of respondent.	
Male	35.8%
Female	64.2%
2. Of the following age groups, which one do you belong to? Under thirty, in your thirties, in your forties, or fifties and older? (Nonrespondents = 2)	
Under 30	32.2%
In thirties	23.2%
In forties	13.0%
Fifties and older	31.6%
3. Are you a high school graduate? [If yes] Have you ever attended college? (Nonrespondents = 4)	
Less than high school	13.1%
High school graduate	18.9%
Have attended college	68.0%
4. Would you mind telling us which of the following ethnic groups you identify yourself with? Hispanic, Italian, or other? (Nonrespondents = 6)	
Hispanic	1.7%
Italian	24.3%
Other	74.0%
5. When you were growing up, did anyone in your home use a language other than English? (Nonrespondents = 3)	
Yes	44.3%
No	55.7%
6. Right now in your home, does anyone use a language other than English? (Nonrespondents = 4)	
Yes	17.1%
No	82.9%
7. We would like to ask you how knowledgeable you consider yourself to be about the Bilingual Education Program in New Haven. Would you say that you are knowledgeable, somewhat knowledgeable, or not too knowledgeable? (Nonrespondents = 0)	
Knowledgeable	2.8%
Somewhat knowledgeable	21.8%
Not too knowledgeable	75.4%
8. What would you say is the primary source of what you know about bilingual education? Would you say that you know about it through direct experience, through newspapers, through television, or through neighbors and friends? (Nonrespondents = 18)	
Direct experience	13.7%
Newspapers	43.5%
Television	16.8%
Neighbors and friends	26.1%

to the question of "When you were growing up, did anyone in your home use a language other than English?", 44 percent responded positively. Considerably more than half of the respondents in homes where a non-English language was used, but do not use it now in their homes. This finding is consistent with the

Table 2 (continued)

PERCEPTIONS ABOUT BILINGUAL EDUCATION

1. Would you agree that a major emphasis of the currently existing program is to encourage the students to enter regular English-only classes as quickly as possible? (Nonrespondents = 18)	
Yes	75.2%
No	24.8%
2. Would you agree that a major emphasis of the currently existing bilingual program in New Haven is to maintain the Spanish language and culture of the children? (Nonrespondents = 21)	
Yes	62.7%
No	37.3%
3. There are about twenty-seven-hundred Hispanic children in the New Haven Public Schools. Of these, what percentage do you think are currently in Bilingual Education classes? Less than 25 percent, 25 to 50 percent, 50 to 75 percent, or more than 75 percent? (Nonrespondents = 20)	
Less than 25%	39.0%
25% to 50%	40.3%
50% to 75%	14.5%
More than 75%	6.3%
4. When a child enters the bilingual program in kindergarten, about how many years do you think that the child is in the program before entering regular, English-only classrooms? Please say the number of years. (Nonrespondents = 14)	
1 year	12.7%
2 years	31.5%
3 years	26.7%
4 years	9.1%
5 years	12.1%
6 years or more	7.9%
5. In terms of the teachers who teach in the bilingual education classes, do you think that they are more qualified, less qualified, or just as qualified as other teachers in the New Haven Schools? (Nonrespondents = 19)	
Less qualified	8.7%
Equally qualified	67.5%
More qualified	23.7%

common observation that non-English languages are rapidly becoming extinct in the homes of Americans.

Tabulation of the specific languages reportedly used in the home when growing up, and currently being used, are shown in Table 3. (Some respondents reported more than one language, so the numbers do not add up exactly to those reported in Table 2).

Perceptions of Bilingual Education

The questions aimed at tapping the perceived emphasis of the bilingual program in New Haven were two-fold. First, is it perceived as emphasizing mainstreaming

Table 2 (continued)

ATTITUDES ABOUT BILINGUAL EDUCATION

1. Do you think that the emphasis should be to encourage students to enter English-only classes as quickly as possible? (Nonrespondents = 4)	
Yes	76.0%
No	24.0%
2. Do you think that the emphasis should be to maintain the Spanish language and culture of the children? (Nonrespondents = 6)	
Yes	57.8%
No	42.2%
3. Do you think that bilingual education program is the best way for a Spanish-speaking child to learn English/ (Nonrespondents = 5)	
Yes	70.1%
No	29.9%
4. In your opinion, should the amount of funding for bilingual education classes be increased, decreased, or kept the same? (Nonrespondents = 22)	
Should be decreased	17.8%
Should be kept the same	32.5%
Should be increased	49.7%

TABLE 3.

List of languages used in the homes of respondents when they were growing up, and languages currently being used in their homes.

LANGUAGE	USED WHEN GROWING UP	CURRENTLY USED
Italian	33	11
French	12	9
German	9	3
Yiddish	8	0
Spanish	7	9
Polish	5	1
Hebrew	4	1
Arabic	1	1
Dutch	1	1
Hindi	1	1
Japanese	1	1
Portugese	1	0
Swedish	1	0
Telegu	1	0
Ukranian	1	1
Hungarian	0	1
Unidentifiable	1	0

into English-only classes; and second, is it perceived as a maintenance program of Spanish language and culture? Seventy-five percent of the respondents felt

that mainstreaming was a major emphasis, while 63 percent felt that maintenance was a major emphasis. Since 75 percent and 63 percent add up to more than 100 percent, the respondents did not see these as mutually exclusive categories. Most likely, there was a response tendency towards saying "yes". Nevertheless, it is significant that more respondents correctly saw the major emphasis as mainstreaming rather than maintenance. In this sense, there is little evidence for the existence of a widely held view that the bilingual program is primarily for the maintenance of Spanish language and culture.

The respondents were also quite accurate in their guesses about some specific program characteristics. Current figures show that approximately 45 percent of all Hispanic children in the New Haven Public Schools are in the Bilingual Program. If any estimate other than "more than 75%" is considered roughly accurate, only 6 percent of the respondents were inaccurate in their estimate. In other words, the bilingual program is not perceived as a program that caters to the majority of the Hispanic community.

Similarly, the respondents were accurate in their guesses at the number of years that an average child spends in the bilingual program (2 to 3 years). As can be seen in Table 2, most estimates were at 2 and 3 years. Very little evidence exists to support the idea that popular perception of the program is for long-term maintenance of Spanish language and culture. Rather, people see it as a transitional program which caters to a select segment of the Hispanic population.

The teachers in the bilingual program, in comparison to other teachers in the New Haven schools, were seen as equally qualified (67.5%) or more qualified (24%). Only 9 percent thought that they might be less qualified.

It is important to emphasize that many of the respondents warned that they were guessing, on the basis of very little information. What this information is telling us is *not* that people are well informed about the bilingual education program in New Haven. Rather, the more prudent interpretation is that there do not appear to be widely held misperceptions about the program with respect to its goals and performance.

Attitudes about Bilingual Education

The responses to the questions about attitudes towards transitional and maintenance as emphases of the bilingual program indicated that seventy-six percent supported transitional as the major emphasis. Maintenance was supported by 58 percent of the respondents. As in the questions tapping perception of program goals, the two positions were not seen as mutually exclusive.

One can attempt to obtain a clearer understanding of support for the maintenance versus transitional positions by taking only those respondents who differentiated between the two. Respondents who supported maintenance *and* opposed transitional were compared to those who supported transitional *and*

opposed maintenance. There were 92 respondents who showed either of these two patterns. Of these, 30 (33%) supported maintenance, while 62 (67%) supported transitional. This analysis suggests that the respondents were clearly leaning towards a transitional as opposed to a maintenance model of bilingual education. However, it is worth noting that a full third of them support maintenance and oppose rapid transition into English-only classes.

In response to the question of whether a bilingual education program is the best way for a Spanish-speaking child to learn English, 70 percent responded positively. Thus, while some respondents volunteered the alternative of "sink-or-swim", most supported the concept of bilingual education.

Finally, regarding funding, a surprisingly large proportion (50%) supported an increase in funds. Only 18 percent felt that funds should be decreased. Since details such as funding sources (Federal, State, City, Private Sector) were left unspecified, responses to this question are best seen as generalized attitudes related to whether they support continuation or termination of existing bilingual programs. In this regard, there is strong support for bilingual education programs.

Variations in Response Patterns by Background Characteristics

A statistical approach was used to determine whether background characteristics influenced responses, using Chi-square to evaluate whether the distribution of responses in two-way contingency tables was systematically related to the background variable. Each of the responses on perceptions and attitudes was subjected to this analysis against the background variables of sex, age, education, and whether a non-English language was spoken in the home during childhood. Other analyses were also conducted, including the reported level of knowledge, source of knowledge, whether a non-English language is currently spoken in their home, and ethnic group status. These analyses were considerably unreliable for statistical reasons. (Due to the small frequencies in some of their response categories, expected cell frequencies in the contingency tables often became unacceptably small). When interesting trends could be found, however, the results will be reported.

Perceptions by Background Characteristics

In general, very few relationships were found. None were found for perceptions of the programs as transitional or maintenance. Furthermore, none of the background characteristics predicted differences in estimated length of residence in the bilingual program.

TABLE 4.

Estimated percentage in the Bilingual Program, broken down by age group. The four different estimated categories (less than 25%; 25% to 50%; 50% to 75%; more than 75%) were collapsed into two categories (less than 50%; more than 50%) for statistical reasons.

ESTIMATED PERCENTAGE IN PROGRAM		
Age Group	Less than 50%	More than 50%
Under thirty	89.1% (49)	10.9% (6)
In thirties	76.9% (30)	23% (9)
In forties	77.3% (17)	22.7% (5)
Fifties and older	69.8% (30)	30.1% (13)

TABLE 5.

Perception of teacher quality broken down by educational level.

PERCEPTION OF TEACHER QUALITY			
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	Less Qualified	Equally Qualified	More Qualified
Less than High School	5% (1)	50% (10)	45% (9)
High School Graduate	0% (0)	86.2% (25)	13.8% (4)
Some College	11.7% (13)	65.8% (73)	22.5% (25)
TOTAL	8.8% (14)	67.5% (100)	23.8% (38)

Estimated Percentage in the Bilingual Program

A slight trend emerged in the data to suggest that respondents in the older age categories tended to estimate the proportion of children in the Bilingual Program to be larger. Table 4 shows the trends observed. As can be seen, the major difference seems to be between the "under 30" and the remainder of the age groups.

Perceived Teacher Quality

The reported perception of teacher quality seemed to depend mostly on the respondent's level of education. As can be seen in Table 5, those with some college education were the most likely to report the perception that teachers in Bilingual Programs are less qualified. Of the 14 responses that teachers were less qualified, 13 came from respondents in the higher educational level.

Attitudes by Background Characteristics

Attitudes favoring transitional programs did not depend on any of the background variables. Similarly, favoring bilingual education as the best way for the Spanish-speaking child to learn English was not associated with background variables. However, two attitude items, that concerning maintenance programs and that concerning funding, yielded informative results.

Attitude towards Maintenance of Spanish Language and Culture

Support for the concept of maintenance dependent on three background characteristics: sex, age group, and whether a non-English language was spoken when they were growing up. The results can be seen in Table 6.

First, women are considerably more supportive of the concept of maintenance programs than are men. Sixty-six percent of women respondents supported maintenance, compared to 44 percent of the men interviewed.

Second, support for maintenance is lowest among the fifties and older age group (43 percent support compared to the 60 percent range of support in the other age groups).

Finally, support for maintenance is higher among those who grew up in homes where English was the only language spoken (64% in support) than among those who grew up with a non-English language (50% support).

TABLE 6.

Attitude towards whether bilingual programs should emphasize the maintenance of Spanish language and culture, broken down by sex, age group, and whether a non-English language was used in their home when they were growing up (NEL).

	SHOULD EMPHASIS BE MAINTENANCE?	
	Yes	No
SEX		
Men	44.4% (28)	55.6% (35)
Women	65.5% (72)	34.5% (38)
AGE GROUP		
Under thirty	61.4% (35)	38.6% (22)
In thirties	66.7% (26)	33.3% (13)
In forties	65.2% (15)	34.8% (8)
Fifties and older	43.4% (23)	56.6% (30)
NEL STATUS		
NEL used	50% (39)	50% (39)
NEL not used	63.8% (60)	36.2% (34)
TOTAL	57.6% (99)	42.4% (73)

It is noteworthy that the first two characteristics, sex and age, can be considered additive. When response patterns are analyzed separately within each of the age categories for men and women, women are more supportive in each age category. However, even within women, the fifties and older group are least supportive of the maintenance concept. The breakdown can be found in Table 7, which suggests the conclusion that women who are in their forties or younger are most supportive of maintenance; that men in this same age range are equivocal, as are women in their fifties and older; and that men in their fifties and older are heavily opposed to maintenance.

Attitudes towards Funding

Opinion about whether funding for bilingual education should be decreased, increased, or kept the same depended on the age group, somewhat on educational level, and on whether the respondent's home used a NEL (non-English language)

TABLE 7.
Breakdown of attitude towards maintenance by sex, separately for age groups.

	SHOULD EMPHASIS BE MAINTENANCE?	
	Yes	No
AGE GROUP: UNDER THIRTY		
SEX		
Men	15	14
Women	20	8
AGE GROUP: IN THIRTIES		
SEX		
Men	7	5
Women	19	8
AGE GROUP: IN FORTIES		
SEX		
Men	3	4
Women	12	4
AGE GROUP: FIFTIES AND OLDER		
SEX		
Men	3	12
Women	20	18

in childhood. It did not depend on the sex of the respondent. The results are in Table 8.

In terms of age group, the fifties and older group were the most likely to support decrease in funds (36%) and the least likely to support an increase (31%). This compared with the under 30 age group, who were the least likely to support a decrease (9%) and most likely to support an increase (63%).

As can be seen in Table 8, there was also a slight tendency for those who have attended college to support and increase, while those with a high school diploma or less were more likely to support a decrease.

Finally, those whose childhood homes used a NEL were twice as likely to support decrease in funds as those who grew up in English-only homes (25% compared to 12.4%). Similarly, those from English-only childhood homes were more likely to support an increase in funds as those from NEL homes.

Patterns of Responses to Questions

Contingency tables were used to look for patterns of responses to our questions. This analysis yielded a set of three questions, which seems to tap a generalized attitude towards bilingual education: (1) whether they see bilingual education as the best way for the Spanish-speaking child to learn English; (2) whether they support maintenance as the emphasis of bilingual programs; and (3) whether they support increase or decrease in funding. The relationship between responses

AGE GROUP	WHAT SHOULD BE DONE ABOUT FUNDING?		
	Decreased	Kept the same	Increased
Under thirty	9.3% (5)	27.8% (15)	63% (34)
In thirties	10.5% (4)	36.8% (14)	52.6% (20)
In forties	15.0% (3)	35.0% (7)	50.0% (10)
Fifties and older	35.6% (16)	33.3% (15)	31.1% (14)
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL			
Less than High School	27.3% (6)	31.8% (7)	40.9% (9)
High School Graduate	24.1% (7)	37.9% (11)	37.9% (11)
Some College	13.3% (4)	31.4% (10)	55.2% (18)
NEL BACKGROUND			
NEL used	25% (17)	32.4% (22)	42.6% (29)
NEL not used	12.4% (11)	32.6% (29)	55.1% (49)

to these items can be seen in Table 9, where the three possible pairings of the questions are made.

The first sub-table shows clearly that those who think bilingual education is the best way also tend to support the concept of maintenance. The second sub-table shows that those who think bilingual education is the best way enthusiastically support an increase in funds, while those who do not think it is the best way are strongly for a decrease in funding. The third sub-table shows that supporters of maintenance favor increased funding, while those who do not agree with a maintenance emphasis are more equivocal.

This general pattern of responses is not particularly surprising. However, these results are important because they suggest that the respondents were answering our questions in a systematic way, which attests to the general reliability of the results obtained.

RESULTS FROM THE SPANISH-SPEAKING SAMPLE

A total of 37 responses were obtained from the Spanish-speaking sample. Since the sample is small, only some tentative conclusions are in order. This caution must be taken especially seriously because of the highly selective nature

SHOULD GOAL BE MAINTENANCE?	Is Bilingual Education Best Way?	
	Yes	No
Yes	88	11
No	31	40
WHAT TO DO ABOUT FUNDING?	Is Bilingual Education Best Way?	
	Yes	No
Decrease	3	25
Keep the same	37	14
Increase	69	9
WHAT TO DO ABOUT FUNDING?	Should Goal Be Maintenance?	
	Yes	No
Decrease	4	23
Keep the same	26	23
Increase	58	19

of the sample. They are Hispanics who could be identified through the telephone directory, who were home when the call was made, who agreed to be interviewed, and who spoke Spanish. In this section, a description of the sample characteristics will first be presented. The response patterns to the questions will then be discussed for the sample as a whole, with the focus especially on points of striking similarity and differences with the general sample. Unfortunately, with this small sample size, no reliable breakdowns could be made with regard to the backgrounds of the subjects, as we could for the general sample.

Description of the Spanish-speaking Sample

This sample of 37 respondents consisted of an even greater representation of women than was the case in the general sample. Women represented 71.1% of the sample. This greater representation of women is partly accounted for by the large percentage of female-headed households among Hispanics in New Haven (44.4 percent of Hispanic households are headed by females, compared to 32.1 percent for the total households).

The age distribution was somewhat younger than in the general sample, as follows, with the general sample data in parenthesis: under thirty, 44.7% (32.2%); in thirties, 36.8% (23.2%); in forties, 13.2% (13.0%); fifties and older, 5.3% (31.6%). This difference reflects the fact that the Hispanic population in New Haven is considerably younger than the general population. According to the 1980 Census figures, the median age for Spanish-origin persons in New Haven was 19.7, while the median age for all persons in New Haven was 27.9.

The educational level of the Spanish-speaking sample is also lower than the general sample, as follows: less than high school, 39.5% (13.1%); high school graduate, 36.8% (18.9%); have attended college, 23.7% (68.0%). This difference is also probably a reflection of differences in the distributions in the real populations.

The questions about home language use when growing up and in their current household were modified, to ask about whether a non-Spanish language was used. When growing up, 81.1% of the respondents reported that only Spanish was used. Currently, 55.3% report that Spanish is exclusively used. The non-Spanish language in all cases is English.

The responses to the questions about their extent of knowledge of bilingual education, and about their source of information, indicates that we were somewhat successful in obtaining a sample with some direct contact with bilingual education. Compared to 75.4% of the general sample who claimed that they were not too knowledgeable about bilingual education in New Haven, only 18.4% of the Spanish-speaking sample said that they were in this category. (The remainder: somewhat knowledgeable, 57.9% (as compared to 21.8% from the general sample); knowledgeable, 23.7% (as compared to 2.8%)). As for source

of information, the Spanish-speaking sample considered direct experience and neighbors and friends to be their primary source: direct experience, 44.7% (13.7%); neighbors and friends, 42.1% (26.1%); newspapers, 10.5% (43.5%); television, 2.6% (16.3%).

Overall, in comparison to the general sample, the Spanish-speaking sample has a slightly higher representation of women and younger people, and consider themselves more knowledgeable, apparently as a function of direct experience and information through neighbors and friends. It is also worth noting that most of them came from monolingual Spanish-speaking homes, and are currently living in households where a considerably larger amount of English is used (44.7%).

It should be recalled that women and younger people were the segments of the general sample who tended to look upon bilingual education more favorably. Assuming that this same pattern is true within the Spanish-speaking population, any differences in attitudes towards bilingual education between these two samples should be interpreted with care.

Perceptions about Bilingual Education

There were in general few surprising results in the responses of the Spanish-speaking sample to the questions that tapped their perception about bilingual education in New Haven. One possible difference was in their perception of teacher qualifications. There was a larger proportion of respondents who thought that teachers in bilingual programs were less qualified (26.3%, compared with 8.7% in the general sample), and also who thought that they were more qualified (36.8%, compared with 23.7%). This may be a reflection of greater familiarity with the program and thus more highly differentiated views of its teachers. Otherwise, as in the general sample, the respondents were quite accurate in their perceptions about the existing program.

Attitudes about Bilingual Education

There were some indications that the Spanish-speaking sample were as favorable to the concept of a maintenance program (81.6% supported it) as they were to a transitional program (89.5% supported it). In the general sample, 76.0% supported transitional, while 57.8% supported maintenance.

On whether bilingual education programs are the best way for Spanish-speaking children to learn English, 73.7% agreed, closely matching the 70.1% figure for the general sample.

Finally, on the question about funding of bilingual education classes, the Spanish-speaking sample appeared to be more supportive of an increase than the

general sample, as follows: decrease, 5.6% (17.8%); keep the same, 16.7% (32.5%); increase, 77.8% (49.7%).

In sum, it seems that the Spanish-speaking sample may be more in favor of maintenance programs, and to be more favorable towards funding increases. However, as we cautioned earlier, these are exactly the variables which, in the general sample, were supported by women and younger people, and so could be a function of the differential distribution of these strata in the two populations.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Before summarizing the general conclusions to be drawn from this study, it should be pointed out that the interviewers received many incidental comments from the respondents that could not be included in the objective analyses just presented.

For example, one respondent complained that "No one taught me in my own language. I had to learn the hard way and it took less than a year even though I spoke my own language at home. This is an English-speaking country, if the parents want their kids to speak Spanish, they should teach them at home like I taught my kids." Another respondent, recounting from her own experience, said that since children learn very quickly, they should be placed in regular classrooms because "all they lose is about half a year". Another respondent reported that she did not believe in bilingual education, having "started English immediately" although Italian was spoken at home, and that she "didn't find it a deterrent to learn only English." She also pointed out that none of the culture was lost, as parents instilled it in them and noted that one can always go back and study the culture. Comments of these kinds very much resembled opinions expressed in the public debate over bilingual education, such as in letters to editors.

These observations suggest that many of the strong opinions about bilingual education are based upon personal experience, which is perhaps one reason why discussion of this issue generates such intense reactions among the public. Such vociferousness, intense as it may be, may not necessarily be representative of public opinion at large. The value of sampling from the population at large lies in its ability to put these individual opinions into perspective.

Based on the survey reported in this paper, the following conclusions can be cautiously drawn:

(1) over the past generation, there has been a substantial loss in the number of households in which a non-English language is used;

(2) if there are misperceptions that the primary emphasis of the bilingual education program in New Haven is the maintenance of Spanish language and culture, the misperception is not widespread; rather, most people believe that the primary emphasis is transitional, that the program does not cater to the entire

Hispanic community, and that the average child remains in the program for a short period (between 1 to 3 years) of time;

(3) there is considerable agreement with the proposition that bilingual education is the best way for a Spanish-speaking child to learn English; a corollary is that there is no widely held misperception that instruction is provided only in Spanish;

(4) of the two types of bilingual programs (transitional versus maintenance), there is more support for the concept of transitional programs; however, there is also substantial support for the concept of maintenance, which we estimate to be one-third of our group of our general sample;

(5) if there are beliefs that teachers in the bilingual program are less qualified than those in the regular classes, this is not widespread; on the contrary, more individuals believe that they are equally or better qualified;

(6) the concept of maintenance programs tends to be supported by women, and by people in the generation under fifty years old; these factors are additive, such that younger women are the most supportive, and older men are strongly opposed;

(7) funding increases, interpreted as generalized attitudes towards bilingual education, are supported by people in the generation under fifty years old; people in their fifties and older are more likely to support decrease in funds;

(8) whether an individual grew up in a home which used a non-English language is an important determinant of attitudes towards the concept of maintenance and towards funding issues: those who grew up in a home where only English was used are more supportive of maintenance, and of increased funding; this corresponds to our qualitative findings that many individuals who strongly expressed opposition to bilingual education were doing so on the basis of personal experience.

(9) the Spanish-speaking group generally have similar perceptions and attitudes as the population at large; there is a slight tendency for this group to be more favorably inclined towards bilingual education, especially regarding funding, but this tendency may be a function of the fact that our respondents were younger and contained a larger proportion of women.

In an exploratory study such as this one, it is most appropriate to conclude with a few words about the limitations of the study, so that future researchers might make the necessary improvements. In particular, the limitations of the sampling procedure should be emphasized. For the general sample, the ideal population would have been all individuals in the New Haven area. The actual sampling, however, could not include those individuals with an unlisted telephone number. Furthermore, the response rate obtained, though respectable, warrants a caution in generalizing to the population at large. For the Spanish-speaking sample, these problems are even more severe, and the conclusions drawn from this sample should only be regarded as tentative.

Another limitation is in the nature of the questionnaire itself. Future studies might try to explain in some more detail the nature of the bilingual program, to focus the object about which attitudes were obtained. Better yet, it would be interesting to see if different kinds of information presented about the bilingual program would yield different attitudinal responses. Such studies would have implications for advocacy groups for bilingual education.

Despite the limitations, this study provides a starting point for further systematic studies of local perceptions and opinions about bilingual programs which, for reasons presented in the introduction, can be influential in determining the future of bilingual education in the communities within which they exist.

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