Introduction

On November 11, 2000, the executive director of the organization ProEnglish, K. C. McAlpin, gave a speech at the Social Contract Writer's Workshop called "Language as the entry point for the debate: Population numbers, immigration policy, culture." The speech proposed language as a litmus test of who belongs in the United States and who does not. McAlpin (2000) described "multilingualism" as "troubling" (p. 124). From this perspective, people who have "no intention of abandoning their native language" are a sign of "the growing occupation of our land by alien cultures" (McAlpin, 2000, pp. 123–124). But to whom exactly was he referring? The speech touched on several different (albeit overlapping) groups, including "Hispanic" people, "East Indian" people, "Muslims," and "Native American groups" (pp. 123–124). The inclusion of Native Americans is one particularly telling clue that this discussion is not just about immigration – it is about perceptions of language, race, and citizenship more broadly.[1]

After establishing who he saw as the problem, McAlpin (2000) suggested a solution: making English the only official language. The reasoning was that "the official English movement gives us the rare opportunity to play offense. We can capitalize on this to force the issue wherever we can – through initiatives and laws to scrap bilingual education, declare English our official language, and overturn executive actions via the courts" (p. 124). A number of assumptions appeared to be in play: that multilingualism is new; that multilingualism is bad; that people of color deserve scrutiny; and that white people do not. These beliefs are not necessarily novel; what set the speech apart was its strategy.

This speech anticipated an approach that would go on to play a key role in language policy in the twenty-first-century United States: making English seem like an at-risk language in need of community protection. Language policy includes any institutional efforts to shape how people learn, view, or use a language, and the English-only movement exemplifies how piecemeal those

[1] On language, race, citizenship, and other identities as intertwined social constructions, see Brayboy (2005), Zentella (2014), Rosa and Flores (2017), Balzhiser, Pimentel, and Scott (2019), and Khan (2020).

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efforts can be: The operative phrase here is "wherever we can" (McAlpin, 2000, p. 124).[2] While the United States has never had an official language, localized English-only campaigns have proved more successful. Since 1980, twenty-six states,[3] along with at least eighty-three city and county governments, have made English the only official language.[4] These policies serve as symbols: As one activist put it, enacting one of these policies is like putting out an "unwelcome mat" (Wilgoren, 2002, July 19). Activists and politicians have spent decades testing and refining this approach.

Underlying this English-only movement is the idea that language is a zero-sum game: In order for English to thrive, other languages need to lose.[5] This zero-sum framing matters, both because language is more complex in practice (Canagarajah, 2013) and because judgments about language are also judgments about people (Baugh, 2018). The people active in this movement have successfully made English official in communities and institutions around the country. These successes raise questions about what drives people to create English-only policies and how they do it.

Rather than call for reducing the number of people of color in the United States, McAlpin (2000) suggested a different, more oblique approach, one that framed the issue in terms of language policy and specifically in terms of protecting English in a variety of smaller jurisdictions. Many of the people most directly involved in successfully creating English-only policies situate their work locally, in the sense that they make English official in their own local governments and downplay these policies as harmless community initiatives. These patterns predate McAlpin. The leading activist in this movement, John Tanton, started the annual Writer's Workshop event in 1976 and went on to found a series of organizations that worked on Official English, including the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) in 1978, U.S. English in 1983, and English Language Advocates (later renamed ProEnglish) in 1994.[6]

[2] I define language policy fairly capaciously, but for a comparison of various definitions of language policy and related terms like "language planning," "linguistic culture," and "language management," see Calvet (1987/1998), Cooper (1989), Tollefson (1991), Schiffman (1996), Spolsky (2009), Johnson (2013), and Spolsky (2021).

[3] Of these twenty-six policies, twenty-five are still in effect; Alaska's policy was ruled unconstitutional (ACLU of Alaska, 2007). There are also two state policies that predate the current movement: Nebraska's policy is from 1920 and Illinois' is from 1969 (Faingold, 2018, p. 10). So, there are currently twenty-seven state policies in effect (Faingold, 2018, p. 12).

[4] Herman (2003) lists eleven local policies (p. 101), Flowers (2017) compiles an additional sixty-five, and I discuss seven more local California policies in Chapter 1, for a total of eighty-three.

[5] "English-only" and "Official English" have become the two most common terms, and I use them interchangeably. Both have their advantages: It is important to emphasize the *official* aspect, but it is also important to recognize that these policies are about making English the *only* official language (see Diamond, 1990, p. 119).

[6] See Lamb (2008) on the 1976 origins of the Writer's Workshop. There are conflicting accounts of the history of each of the organizations, but I err on the side of contemporaneous internal documents, government records, and news interviews. On FAIR, see Morgan (1978, August

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I have spent the last decade studying the English-only movement and the people who shape local English-only policies. I have interviewed them, observed their events and meetings, collected drafts of their writing, read through their organizations' records, looked through their historical documents in archives, and followed their work in the news and online, all with the aim of piecing together where this movement came from, how it works, and how it might evolve. Specifically, I aimed to address the following questions:

1. How did the current English-only movement begin around 1980?
2. How do people write English-only policies? What is the role of strategies like ghostwriting, choosing genres, and using templates?
3. How do people in this movement discuss the scale of their work? How do they situate English as a local, regional, national, and/or global language?
4. How do people resist and rewrite English-only policies?

As I began to answer these questions in 2012, I sought out communities that were in the midst of proposing English-only policies so that I could examine language policy discourse as it unfolded.

I focused on four local governments in the state of Maryland: Frederick County, Anne Arundel County, Queen Anne's County, and Carroll County. What drew me to these particular counties was their swell of twenty-first-century language policy campaigns (2006–2015), their ties to one another, and the fact that despite these common threads the campaigns had divergent outcomes. These counties are all geographically close to one another and to English-only organizations in Washington, DC, which allowed me to also interview the CEO of U.S. English and the then executive director of ProEnglish. Notably, three of the four policies share some text in common with a template that ProEnglish makes publicly available. Despite this common template, the outcomes were different: One policy passed but was later repealed in 2015 (Frederick County), two policies passed easily (Queen Anne's County and Carroll County), and one policy was withdrawn from consideration before there could be a vote (Anne Arundel County). While each county is different, they also share many qualities: They are all more white, higher income, and with more people who report speaking English at home than the rest of Maryland and the rest of the United States. Researching these four counties allowed me to examine how certain policymaking practices have become common throughout the English-only movement, yet still with some variation across situations.

What I found is that most local governments passing English-only policies had the help of other local governments and at least one English-only

30). On U.S. English, see Tanton (1983, January 17) and Stanley (1983, June 24). On English Language Advocates, see Tanton (1994, January 1). On the name change from English Language Advocates to ProEnglish, see Tanton (2000, October 23).

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organization, most often ProEnglish. At the same time, what that help looked like, how welcome it was, and how successful it was have varied significantly. On one hand, when I asked Kirby Delauter about what it was like to establish an Official English policy in Frederick County, he described the process this way:

> You can make it the official language any way you want, but I would do that same thing that we did. I would get outside input, you know, from people that have been in through the court system before, that's had it challenged, and get your legal team together, and get something written that's not going to be challenged in court, and explain exactly why you're doing it. And, you know, if you have the votes, do it.

Here, Delauter identifies a number of steps, including assessing the amount of support, getting "outside input" (ProEnglish, in this county's case), drafting a policy that is forceful but not too forceful, and giving reasons for "exactly why you're doing it." Through careful coordination between elected officials, legal counsel, ProEnglish, and other people in and around the community, the Board of County Commissioners in Frederick County, Maryland, not only passed an English-only ordinance in 2012 but inspired three other Maryland counties to try and do the same. ProEnglish (2014, Fall) echoed Delauter's account in its newsletter: "During the last three years, ProEnglish has enjoyed widespread success getting official English passed at the county level, most notably in Maryland, where Frederick County, Queen Anne County [*sic*], and Carroll County all passed official English legislation in 2012 and 2013" (p. 2). Not everyone was on the same page, however.

In a very different interview, a conservative activist in Frederick County named Hayden Duke told me, "If there was an organization behind it, a national organization, I don't like that. At all. I'm sorry, I'm getting a little agitated. …. I don't like the groups where the people who parachute themselves into a locale, get people worked up, to fulfill their own agenda, and then leave. And they leave the people fighting each other." Still others disagreed not just on process but on rhetoric. At one public government meeting, Frederick County commissioner Billy Shreve complained that people were too quick to focus on culture, as opposed to economics: "This is truly a business decision. You guys are missing the point. This is about dollars and protecting taxpayer dollars. When it costs $170 to translate an 8½" × 11" memo, we have to be sure that we're doing the right thing with taxpayer dollars." As these statements reveal, there is not necessarily a consensus about who should be involved, and what they should say, even among people who are open to English being the official language.

These dynamics and tensions are at the heart of the English-only movement. US language policy has always been a relatively localized, contingent phenomenon, with significant variation across communities and situations (Baron, 1990, p. 185; Hopkins, 2010; Dick, 2011; Urbano and Daugherty, 2021).

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In 1980, activist Emmy Shafer sparked the modern movement when she had her lawyer draft an "Anti-Bilingualism" Ordinance for her local government of Dade County, Florida. In 1981, US Senator S. I. Hayakawa began recruiting local government leaders to pass resolutions in support of Official English in his home state of California. By 1982, there were so many such policies that Tanton had trouble keeping up with all of them, and he asked his staff to find a list of the "school boards, city councils and other bodies which have adopted resolutions" on Official English (Bikales, 1982, March 28). Once Tanton launched U.S. English, his first symbolic victory was a 1983 campaign against bilingual ballots in San Francisco, California (Woolard, 1989). While the earliest examples of these local language policies emerged relatively independently of each other, that gradually changed. People in this movement began not only observing one another's work but also coordinating with, hiring, and taking advice from each other, even though they still could disagree over the details. While the English-only movement may seem like a relatively stable, united front, the people involved are actually quite varied in their approaches. Understanding the nuances of how these policies emerge and change is important because they can have serious implications for people and language, and I turn to those stakes next.

Why Official English Matters

When Carroll County, Maryland, passed an Official English ordinance in 2013, the policy's preamble gave some reasons why. One was to "promote proficiency in English"; another was "to protect and preserve the rights of those who speak only the English language to use or obtain government programs, services, and benefits." These explanations suggest that English is an endangered language, its users are an at-risk group, and both need government protection in order to survive. The vote on Carroll County's ordinance was unanimous, and it is still in place today. Furthermore, this government was not alone in using this rationale: Identical wording appears in several other local English-only policies that all stem from the same template. Similar sentiments have also been part of the English-only movement since its origins (Baron, 1990, p. 79; Lo Bianco, 1999, p. 17). If one switched out "English" for any other language, this passage could fit into any treatise on language maintenance and revitalization (e.g. Fishman, 1991).

And yet, English is not just any language, and the United States is not just any linguistic environment. English enjoys the most cachet of any language in the world (Pennycook, 1994; Prendergast, 2008; Park, 2021). What's more, people involved in the English-only movement know so. Whether they are pushing for English-only policies or protesting against them, the people I interviewed, observed, and studied in the archives are highly attuned to context.

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In this section I unpack some of this context, in order to show why these policies matter. I approach this question with humility, because the people I profile in this book articulate the stakes of the issue more memorably than I ever could. What I hope to add here is a sense of what the academic research indicates and what I have witnessed in my own life.

From my perspective, English-only policies matter for four main reasons: (1) they target people who are already marginalized, (2) they oversimplify how language works, (3) they are popular, and (4) the strategies people use to write and promote these policies are ingenious. That fourth reason is where I focus my original research – I am most curious about the processes of *how* people shape language policies like the one in Carroll County. Before I delve into the details of my study, however, I want to step back and explain *why* I find these policies worth studying. In the subsections that follow, I begin with *people*, by thinking through who is really the target of English-only policies and who is not. Second, I loop back around to *language*, by analyzing the language ideologies that underly English-only policies. While I will primarily draw examples from the United States, these ideologies have their roots in global histories of modernity and colonialism (Bauman and Briggs, 2003). Finally, I address the *popularity* of these policies, in order to show that they are not fringe; rather, they appear popular across the board in the United States. The point is that the beliefs in question are important not because they are so extreme but because they are so typical.

A quick note on facts, beliefs, and the stories we tell: Fact-checking people's beliefs about language may seem like a rather naïve and futile impulse. After all, not all policymakers are striving for fairness and accuracy. For some, the opportunity to sow discord may be a feature, not a bug (Tollefson, 1991, p. 7). Sometimes the cruelty is the point (Serwer, 2021). Facts may not be enough in the face of people's "imperviousness to the data" (Fishman, 1988, p. 31; see also Tse, 2001; Haddix, 2008; Lejano and Nero, 2020). However, I have to believe that people can change their minds, because I changed my mind. When I was young, if a pollster had asked me if English should be the only official language, I would have said, "Sure, why not?" My English classes ignored authors who wrote across languages or cultures. My Spanish classes treated Spanish like something people only used in foreign countries. My US history classes glossed over anyone who did not grow up using English. Those narratives were not the whole story; they were not even half the story. That is why it is worth carving out a place for new, more truthful stories about language. I say all this to say: For readers who have lived experiences with multilingualism, migration, and/or discrimination, the content in this section may seem obvious, and for readers who favor English-only policies, the content may seem beside the point. For readers who are still making up their mind, I wrote this part for you.

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Targeting People

Roger Conner was one of the men involved in the early days of the English-only movement, and at one point he had an epiphany. Conner (1989) recalled, "I would later come to see the English language initiative as our analog to the literacy tests in the early part of the century" (p. 80). He came to this conclusion after reading John Higham's (1955) *Strangers in the Land*, a classic (and critical) history of nativism in the United States. Starting in the mid-1800s, state and local governments used literacy tests as a tool to exclude certain people from becoming citizens and/or voting. These tests were not about actually identifying people who were illiterate in some objective sense (although that would have been problematic, too); people designed these tests with certain groups in mind. Depending on the time and place, literacy tests targeted Jewish Americans, German Americans, Irish Americans, immigrant women in general, Black Americans, Latinx Americans (including Puerto Ricans), and Asian Americans (Baron, 1990, p. x; Wan, 2014, pp. 43–49). Today's English-only policies are not the same as these literacy tests, thankfully. If English-only policies are like an unwelcome mat, then those literacy tests were more like an electric fence. As Conner observed, however, they are part of the same impulse. Like literacy tests, English-only language policies affect some people more than others. They marginalize people who already tend to be relatively marginalized.

I purposefully say "people" rather than a more specific term like "immigrants." Put simply, there are immigrants who are not targets, and there are nonimmigrants who are. Immigration receives a lot of attention, which is understandable since the United States has such a push–pull, love–hate, "xenophobia"–"xenophilia" relationship with the figure of the "foreigner" (Honig, 2001, p. 75). As citizens of a settler colony, people in the United States are often invested in the idea that people want to come here, work hard, and contribute to society; yet they can also resent immigrants who shine a little too brightly and threaten to overshadow them (Honig, 2001, p. 76). There is a desire for immigrants to succeed but not to stand out. To illustrate, Zentella (2014) points out "the rising number of cases of people hired for speaking Spanish, and then fired for speaking Spanish" (p. 623). These employers seem to have wanted someone who could use Spanish in a pinch, not someone who would actually use Spanish without shame. While I find Honig's (2001) analysis of immigration indispensable, she and Zentella (2014) both point out the United States is not just a nation of immigrants (see also Dunbar-Ortiz, 2021).[7] When Puerto Ricans or African Americans are targets, for instance,

[7] For a different, quantitative-data-driven argument that comes to a similar conclusion, see Fitzsimmons-Doolan (2009). This corpus study of newspapers found surprisingly little overlap between discourse about language policy and discourse about immigration.

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that is a sign that just being a natural-born US citizen is not enough to be safe (Richardson, 1998; Zentella, 2014, p. 623).

Meanwhile, there are many white people in the world who are multilingual or who do not even know English, but I have never heard of them experiencing the brunt of an English-only policy during the past fifty years. As Schildkraut (2005) points out, when people complain about there being too many foreign-language signs today, they are not talking about the signage outside white-owned French and Italian restaurants (p. 3). Conversely, Latinx and Asian American people do tend to be the target of contemporary English-only policies, even when they may be perfectly competent in English (Zentella, 2014; Lo, 2016). In a series of focus groups about language and American identity, participants often "refused to distinguish between recent immigrants and minorities who are also U.S. citizens" (Schildkraut, 2005, p. 168). If people are conflating all these different groups and different characteristics, then any restrictive language policy, even one that is well-meaning, will inevitably have disparate impacts. English-only policies become more meaningful in light of people's willingness to conflate people who do not use English, people who are learning English, multilingual people, immigrants, refugees, and people of color, as though all these groups were the same, all these groups are undesirable, and all these groups are the opposite of the ideal English user.

***

In my own fieldwork, I quickly realized I myself am part of these assumptions around who merits linguistic scrutiny and who does not. One day in 2015, I was walking around a local fair in Frederick, Maryland, when I suddenly flinched. A man was calling out to me from a booth several feet away, trying to get my attention. He exclaimed, "Hey, you look smart!" and then asked if I would be interested in tutoring. I looked up at the booth's banner: "Literacy Council of Frederick County." I walked closer and replied with something like "I might be … what would that involve?" and we started talking about their tutoring services, which focus on teaching adults to read and write in English. I had read about this organization online before and had taken note of their waitlists for classes (a sign that their services are in high demand). At one point, he asked if I was an English teacher or student, and I said I was both. We started to discuss my study. I wrote down my contact information on their volunteer sign-up sheet, in case they ever wanted someone to do tutoring or editing online. As I walked away, I was happy I had had a chance to meet him, share my study, and get some new leads, but I also thought about how easily he clocked me. Out of the hundreds of people at the fair, I was one of the few white people present, and I was the one who he invited to be an English literacy tutor, without ever saying or writing a single word of English.

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I had heard about the fair from someone I interviewed, Angela Spencer. Spencer had played a key role in helping Frederick County repeal its official language policy. As we wrapped up our interview, Spencer let me know about a health fair that the Asian American Center of Frederick was organizing at the Frederick Fairgrounds later that week. I was excited to go and learn more about the linguistic and cultural landscape of the community. So, that Saturday, I drove to the location and walked into a bustling space lined with booths offering complementary medical services (everything from flu vaccines to osteoporosis screenings), as well as booths representing various social services and nonprofit organizations. I quickly realized that I was one of the only white people who were not standing behind a booth. Most of the people milling about with me were Latinx, Asian American, or Black.[8] I also noticed that almost everyone else was dressed casually in jeans, whether they were behind a booth or not, whereas I stuck out like a sore thumb in my blouse, scarf, skirt, and tights.

Once I got back to my car, I wrote in my field notes, "I guess it was just a reminder that it's impossible to move around the world and seem 'neutral.' [The man at the booth] pegged me as an outsider in general but a potential ally for himself immediately, even with no language or literacy cues." Now, I would flip that initial analysis: What this encounter really reflects is that from many people's perspectives, signifiers of race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, citizenship, and style *are* the language and literacy cues. If you look like a straight, white, able-bodied, white-collar American woman, then you do not have to say a peep; you are presumed to be competent (not for everything, necessarily, but at least for tutoring literacy and English!).

The reverse is also true. Decades of US research suggests that people of color, immigrants, multilingual people, disabled people, and queer people (groups that sometimes overlap and sometimes do not, of course) often have their linguistic abilities discounted, particularly by white people in positions of authority (Alim and Smitherman, 2012; Davila, 2012; Flores and Rosa, 2015; Baugh, 2018; Yergeau, 2018; Flores and Rosa, 2022). Perhaps most strangely, people who know multiple languages or dialects often receive the worst treatment, despite the fact that being able to communicate across language varieties can be a resource rather than a problem (Ruíz, 1984) and historically and globally the norm rather than the exception (Canagarajah, 2013).[9] To borrow a phrase from a collection on discrimination in higher education, many people

[8] The makeup of this event is similar to their other offerings. In an annual report, the Asian American Center of Frederick (2018) notes that the most common participants are "non-white/black Hispanic/Latino" (54.2 percent), followed by Asian Pacific Islanders (22 percent), Black people (10.9 percent), white people (9.2 percent), and multiracial people (3.7 percent) (p. 3).

[9] On the promise and pitfalls of the language-as-resource orientation, see Ricento (2005) and Kaveh (2022).

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are presumed incompetent when it comes to the English language (Gutiérrez y Muhs, Niemann, González, and Harris, 2012).

Dyson (2015) captured this point about presumed incompetence poignantly in her study of one Black kindergartner whose white teacher remarks that he is a better writer than the "bright" kids in class but she still does not categorize him as "bright," simply because of who he is (p. 205). The teacher called students bright only if they were white (with one exception for a Korean American student) (p. 205). Essentially, this teacher did the opposite of what the Literacy Council of Frederick County representative did to me: I was called smart without having to say anything, while the student in Dyson's study was not called bright, no matter how well he writes. These dynamics are all contingent on the situation and the people involved, of course, and there are certainly exceptions. Nevertheless, I dwell on these ideas because the point is that language and literacy are not separate from power and identity. When language is already serving as a proxy for who you are, where you are from, and what level of respect people think you deserve, then language policies can become vectors of xenophobia, racism, ableism, and other forms of oppression.

Oversimplifying Language

Most English-only policies rest on a linked set of assumptions not just about people but about language itself. If I were to distill these assumptions down to their narrative essence, it would go as follows:

> Everything was fine until recently, when immigrants started bringing in other languages and refusing to learn English. Now, this new rise in multilingualism is creating tension and putting English at risk. If immigrants would switch over to English, then the rest of society would treat them better. Making English the official language is a way to solve this problem, by incentivizing immigrants to assimilate faster.[10]

By that logic, English-only policies are helpful and harmless. The issue is that none of these statements are true. Instead, this description vastly oversimplifies how language works and has worked throughout US history. The following account comes closer to the truth:

[10] As an early example of this narrative, Senator S. I. Hayakawa (1981, April 14) once remarked in a TV interview:

> Up to now, people who came from Sweden, Denmark, Greece, Italy or Egypt all hurried to learn the English language. … I'm not trying to impose hardships on immigrants. These are hardships that come by virtue of being immigrants not being able to speak the language. … It's a way of inviting them into the mainstream of American life more quickly. … If we accept a second language in any American city other than English as the official language of that city, or municipality or state, then we begin to breed the seeds of possible dissension and possible division within our country. So what I'm trying to do is to head off trouble in the future.

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The US has always been multilingual. This multilingualism has been societal (different communities using different languages) and individual (people using multiple languages). Sometimes using a language other than English is tied to recent immigration, but not always: historically, using other languages has also been common among Indigenous people, enslaved people, people whose families had already moved here before their region became part of US territory, Deaf people and their interlocutors, and refugees. People often want to improve their English, but there are barriers in the way. English-only policies create more tension than they alleviate. Even if everyone did master English, it would not be enough to stop linguistic discrimination, particularly against people of color. Finally, one can be adept at a language while still not knowing every single variety or register of that language.

I believe some of the oversimplification is unintentional and some is intentional. Some people involved in the English-only movement know quite a bit about this subject, whether through personal experience or academic study or both. Roger Conner, who made the comparison to literacy tests, is clearly aware. However, I do think many members of the general public are unfamiliar with these facets of history, education, and linguistics. I want to begin with history, in order to emphasize that multilingualism is not new. As Dowling (2021) notes, making multilingualism seem new makes English seem "natural to this region" (p. 442). In reality, what is now the United States used to be more multilingual than it is now.

The state of Maryland exemplifies this history of language contact: It is home to Indigenous nations that use Algonquin and Iroquoian languages (among others),[11] it was the site of one of the earliest colonial settlements in the early 1600s, it was an early hub of the enslavement of African people (including in all four counties I studied),[12] and by the 1800s it was home to many German Americans. Traces of this history are everywhere. There are Indigenous place names, such as the Monocacy River that runs through Frederick and Carroll Counties. There are reminders of slavery: At the beginning of an interview, when I asked Bob Simmons how he would describe Queen Anne's County, he described it as "a plantation environment." There were busts of famous figures who shaped American understandings of slavery, including Supreme Court Chief Justice Roger Taney in Frederick. Taney was a one-time resident who later wrote the 1857 proslavery opinion in *Dred Scott* v. *Sandford*, the landmark case that prioritized slave owners' property rights over Black Americans' citizenship rights (I return to Taney in Chapter 4). I also walked by a statue

[11] At Nolands Ferry, in present-day Frederick County, archeologists have found Indigenous artifacts from approximately 8500 BC (Maryland Historical Trust, 2018). The state currently recognizes three Indigenous nations: the Accohannock Indian Tribe, the Piscataway Indian Nation, and the Piscataway Conoy Tribe.

[12] While slavery existed in Frederick and Carroll Counties, it was particularly entrenched in the more coastal plantations in Anne Arundel and Queen Anne's Counties (Jones, 1724/1956; Bianca, 2007; Stories of Flight, 2022).

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of *Roots* author Alex Haley in Annapolis, Anne Arundel County.[13] One time when I was driving into Western Maryland, I noticed a sign for a place called New Germany State Park. In Frederick County, the county's Human Relations Commission cited the community's rich German heritage as one reason why their English-only policy seemed out of step. Since 1868, Frederick has also been home to the Maryland School for the Deaf. To be sure, almost all contemporary English-only policies generally have carveouts for language instruction in schools and services for people with disabilities. The issue is not so much about enforcement as it is about justification. Any argument that there are unprecedented levels of multilingualism, or that the earlier generations learned English with more alacrity, is simply untrue.

The story of Maryland reflects broader truths about language in the United States. No one was using English in this hemisphere until a few hundred years ago. Throughout US history, English has never been the official national language, and language policy has remained an open question (Heath, 1976; Baron, 1990). Before European colonialism began, Indigenous people often learned multiple Indigenous languages in order to be able to communicate across communities (Spack, 2002). When Europeans began colonizing North America, they were initially ambivalent about Indigenous people switching to European languages. At first, there was a bigger push for missionaries to learn Indigenous languages than for Indigenous people to adopt European languages (Heath, 1972, p. 6).

And besides, most of the earliest colonizers were not using English. The first long-term Spanish settlement began in 1565 in St. Augustine, Florida (decades before the first English settlement), and included both free and enslaved Africans (Parker, 2014, p. 561). The first French speaker arrived in what would become Louisiana in 1682 (Dajko, 2019, p. 69). In addition to knowing one or more African languages, many Black people in early colonial history had to learn languages like English, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Swedish, and French, because those were the languages of the white people enslaving them (Read, 1937;[14] Picone, 2003). Eventually, slavery in the United States became more of an anglophone enterprise, and free and enslaved Black people were generally using English by the time slavery ended in 1865.[15] However,

[13] The city of Annapolis was the port of call in *Roots*, which Haley later adapted into what may be the United States' most-watched TV depiction of slavery. The novel and show include a famous scene where the character Kunta Kinte is punished for wanting to keep his name rather than answer to a new English name.

[14] During early American history, many of the references are to "Dutch" rather than "German," but the language in question is usually what we would think of as German today (Read, 1937, p. 94). This pattern lives on in the term "Pennsylvania Dutch."

[15] Histories of African American language suggest that enslaved people learned English relatively quickly, albeit with variation depending on when they arrived, where they lived, who they interacted with on a daily basis, and whether they came directly from Africa or from plantations

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Smitherman (1977) notes that newly enslaved people were arriving from Africa as late as 1858 (p. 12). Meanwhile, many Indigenous people did learn European languages, but at first it was more about adding something new than subtracting Indigenous languages. There was no concerted effort to eliminate Indigenous languages until the late 1800s (Spack, 2002).

Even when anglophone settlers began expecting Black people and Indigenous people to use only English, multilingualism often persisted among people who immigrated voluntarily. Then, as today, Black and Indigenous people were held to different standards (a point I return to when discussing the origins of the English-only movement in Chapter 1). New immigrants brought in languages like German, Chinese, Japanese, Italian, and Polish. At one point there were at least thirty-eight German-medium newspapers in the United States (Pavlenko, 2002, p. 168). Even as late as the early 1900s, immigrants from Germany often maintained their heritage languages well past three generations, such that even the grandchildren of immigrants might not use English as their primary language (Wilkerson and Salmons, 2008, p. 260). The United States also expanded its empire. Places like Puerto Rico and the American Southwest already had large numbers of Spanish speakers before they became US territory (Lozano, 2018). In these cases, then, it was not so much that people crossed the border but rather that the border crossed them (Anzaldúa, 1987; Zentella, 1999; Cisneros, 2013; Enoch and Ramirez, 2019). One other key moment was the development of American Sign Language in the early 1800s, which grew out of French Sign Language (Reagan, 2010, p. 97). Overall, the early-mid nineteenth century was a time of acceptance for many heritage languages.

In response, some supporters of Official English might reasonably suggest that the past is the past, and what really matters is that people use English now. I am sympathetic to that view. The trouble is that everyone already has strong incentives to use English, that English-only policies do not help people learn English, and that learning English is, unfortunately, not enough to succeed in the United States. Of course, there are people in the United States who have less experience using English, but they tend to want to learn. In one large-scale survey study, Mexican Americans who opted to answer the survey questions in Spanish were three times as likely to say that knowing the English language is "very important" compared with people who chose to take the survey in English (Dowling, Ellison, and Leal, 2012, p. 370). In other words, Spanish users were much more likely to place a premium on English, not less likely.

in the Caribbean (Read, 1939; Smitherman, 1977; Morgan, 2002; Mufwene, 2008; Mufwene, 2015). Debates remain over the details of African American language, and especially over the historical possibility of creole influence (Weldon, 2003).

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Because people are so motivated to learn and use English, there is great demand around the country for classes in ESOL (English for speakers of other languages). At my local public library in Lowell, Massachusetts, there is a six-to-nine-month waiting list for an English tutor (Learn to Speak English, 2022). The situation has been similar in Maryland. The Literacy Council of Carroll County, which offers tutoring in English, "always has a waiting list of people needing its services" (Oland, 2012, May 18). The Literacy Council of Frederick County's (2012) ESL coordinator reports "12 students on the waiting list," even though the organization already has "68 active tutors" (p. 2). Four years after that newsletter, and one year after I met the man at the fair, the Literacy Council of Frederick County (2016) was still reporting, "There's always a waiting list of students who need tutors." Unfortunately, policies making English the official language of local governments generally do not come with any strategies or resources for actually alleviating any of these wait lists.

Tollefson (1989) argued that this sort of gap may be more than an oversight. In his study of how the United States works with refugees from Southeast Asia, he documented a system in which refugees are purposefully provided with subpar education in English. He found that the US government wants refugees to assimilate into US life but not so much that they actually qualify for white-collar jobs. Ricento (2021) reported a similar dynamic in a recent study of refugees in Canada who were medical doctors in their countries of origin, which emphasizes that this problem has not gone away and it is not limited to the United States.[16] When refugees try to practice academic and professional registers of English, some teachers actively discourage them (Ricento, 2021, p. 81). In these systems, the goal seems to be for these people to form a sort of permanent underclass. Tollefson's (1989) study is particularly haunting because these were refugees who had to leave their countries due to US military interventions in and around the Vietnam War. These refugees' experiences thus show that language issues are not just a product of outside forces. Instead, policymakers often set language learners up to fail and then blame them for failing. To be sure, the county governments I study have little to no control over US foreign policy or even US education policy (much to their chagrin). The point is that scapegoating multilingual people can be a crude way to try to gain some semblance of control.

Readers may be wondering whether the solution could be to revise English-only policies so that they are more about actually helping people learn English. I agree that there should be much more societal investment in language education. However, it is important to recognize that learning English may never be

[16] In the United Kingdom and Europe too, language policies around asylum seekers, refugees, and incoming migrants tend to be exceptionally Kafkaesque (Blommaert, 2010; Khan, 2022).

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enough (Flores and Rosa, 2015; Rosa, 2021). Fishman (1988) tartly observed that if knowing English were enough to escape discrimination, then Black Americans would experience much less discrimination (since nearly all Black families whose ancestors were enslaved here have been using English as their primary language for more than 150 years) (p. 131).

Furthermore, some people do not believe bilingualism is really possible for people of color, and so if they still use a first language, then it does not matter how fluent they become in English: They are still tainted. Conservative commentator William F. Buckley, Jr. (1983, November 10), made this point on an episode of his TV show *Firing Line*: "My own experience with bilingualism is that it's an utter and total phony. What you end up doing is having a society in which people speak either English or Spanish, and understand a few frijol-y words in between." Buckley is likely talking specifically about bilingualism among Mexican Americans, based on the facts that the overall episode is about immigration in Texas and he chooses "frijol-y" as his example of a bivalent word (Woolard, 1998). From his perspective, anyone in this group who claims to be bilingual is stretching the truth; at best they know one language plus a few words of Spanglish. Rosa (2019) documented a similar ideology even among bilingual people, like a bilingual principal at a high school with predominantly Mexican American and Puerto Rican students, who equates bilingualism with students who lack English, who "don't know the language," who "need help" (p. 128). While bilingual people do push back and even make fun of this ideology of languagelessness,[17] there is still a pervasive assumption that people of color have to choose one language; it's an "either/or", rather than a "both/and."[18] From that perspective, if a person of color is using a language other than English in any everyday context, then that means they have failed to learn English. Tanton (1994a) went a step further, by questioning bilingual people's abilities in both languages: He wrote that "bilingual" is more like "bi-illiterate" (p. 47). If people believe that bilingualism is not really possible for people of color, then English proficiency is not the crux of the issue.

This "either/or" framing also makes it difficult to accept that knowing a language is always necessarily partial. This point is not just about particular identities or about the English language but about the very foundations of how language works. In the immortal words of Blommaert (2010), "No one knows *all* of a language"; there are always a variety of repertoires, registers, genres, dialects, and, often, literacies in play (p. 103; see also Rymes, 2014).

[17] See Rosa (2019) on the ideology of languagelessness, as well as people's playful and reclamative forms of Inverted Spanglish (pp. 160–176).

[18] See Subtirelu (2017) and Panaligan and Curran (2022) for an example of how this dynamic results in lower salaries for multilingual people of color, both in the United States and in the Philippines, a former US colony.

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Even among people who agree that English is important, there is no definitive, singular form of English that people are learning, or even aspiring to learn (Kachru, 1985; Ricento, 2014).

To give an example, people in the English-only movement often worry about the fact that most jurisdictions in the United States will administer driver's license exams in multiple languages (Schiffman and Weiner, 2012). The thinking is that if one cannot pass a written test in English, then one is not qualified to navigate streets filled with signs in English. The underlying ideology is that one either knows a language or not. And yet, as anyone who has rented a car in another country knows, proficiency in the language(s) of that country is neither necessary nor sufficient to driving well. Recognizing a Stop sign is not the same as taking a lengthy written exam. This point matters especially because contemporary English-only policies are about government documents, which can be notoriously specialized. Zentella (1988) captures this dynamic perfectly in a description of her Puerto Rican mother: "Although she can converse with anyone and read newspapers in English, she still needs federally funded bilingual services and documents for help with complicated medical, Social Security, and veterans' benefits" (p. 41). If the tables were turned, I would feel the same way. I can read a newspaper in Spanish, but if I had to do government business in Spanish, I would have a hard time. Intuitively, I think everyone has experience with being more comfortable with some registers than others. However, people who understand the complexity of language in their own lives are not necessarily willing to extend any grace to others. By talking only about "English," English-only policies invite people to express an all-or-nothing view of language and a stance for or against English. And when the question is framed this way, most people in the United States will side with English.

The Popularity of English as an Official Language

Most Americans seem to support making English the one and only official language. Political scientists have researched public opinion on this topic from a number of angles, from preexisting survey data (Tatalovich, 1995; Schildkraut, 2005; Dowling, Ellison, and Leal, 2012), to voting results (Tatalovich, 1995), to focus groups (Schildkraut, 2005, chapters 5 and 6), to original surveys and questionnaires designed to address this precise topic (Smitherman, 1992; Lawton, 2010; Schildkraut, 2011). In her Twenty-First-Century Americanism survey, Schildkraut (2011) found that 77 percent of respondents said English should become the official language (p. 71). In an earlier study, Schildkraut (2005) heard "little to no" support for bilingual education among her focus group participants (p. 148). These findings are consistent with Tatalovich's (1995) landmark study, which reported that a majority of each racial group favors English-only policies, based on national survey data from 1990 and 1992

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(p. 180). Lawton (2010) found that immigrants often support the dominance of English (p. 335). Historically, English-only policies also have bipartisan support among politicians: Of the nine state-level policies Tatalovich (1995) studied, five passed with bipartisan support, and some were in Democrat-led state governments (p. 222). In other words, the issue is not just popular with white people or Republicans.

People support English-only policies for a wide variety of reasons, but economics does not appear to be one. A person's support for English-only policies has no clear correlation with perceived economic insecurity (Schildkraut, 2005, p. 173) or with their actual income (Tatalovich, 1995, pp. 180, 187; Schildkraut, 2005, p. 112; Dowling, Ellison, and Leal, 2012, pp. 370–371). Tatalovich (1995) also examined whether "the anti-Spanish backlash [is] tied to economic deprivation" (in other words, the "they're taking our jobs" rationale), but he concluded that, if anything, higher poverty levels correlate with *less* support for Official English (p. 189). In sum, economic anxiety is not the driver. This finding may be surprising. I am someone who spent my twenties living through the 2008 recession, the Occupy Wall Street movement, and the Tea Party. In my fieldwork, talk of the economy was ubiquitous, on both sides of the issue. People who passed English-only policies pointed to the potential money their county could save if they avoided translation and interpreting services. Meanwhile, one of the strongest voices against one of these policies came from a group called Occupy Frederick (a local play on Occupy Wall Street). For all these reasons, I cannot help but wonder if economic thought plays a more meaningful role than surveys detect. On the other hand, perhaps people are right not to rely on economic thinking to make up their mind on this issue, since Tatalovich (1995) finds that these policies generally do not save governments money.

Social, cultural, and political factors seem to matter much more than economic factors. All 122 politicians who were primary sponsors of state-level English-only policies during the early years of the English-only movement were white (Tatalovich, 1995, p. 226). From Tatalovich's perspective, racism may be the initial spark, but it cannot explain the widespread support (p. 129). When Tatalovich (1995) examined county-level voting data, there were certain factors that predicted which counties would vote for Official English, such as whiteness (p. 192), support for Reagan in the 1984 election (pp. 189, 246), and having lower levels of education (pp. 180–181). Meanwhile, Schildkraut (2005) found that some people thought making English official would be a way to instill unity, foster communication, fight balkanization, or encourage assimilation (p. 159). People can be relatively restrictive about language without extending those restrictions to other aspects of people's identities. For example, 71.6 percent of Twenty-First-Century Americanism survey respondents said being able to speak English is "very important," while only 24.2 percent

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of Americans said it is "very important" to have been "born in America" (Schildkraut, 2011, p. 45). The thinking is that if people were really using language as code for ethnicity, the percentages would match one another. These sorts of numbers are crucial to Tatalovich's and Schildkraut's arguments that English-only policies are not synonymous with racism and nativism. Baron (1990) came to this conclusion as well: The motivations behind these policies include but are by no means limited to nativism (p. 4). All this is true, and it is what makes Official English such an attractive political issue for activists. Making English official can be a way to bring together everyone from the most ardent white supremacist, on one extreme, to the person who just thinks communication is easier and more efficient in one language, on the other extreme.

Importantly for this study, people's beliefs about race do intersect with their beliefs about their local community. Schildkraut (2005) discusses how local language policies are "causing a stir in cities and towns across the country" (p. 16). One theme in her focus groups was "civic republicanism," which means that someone values "local control over decision making" (p. 97). In one particularly potent combination, some people expressed both "civic republicanism" and "ethnoculturalism" (the notion that white English speakers are ideal citizens) (p. 169). A "civic republican-ethnocultural mix appears to be uniformly associated with a preference for language restrictions" (p. 169). This finding makes sense, because if people have a sense of local citizenship but only white English users can be good citizens, then there is no way for people of color and/or multilingual people to win.

While all these findings are striking, that does not mean that these studies are representative of everyone or that people's minds are set in stone. Most of the surveys I have discussed leave out Native Americans, do not account for multiracial people, and do not distinguish between different groups within large racial categories. Tatalovich (1995) acknowledged that one of the main national surveys included too few Hispanic people, making it difficult to analyze that part of the data with much confidence.

One study that puts these limitations in stark relief is Smitherman (1992). Smitherman's (1992) survey was more inclusive than other survey studies, and she reports that only 35.4 percent of respondents were in favor of Official English (p. 247). By race, 29.2 percent of African Americans were in support, compared with 46.4 percent of European Americans. These numbers are very different from the numbers (50+ percent) reported in Tatalovich (1995) and Schildkraut (2005, 2011). Smitherman (1992) pointed out two reasons why there may be a discrepancy between her findings and those of other national surveys. First, it really depends on how pollsters phrase the question. She cites a Gallup poll, carried out on behalf of U.S. English, which made the issue seem more symbolic, by asking "Would you favor or oppose making English the official language of government in the United States?" In contrast,

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Smitherman's (1992) survey touched on the legal ramifications: "Some people want to pass laws to make English the official language of the United States. Have you heard of this? If these laws were passed, it would mean a lot of changes for many Americans. For example, courts, public, medical, and social services communications would be in English only. Are you in favor of such a law?" (p. 243). The use of words like "laws" and "changes" emphasizes the gravity of the situation and may give people pause.

That brings me to the second difference: the people who took this survey. While many national surveys focus on likely voters and predominantly white areas of the country, Smitherman (1992) opted to take a more race-conscious approach by centering predominantly Black cities and by not excluding adults who were not likely voters. This study creates a sense of possibility: Even though politicians may promote English-only policies precisely by framing them as innocuous (rather than as laws) and by appealing to likely voters (as opposed to everyone else they represent), Smitherman (1992) showed that things could be otherwise. By asking the question differently, by centering Black people and other people of color, and by including people whether they are likely voters or not, the picture could look very different.

These studies from previous decades raise questions about how public opinion may have evolved in recent years and how people's lived experiences may be more nuanced than their answers on a survey. Indeed, when I started to actually talk to the people making and living with English-only policies, a more complex portrait started to emerge. That is one of my aims in this study: to go beyond the historical precedents, the polling data, and the policy texts, to listen to what it is actually like for the people who create, debate, and live with English-only policies in their communities.

Looking for Language Policy in Action

If other studies have focused on why Official English matters, I wanted to figure out how these policies emerge at all. In other words, I was curious about the policymaking *process*, rather than just the final policy product or the aftermath. When I first started looking into the English-only movement, I realized that it was not immediately apparent where these policies were coming from, why so many of them closely resembled each other, or why some policies passed while others failed. And because language policies do not write themselves,[19] at least not yet, I try to understand the *people* involved in order to understand the processes by which English can

[19] Not every language policy is written – many are more tacit (Watson and Shapiro, 2018). Much of my approach in this book is applicable to understanding tacit language policies, but my specific focus is on the most official, explicit, inscribed government language policies.

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become an official language.[20] What interests me about the people who craft these official language policies is less their beliefs and more their actions. Of course, the two are inseparable in practice, since people's thoughts and feelings shape how they act and vice versa. I argue, however, that it is crucial to recognize that language policymaking is not just a reflection of what people feel in their hearts and minds. Many people in the United States are racist, xenophobic, and/or value English and monolingualism over other languages and other ways of communicating, but only a few of those people have the time, motivation, expertise, and resources to successfully go through the process of enacting English-only policies. What are the keys to those people's success? And, conversely, when people thwart English-only policies, what are the keys to *their* success? Those are the kinds of things I am curious about.

There are two main reasons for my focus on people and their policymaking processes, one related to policy in general and the other more particular to English-only policies. In terms of policy more generally, the policymaking process is an important way for language advocates to generate meaning and power. Language policies typically do not spring fully formed from one person's head. Rather, people form coalitions and develop their perspectives on language as part of the process. In other words, it is not that people have an idea and then they put it into policy form; rather, they decide to work on a policy and then their most effective ideas and strategies often come out of that process. That process often involves not just one text but many (Lo Bianco and Aliani, 2013, p. 3; Wible, 2013, p. 169; Branson, 2022, pp. 162–163). The initial idea may not even be for a language policy but for a policy on immigration, or housing, or education, or voting. For example, in Chapter 2 I discuss an English-only policy that started out under the umbrella of an "Illegal Immigration Relief Ordinance." Even once someone or some small group decides to focus on language, most language policies can pass only through the collaborative efforts of a wide range of people, but many of those people become involved only in later stages of the process. In other words, many policymakers do not think about language issues on a regular basis, and so recruiting those people into the policymaking process is part of the work.

To put it in numerical terms, most of the local governments I study have five to seven elected officials with the power to enact new ordinances, and usually only one or two are actually passionate about making English official.

[20] This line of inquiry goes back to the beginning of language policy and planning as a field. In one of the field's early texts, Rubin and Jernudd (1971) write, "We still do not know how language planning *actually* operates: what are the goals that planners have considered, what motivates their considerations of particular goals and their acceptance of certain goals, what are the alternative strategies that the planners consider, how do these express given goals, how do they evaluate the strategies, what outcomes do planners predict for various strategies, and what does in fact happen?" (p. xxii).

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That means that in order to make any headway at all, they have to convince several of their colleagues to agree. Even beyond getting their colleagues to cast their votes in their favor, people have to meet potential supporters and persuade them to support their policy idea, whether by signing a petition, giving an endorsement at a government meeting or public hearing, or contributing suggestions for how to write or revise the policy draft. These gradual steps of generating ideas and building connections with like-minded people are not trivial – they are crucial moments where language ideologies and strategies can be hammered out, tested, revised, refined, and ultimately shared with other policymakers in other communities.

The second reason I focus on the policymaking process is more specific to the English-only movement in the United States. Because these policies tend to be primarily symbolic, they are actually at their most potent when they are on the cusp of passing. The days and months leading up to a vote are when an English-only policy will generate the most news coverage, when elected officials can use language as a campaign wedge issue, when lobbying groups can capitalize on the controversy to raise funds, when policymakers may be the most open to revising the policy draft, when activists can try to exert their influence, and when people in the community will be actively discussing and debating, in some cases for the first time, how language can and should work in their community. The aim of these local English-only policies is typically not to set up an enforcement apparatus but more so to dissuade multilingual people of color from moving to the community or engaging with the local government at all. Because the kinds of policies discussed in this book are rarely enforced after they pass, having a high-profile process becomes the purpose of the whole exercise. Not all language policies are like this: There are many situations where a language policy really makes a splash only when implementation begins. In the English-only movement, though, the publicity leading up to the policy passing is the point.

To add one more layer of complexity, English-only campaigns are not isolated events. One year, there may be no official language policies in a given region, and by the next year there may be several, and that clustering is not a coincidence. So, one of my main points in this book is that these policies tend to be quite closely connected, in terms of intertextual ties between the policy texts (they often share some of the exact same wording) and interpersonal ties between the people involved (including across different governments and between elected officials, lobbyists, and activists). Furthermore, even identifying who the authors are is not straightforward, since most English-only policies are ghostwritten and collaboratively written. While this writing network became more refined in the 2000s, in truth the English-only movement has always operated this way. As I will discuss in Chapter 1, all of the English-only policies that started the modern movement in the early 1980s were written by

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people other than their official public sponsors, and they were all later emulated by policy writers in other communities and jurisdictions. The upshot is that I quickly realized that focusing on one English-only policy, or one person, or one government, or one organization would prevent me from learning what was really going on.

To design a study that could shed light on all this complexity, I drew on research traditions in language policy (Tollefson, 1989; McCarty, 2011; Källkvist and Hult, 2016), writing studies (Prior, 1998; Lillis and Curry, 2010; Brandt, 2015), applied linguistics (Pennycook, 2010), sociolinguistics (Heller, 2011), sociocultural linguistics (Bucholtz and Hall, 2008), and rhetoric (Cintrón, 1997; Asen, 2015), as well as on the work of scholars whose research synthesizes much of the above, like Ana Celia Zentella (1996), Geneva Smitherman (1999), Jan Blommaert (2010), Scott Wible (2013), and Suresh Canagarajah (2013). I foreground people's perspectives, triangulate multiple kinds of data, and reflect critically on my own role as a researcher (all hallmarks of ethnography), while also taking a decidedly writing-oriented approach. I prioritize methods that allow me to trace how a range of people write and otherwise shape the meaning of local language policies over time, both from their points of view and from mine. What ultimately unites all these bodies of work is an emphasis on how people navigate language, literacy, and power in the course of everyday life.

At first glance, it may appear that language policy is not part of everyday life – it can seem like a lofty enterprise where nameless, faceless policymakers issue mandates from on high. For the people involved in language policy, though, it is a quotidian activity that happens through embodied conversations, reading, and writing. The grounded nature of language policy is especially apparent in firsthand accounts of cases where scholars themselves are part of the process (Rabin, 1971; Lo Bianco, 1989; Smitherman, 1999; Wee, 2018; Mihut, 2019). What this means in twenty-first-century terms is that it happens in meeting rooms, over email, in Microsoft Word, and on social media (and probably increasingly on Zoom and Slack as well). One of the key insights of Pennycook's (2010) work on language as a local practice is that even the most powerful people are situated – no one's discourse happens outside of context. That is why I resist framing language policy as micro versus macro.[21]

Language policy *is* a local practice; it's just a question of whether people play up that localism (which I argue is common in the English-only movement) or whether they try to transcend their local context. Treating language policy as a local practice is important because "a focus on local action is a

[21] For other arguments that phenomena cannot be dichotomized either being macro or micro, and that indeed this dyad may not be useful, see Wortham (2012), Wortham and Rhodes (2012), and Latour (2005).

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useful corrective to the bland work on language planning that has held sway for too long, doing little more than describing national policies" (Pennycook, 2010, p. 54; see also Liddicoat and Baldauf, 2008). Pennycook (2010) is not suggesting that national policies are irrelevant but rather that all studies, even of national policies, could be less "bland" if they focused on action situated in localized spaces, rather than pretending language policy is so exceptional as to exist outside of context. When language policy studies treat policymakers and policy texts as if they were voices from nowhere, it limits every aspect of the research.

The Research Process

Over the course of several years, I observed government meetings and hearings in Anne Arundel County, Carroll County, Frederick County, and Queen Anne's County in Maryland; conducted and incorporated interviews with twenty-three of the people involved; and collected texts from the government, news media, social media, local Maryland organizations, the two major organizations focused on making English official (ProEnglish and U.S. English), and historical archives (see Appendix A on research methods). My archival research focused on people and organizations that have been involved in the English-only movement for longer periods of time, extending back to the 1980s. I sifted through the collections of activist John Tanton, FAIR, and Senator S. I. Hayakawa. I also consulted more isolated oral histories, pamphlets, and newsletters held in libraries around the country. Finally, I read through public tax records and registration records for relevant organizations, as a way to try to pin down historical details around timelines, names, and locations.

In including materials from several decades, my purpose is not to compare and contrast earlier and later phases of this movement but to show connections across space and time. Specifically, some of the people who are working on language policy in the 2000s have been doing so since the 1980s. For example, the lawyer who reportedly wrote ProEnglish's policy template around 2006 also worked for U.S. English when it first began in 1983, and I learned about this history in my 2015 interview with Robert Vandervoort. Similarly, the current CEO of U.S. English, Mauro Mujica, has led the organization since 1993 and got involved in language policy through interactions with Hayakawa in the 1980s, and I put this timeline together through my 2019 interview with Mujica. Including earlier English-only discourse is important, then, for showing that people's strategies for making English official are neither new nor exceptional nor limited to local government policies but rather that these strategies have been central to the modern iteration of the English-only movement since its origins. The boundaries between historical and contemporary research can be particularly blurry in social movements or policy initiatives that unfold over many years.

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The Trump Factor

Perhaps nowhere are these historical throughlines more consequential than in the rise of Donald Trump. When I began researching the English-only movement, I admit that I did not see Trump as part of the picture, and I do not think my participants did either. As a case in point, one of the people I interviewed is a Democratic county council member named Jerry Donald, and in the months leading up to the 2014 election, Donald (2014) was able to establish his campaign website at electdonald.com. When I was getting ready to interview him in 2015, I bookmarked the URL for my records and did not give the domain name a second thought. I never imagined that the phrase "Elect Donald" would come to take on a new valence with Trump's presidential election in 2016. Most Republican politicians seemed to be caught off guard as well. Former president George W. Bush, for example, reportedly remarked after Trump's inauguration speech, "That was some weird shit" (Ali, 2017).

However, some of the people involved in the English-only movement were not so surprised. They were quick to notice connections between their work and Trump, and between past and present. Lou Barletta was one of the first politicians to endorse Trump in 2016. Barletta is one of the local politicians I discuss in Chapter 2. He was the mayor of Hazleton, Pennsylvania, when he enacted his Illegal Immigration Relief Act, which included an Official English clause (Dick, 2011). Barletta saw himself in Trump. In a news interview, he explained that he identified with the candidate because "Donald Trump was criticized the same way I was criticized when I was mayor" (Collins, 2016). Collins (2016) added, "Barletta is one of a handful of lawmakers who have endorsed Trump … Barletta said he hopes more of his colleagues will endorse Trump."

While Barletta took pride in Trump's success, others seemed to feel shame. Roger Conner, the early figure who compared English-only policies to literacy tests, has since changed careers and become a woodworker. In 2021, Conner gave an interview to Georgia Public Broadcasting where he described the Trump administration's approach to the US Census: "I can only understand it as a pure expression of racism and evil. And yet I have to own I took this same position 40 years ago" (Wang, 2021, February 15). Barletta's and Conner's comments get at a larger point: Trump was not so much inventing new strains of political thought as he was channeling, mixing, and matching old strains (Santa Ana et al., 2020; Jones, 2021; O'Connor, 2021; Continetti, 2022). The connections were not merely conceptual either, as the Trump administration hired people like Stephen Miller and Kris Kobach who had been part of some of the networks I discuss in this book. For instance, before Kobach worked on Trump's 2016 campaign and helped Trump contest the 2020 election, he worked on a number of state- and local-level policies around the country, including with Lou Barletta.

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I interpret Trump's actions in light of the people who made his presidency possible: people like Kobach, Miller, and Barletta. They had high hopes for Trump, but overall he seems to have disappointed them. When Trump entered office in 2017, I predicted that one of two things would happen. The first possibility was that he would help sign into law a national English-only policy. Maybe it would be an executive order, or a bill in Congress, or a constitutional amendment, but whatever the genre, I was sure Trump would sign off on it. The other possibility was that language policy would seem beside the point during the Trump administration. Why make English official when it was possible to dream up even more ambitious policies, like Executive Order 13769 (the Muslim ban)? In the end, he took the latter approach. Trump has no language policy accomplishments to speak of, much to the disappointment of English-only organizations. In a way, his lack of language policy acumen seems to give credence to something that I heard local politicians say all along: They move to make English official precisely because *they do not trust the higher levels of government to do so*. At the same time, Trump took up so much oxygen that other areas of politics did seem to fall by the wayside. After the 2016 election, I did not come across any other new city- or county-level English-only policies. When I did my last round of fieldwork in 2019, the movement had lost some of its momentum. I found myself spending more time in historical archives, and only a few days on interviews; previously, the ratio had been the opposite. My aim is for the book to capture the whole trajectory of this movement, from its origins, to its early strategies and stumbles, to its peak period, to its current lull, to its possible futures.

My Position

Finally, a note on my role as a relative outsider in these communities. I am not a politician, lobbyist, lawyer, or activist, and so when I conducted interviews and asked people how they do what they do, I was genuinely asking. And for someone interested in studying the *local*, I certainly selected research sites and other data sources in which I was decidedly nonlocal. I had never spent much time in Maryland (except Baltimore) or Washington, DC, before this study. One of my earliest participants may have realized just how new I was to the area when we were trying to schedule an interview. I asked him if we could meet the next day, and he replied that he had to go to Gettysburg in the morning. At the time, in my mind, Gettysburg was like the Mariana Trench: I had heard of it, and I could even recite some facts about it, but I had absolutely no idea where it was. (This admission will likely horrify anyone from the East Coast and anyone better versed in US Civil War history.) My mind was racing, wondering whether we might need to schedule the interview for a different week to account for his trip. He must have been wondering why I was not

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replying, so he added that he would be available after lunch, since Gettysburg was only a short drive away after all. What can I say? I am from Port Angeles in the state of Washington, thousands of miles away. While that moment was unfortunate, in general my outsider position was not necessarily a problem. For example, once people realized I was unfamiliar with the area, they would go into greater detail about local history and politics, in a way that I doubt would have happened if we had shared more points of reference. On the other hand, I do not have the same perspective or access as someone studying their own local language policy (Tardy, 2011; Mihut, 2019).

These differences aside, I did find much in common with many of my participants (and with the people whose archived papers I read). Like me, they tended to be white, US-born, middle-class people who use relatively unmarked varieties of English and who write professionally. Of all the elected officials I discuss in this book (including both supporters and critics of English-only policies), I believe all are white except for Senator S. I. Hayakawa. Nearly everyone I studied was at the top of their field, with careers in medicine, law, K–12 education, higher education, and business before and often during their time in elected office. They also tend to share an unusually high level of postsecondary education, with many having attended graduate school. When I started my fieldwork, I was still a PhD student, and I was struck by how many participants seemed to be very familiar with what academic life entailed. One participant asked me what stage I was at, and after I started to give some convoluted explanation about how I was finished taking classes but I would not graduate for a couple more years, he realized what I was saying and he said, "Oh, so how's it feel to be ABD?" This acronym ("all but dissertation") connotes that someone has completed their coursework and exams but not yet their dissertation. In another conversation, someone asked what kinds of classes I taught, and I again started to give some tortuous answer about how I was in an English Department but I don't teach literature, and he said, with a dawning sense of recognition, "Oh, so you teach comp?" He sussed out that I teach composition (academic writing for first-year students), which struck me because in both these conversations I mistakenly assumed we were in separate spheres but we were not. This focus on education was not limited just to them as individuals. Many of my participants had children about the same age as me, and one of the most common forms of small talk we would have while I was setting up or putting away my recording equipment was about where they were in college or graduate school.

Conversations like these are why, when people ask me what it is like to study the English-only movement, I say that it just feels very normal. Yes, the people in this book have developed a distinctive set of strategies around language policymaking, but the English-only movement is not off in its own separate world. English-only policies and the people who develop them are not

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worlds apart from other kinds of writing and other kinds of writers.[22] It is all the same world. English-only policies are indicative of much broader patterns in how people write for change, and they represent the hopes and fears of hundreds of millions of people.

Plan for the Book

In Chapter 1, I go back to the beginning, in order to show local language policies were crucial to the formation of the English-only movement. From the 1970s into the 1980s and 1990s, relatively disparate activists and politicians started to notice each other, collaborate with each other, and form English-only organizations together. To tell this story, I focus on the perspectives and experiences of key figures like Emmy Shafer, who started the current English-only movement in 1980 when she started organizing support for an Anti-Bilingualism Ordinance targeting Spanish users in Dade County, Florida. Shafer pioneered a number of groundbreaking strategies that would become a blueprint, like emphasizing the local economy, starting a nonprofit, and hiring a ghostwriter. I also introduce the two figures who really popularized the idea of making English official: John Tanton and Senator S. I. Hayakawa. I explain how Tanton founded the organization U.S. English and then the organization English Language Advocates (later renamed ProEnglish). Ultimately, these people and organizations paved the way for the local language policies discussed in future chapters.

Next, in Chapter 2, I analyze how people write and revise local English-only policies, through text histories of the four policies in Frederick County, Anne Arundel County, Queen Anne's County, and Carroll County. Three of the four policies were adapted from one common template, and that template emerged out of an even earlier partnership between the organization ProEnglish and the town of Hazleton, Pennsylvania. This state of affairs complicates previous accounts of local language policies, which tend to treat the phenomenon as either a purely grassroots phenomenon or a case of astroturfing. Instead, all language policymakers have agency and are strategic about their writing processes. I argue that three writing strategies are particularly important: ghostwriting, working with templates, and making conscious choices about genre. Once these Maryland communities started developing their English-only policies, each case unfolded quite differently, and so I also address what local circumstances and writing processes can facilitate or constrain these policies. Within each community, there were also mixed feelings about the existence of the language policy network: Some relished getting to work with colleagues

[22] Prior (2018) articulates the problems with the "worlds apart" framework, particularly in the context of treating academic and professional writing as separate spheres.

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from other counties and from U.S. English and ProEnglish, whereas others resented these outsiders for interfering. Based on these findings, I argue that while language policies are sometimes treated as transparent windows into language ideology, the reality is more complex because there are so many other procedural and interpersonal factors involved.

I then turn from how people write these policies to how they discuss their scale and scope. In contrast to the relatively chronological and narrative structure of Chapters 1 and 2, Chapter 3 examines how a penchant for localism permeates the whole movement. Drawing on Blommaert's (2010) theory of upscaling, I argue that *downscaling* plays just as pivotal a role in the English-only movement, and I examine examples that cut across my interviews, archival research, observations, and policy documents. I begin by analyzing examples of downscaling on its own, then turn toward situations where people engage in both upscaling and downscaling in a single text or interaction. I argue that previous work on scaling in discourse oversimplifies how power works, since a policy seeming quaint and innocuous (and therefore impervious to criticism) can be just as powerful as a policy framed in terms of nationalism or globalization. Ultimately, scaling in either direction can be a way to claim linguistic authority. At the same time, sometimes policymakers do not walk this discursive tightrope successfully, and I argue that this is what ultimately happened in Frederick County, which led to that policy's downfall.

When Frederick County, Maryland, repealed its English-only policy in 2015, it marked the first community-driven repeal of its kind since 1993. To explore how Frederick County managed this feat, in Chapter 4 I analyze how activists and politicians worked in concert to dismantle the ordinance, both in terms of actually passing a repeal bill and by marshaling community support more broadly. I find that people used four strategies: flipping the economics script, linking language to race and racism, questioning whether English can even be defined and separated from other languages, and highlighting the role of collective action. At the same time, focusing on the economic benefits of multilingualism risked eclipsing the other approaches. In light of these people's successful organizing, I also conclude that scholars have much to learn from activists' expertise.

In the Conclusion, I consider how this study complicates what success looks like in language policy. I also explore the implications of this study for future research on language, writing practices, and other areas of public policy. Finally, I consider possibilities for future organizing and social change in both governments and other institutions, including institutions that hit closer to home.

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