4 Resisting and Rewriting
How People Undo English-Only Policies

While language policies may be difficult to enact, they can be even more difficult to undo. When Frederick County, Maryland, repealed its English-only policy in 2015, for example, it marked the first community-driven repeal of its kind since 1993 in Dade County, Florida (Associated Press, 1993, May 19). This twenty-two-year gap reflects the fact that while institutions may tacitly reinterpret language policies over time, or alter them due to external pressure,[1] actively working against them from the inside is relatively rare. Of the English-only policies I studied in Maryland, this is the only one that people repealed. Many institutions remain committed to what Canagarajah (2013) calls a "monolingual orientation" toward language (p. 20), and this commitment grants English-only policies a certain inertia. The monolingual orientation can make using only one language or language variety seem more natural, normal, correct, efficient, or otherwise authoritative than other ways of communicating (Watson and Shapiro, 2018). So, how did Frederick County break out of this inertia? How do people resist and rewrite English-only policies?

Activists and politicians spent more than a year working in concert to dismantle the ordinance, both in terms of actually passing a repeal bill and marshaling community support more broadly. I explore how people used four approaches to argue for undoing their community's English-only policy, each of which emerged from a particular, alternative, orientation toward language. First, they flipped the economics script. Since the people who passed the English-only ordinance had argued it could save the county money, they argued back that it would not and that indeed it could actually be hurting the local economy. This strategy was about articulating the value of multilingualism. Second, they made connections between the English-only policy and racism. Since the original ordinance did not mention race or immigration on its face, people had to actively make the case that the policy did indeed target people of color and that this racism made the community look bad.

[1] This pressure could come from the state government (Wright, 2011, June 3) or from other groups, like the American Civil Liberties Union (Eichelkraut, 2007, February 16; Dick, 2011).

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This strategy was not so much about monolingualism versus multilingualism as it was about highlighting the importance of a raciolinguistic perspective. The third strategy was questioning the nature of English. Some of the protesters approached language as something too fluid to be contained and bounded by a restrictive language policy, thereby offering a more translingual understanding of how language works. Finally, almost everyone involved highlighted the role of collective action. This strategy emphasized that while English-only policies may be popular, their alternative policy proposal was popular too. All these strategies were indispensable.

This small group of people pulled off something that almost no one in the United States has ever accomplished before or since. The Frederick County repeal campaign thus offers a critical window into how language policies emerge and change in practice and a possible model for future language advocacy. There is much to learn from their strategies, in terms of both what works and what pitfalls to be wary of along the way. Scholars have long debated about what the alternatives to English-only policies could be in the United States and what the alternatives to restrictive and colonial language policies could be around the world. For many observers and practitioners of language policy, including myself, critique is easy but change is hard. In part, it is hard because there is no one right answer. There is probably no one-size-fits-all language policy that will do everyone justice. Nevertheless, we have to try. People in Frederick County show what that can look like.

In contrast with earlier chapters, here I narrow in on one policy, one community, and a few of the actors. The nine people whose interviews I highlight in this chapter all play a number of roles, as activists, writers, public speakers, employees, and volunteers, but for the purposes of this study, I would say that three are primarily elected officials, three are primarily activists and community organizers, and three are primarily bloggers. The elected officials are county council members Jessica Fitzwater, M. C. Keegan-Ayer, and Jerry Donald. The activists and community organizers are Jay Mason, Angela Spencer, and the man who organizes the Occupy Frederick Facebook page.[2] I include the Occupy Facebook writer in this group because he is also outspoken at public hearings. Finally, three women operate Frederick Local Yokel, a blog offering "a humorous yet informative look at politics in Frederick County, Maryland."[3] Everyone I spoke with was confident about their decision to support repealing the English-only policy: As Keegan-Ayer put it, wryly, "there wasn't a whole lot of, you know, inner struggle."

[2] Of the nine participants highlighted in this article, everyone requested that I use their real name, or the real name of their blog or social media profile.

[3] I will cite individual posts along the way, but in general see https://fredericklocalyokel.com/ and www.facebook.com/occupyfrederick/

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Alternatives to English-Only Policies

Scholars have theorized several alternatives to monolingual language policies, each of which has potential and each of which leaves something to be desired. One possibility is a more multilingual orientation, which emphasizes the existence and the value of using multiple different languages. That orientation is foundational to dual language education and other additive programs, like English Plus in the United States, the European Union's language policy, the Conference on College Composition and Communication's own National Language Policy (CCCC, 1988; Wible, 2013; Flowers, 2019), and academic fields like second language writing (Jordan, 2012). However, additive approaches to language carry the risk of re-essentializing the languages and identities involved (Horner et al., 2011). To put it another way, if English-only policies suggest that there is one worthwhile category of language, then some multilingual language policies suggest that there are, perhaps, two or three worthwhile categories of language, rather than actually dismantling those rigid categories or taking into account that the people policing these categories may be racist or otherwise prejudiced.

A more translingual approach offers a way to reconcile some of the issues with both monolingual and multilingual orientations (Canagarajah, 2013). Translingual theory has emerged in response to growing awareness that "language mixing is the norm and does not need explanation, that communication occurs across what have been thought of as languages, that speakers draw on repertoires of semiotic resources, and that language is best understood in terms of social practices" (Pennycook, 2016, p. 212). Communication in this framework is about drawing on a range of semiotic resources that transcend tidy categories. While this approach to language can seem like a radical break from more traditional ways of thinking about language, I actually think people in the United States are already primed to think about language in this way, at least in some contexts. For example, the First Amendment to the US Constitution simply says that "Congress shall make no law … abridging the freedom of speech." There is nothing there about freedom of speech in one or two or three particular languages or particular dialects. Of course, the First Amendment plays out in complicated and paradoxical ways in practice (Baron, 2023), but my point is that thinking about language in terms of open-ended practices is not a new or foreign concept.

However, neither multilingual nor translingual approaches tend to center identity and inequality. There are bodies of work that tackle questions of power more directly, particularly around race and racism. For example, scholars like Smitherman (1999) and May (2001) have focused on language rights, while others have moved toward raciolinguistic inquiry into how language and race shape each other (Flores and Rosa, 2015; Alim, 2016; Rosa and Flores, 2017;

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Rosa, 2019). Alim (2016) describes how, for him, this inquiry stems from his work with Smitherman on the language of President Barack Obama (Alim and Smitherman, 2012) and aims to "ask and answer critical questions about the relations between language, race, and power across diverse ethnoracial contexts and societies" (p. 3). A raciolinguistic perspective draws attention to how language and race shape each other and how this shaping is at once historical and ongoing. This framework allows for a much more clear-eyed understanding of how language policy works and how it could work differently. In the context of language policy, studies like Flores, Tseng, and Subtirelu (2021) have led the way toward a raciolinguistic perspective, particularly in education. This body of work tends to focus on scholars' perspectives, but what interests me is that activists and politicians are also quite aware (perhaps even more aware) of how to talk about language and race in such a way as to push back against unjust language policies.

To be sure, I am not suggesting that a raciolinguistic perspective is completely distinct from theories of multilingualism and translingualism. Indeed, some of the most fruitful work on language has focused on how people could and should synthesize understandings of race and racism with understandings of how language works in practice (Smitherman, 1977; Young, 2009; Zentella, 2014; Gilyard, 2016; Guerra, 2016; Simon, 2019; Milu, 2021). What I am suggesting is a need to build on such work, particularly in the form of inquiry into how people navigate these alternatives to monolingual language policies in the context of community organizing. Sometimes, there is a sense that new language policy ideas need to come from scholars, but what interests me is cases where policymakers develop their own innovative approaches.

In order to examine what made this repeal campaign so innovative, I first set the stage for what was happening in Frederick when the repeal process began and then I examine each of the four strategies in turn. The section on flipping the economics script focuses on the repeal bill itself, why some sectors of the economy were so locally relevant, and why this strategy partially eclipsed the others. I turn next to the ways people situated the English-only policy in the area's long history of segregation and civil rights activism, recent rise in anti-Latinx and anti-Asian xenophobia, and growing controversy over their "Fredneck" reputation. After these two prominent strategies, I analyze one that was more rare yet also better-received by bloggers and activists: one council member's decision to focus on the unruliness of English and how that fluidity made the English-only policy untenable. By emphasizing collaboration and cooperation, the people involved wove the other strategies together into a multifaceted yet coherent campaign, and I conclude by discussing how that strategy shaped my interview questioning and resulted in multiple coauthored documents, from a communitywide petition to the new policy text. In the final discussion, I consider the implications of this case study.

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Setting the Stage for Frederick County's Repeal Campaign

In 2013, where Chapters 2 and 3 left off, Frederick County had an English-only policy; now it does not. What changed? While my interest is primarily in the people who shaped the new language policy in 2015, there was also a structural transformation of the county government that facilitated their work (see timeline in Table 4.1). Voters approved this transformation by referendum in late 2012 (nine months after the English-only ordinance passed). The new form of government involved both new kinds of office and new voting districts. Before, five commissioners were elected by the whole county (not by districts); now, seven council members and a county executive are elected by a combination of district-specific and countywide elections. During the 2014 election cycle, one effect of the new system was that there were no true incumbent candidates: Districts were electing their first-ever representatives, and even people running at large still had to shift their political identities from commissioners (an administrative and legislative office) to council members (a purely legislative office). Another effect was that the city was no longer overshadowed by the county's rural majority. In one fell swoop, and in the absence of major demographic or ideological changes, the government changed structure dramatically.

Fitzwater won office and went on to sponsor the repeal bill. In an interview, she told me that "this was a great time for a candidate like myself to jump" in. At the time, Fitzwater had nine years of experience as an elementary music teacher for the local school district. When I interviewed her, she also explained

Table 4.1 *A three-and-a-half-year timeline of events between the English-only ordinance's passage and repeal*

Date	Events
February 24, 2012	English-only ordinance passed
November 2012	Referendum approving new form of government
Summer 2014	Voting guide raises possibility of repeal
November 4, 2014	Election (Jessica Fitzwater, M. C. Keegan-Ayer, Jerry Donald, and others win office)
December 1, 2014	Inauguration
January–February, 2015	Initial meetings to plan repeal
February–August, 2015	Human Relations Commission (HRC) discusses resolution, petition, and repeal at meetings
April 28, 2015	HRC resolution
June 16, 2015	Repeal bill introduced
July 21, 2015	Public hearing
August 18, 2015	Final meeting and vote; ordinance is repealed
October 17, 2015	Repeal is in effect

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that before running for office, she was "very active" in the local teachers association and the State Education Association as well as the National Education Association (NEA), which included "attend[ing] local budget hearings," lobbying in Annapolis, and winning the 2014 NEA award for Political Activist of the Year. In an article describing her initial nomination for that award, she brought up her support of Maryland's recently passed DREAM Act (Nuñez and Flaherty, 2014, June 25). In 2013, she completed a seven-month-long program called Emerge Maryland (2012), which aims to "chang[e] the face of Maryland politics by identifying, training and encouraging women to run for office, get elected and to seek higher office." Many people I talked to in Frederick went out of their way, unsolicited, to praise her work, whether they were colleagues or constituents, Democrat or not, an official participant or not. They described her as "a prime mover," "very impressive," "very intelligent," "excellent," "serious," with "the best work ethic," and as someone who is "going someplace."[4] I am not surprised that her star has continued to rise in the years since I interviewed her; she recently became the new Frederick County executive in December 2022.

Fitzwater's colleague M. C. Keegan-Ayer also won office in that same 2014 election and became the council's vice president. The two eventually cosponsored the repeal bill. Keegan-Ayer ran for office after an earlier career as a lobbyist on Capitol Hill and after more than twenty years of being active in the community. While she sees national and local politics as similar – "local isn't that different" – the move from constituent to politician was more significant. She recalled thinking, "I'm always out there yelling at them, it's time for me to step up and take the heat for a while." In a voter guide published by the Frederick County Chamber of Commerce (2014) for the primary election, she stated that if she were elected, "The first thing I will do is to repeal the English as the official language ordinance." She learned how to craft and move legislation when she was working in Washington, DC, and this experience helped her put together the repeal bill. Together, Fitzwater and Keegan-Ayer were a dynamic duo.

In November 2014, these two, along with five other people, became the first cohort of county council members, and plans to engineer a repeal started in earnest. In early 2015, Fitzwater discussed the issue with Keegan-Ayer and the county's Human Relations Commission (HRC), as part of her role as HRC government liaison (see Human Relations Commission, 2015, February–August). Other community activists also started talking about the issue, well before any bill was formally introduced. In April, the HRC put out a resolution calling for a repeal. Around the same time, the blog Frederick Local Yokel began. As the blog's title suggests, their style is tongue in cheek. The three friends behind

[4] The first four quotes are from Hayden Duke, and the last three are from the Occupy Frederick writer.

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the blog were inspired by both the DC blog Wonkette and the spectacle of county politics to write about nearly every council meeting, as well as other local events. They started their blog in response to Blaine Young's actions. On Facebook one night, they recalled deciding, "We need to do something about this, so this guy doesn't get elected again."[5] They initially considered writing a book on the topic, but they decided to start with a blog instead. They wrote several posts about the repeal in terms of both county council events and ProEnglish's attempts to sway the council members.

In June, Fitzwater publicly introduced the bill, in July, the council held a public hearing, and in August, they voted. During this summer stretch, ProEnglish and U.S. English defended the original ordinance and worked to sway some of the council members. People also debated the policy online, in the media, and, as a few participants recalled, in church. Within the county council, two Republican members floated ideas for amendments (as an alternative to an all-out repeal).[6] In the end, the bill passed 4–3, with three Democrats and one Republican voting for the repeal. In striking contrast to the English-only policy case studies, I never found any evidence that these people ever received support from any non-Frederick-based advocacy organizations or any other lawmakers who had gone through a similar process. The repeal went into effect in October, while I was conducting interviews. This chronology describes what happened, and now I turn to the question of how it happened, beginning with the first of the four strategies.

Flipping the Economics Script

Economic arguments had propelled Frederick County's English-only policy to success, and much of the repeal campaign focused on flipping that economics script. Flipping the script entails taking a relatively established kind of discourse and reproducing some of the formal features but doing so with a different goal (Carr, 2011, p. 3). In this case, the established discourse involved linking language to the economy. One of the original policy's stated aims was to "reduce costs and promote efficiency." Supporters of the original ordinance had argued that a monolingual government would be best for the local economy, saving money on translation and interpreter services. This sentiment

[5] In using Facebook as a platform for feminist and progressive activism and commiseration, they exemplified a kind of activism that was about to get even more popular after the 2016 election (Zentz, 2021).

[6] Immediately after Jessica Fitzwater introduced the bill, on June 16, 2015, fellow council member Billy Shreve said to her, "I think we can just modify it to include the things that you're looking for." Fitzwater replied that if he sent her a draft in writing, she would "be happy to look at it." Later in the summer, council member Tony Chmelik drafted an actual amendment but it never passed.

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echoes Wible's (2017) research on the "common argument that public and private organizations – and by extension, taxpayers – incur significant financial costs" when they allow for multilingualism (p. 187). Many people who were critical of the English-only policy nevertheless took this economic angle seriously. These politicians and activists argued that money does matter but that multilingualism would be more lucrative than monolingualism.

The repeal bill itself exemplified this strategy. When county council member Jessica Fitzwater introduced cosponsored Bill No. 15-08 at a June 2015 public meeting, she read the first section aloud to the audience. According to the unedited text, the purpose of the bill is to

> Repeal Ordinance No. 12-03-598 [the English-only policy], for the purpose of promoting a competitive business climate for Frederick County's existing 6,200 businesses which employ 79,000 workers; attracting new life science businesses and jobs that will move Frederick County closer to becoming the State's bio-tech hub; ensuring that non-English language speakers are not deterred from reporting crimes, seeking medical care or other human services; and generally relating to Frederick County's encouragement of multi-linguistic acceptance, tolerance and multi-cultural diversity in an increasingly global economy.

There are several themes present, from crime to healthcare to multiculturalism. The overarching strategy, however, is to frame multilingualism as an economic resource rather than a problem (Ruíz, 1984). Specifically, the bill argues that repealing the English-only policy matters to the county's thousands of businesses and tens of thousands of employees and hinders the county's ability to become "the State's bio-tech hub." Even the concepts of "acceptance," "tolerance," and "diversity" appear only in the immediate context of "an increasingly global economy." Importantly, the preamble does not focus on all economic activities equally: It is primarily about science, technology, engineering, and medicine. In other words, lower-paying jobs and other kinds of industries are not the priority. Finally, the focus on the "increasingly global" has a significant temporal and spatial component and frames multilingualism as a new incoming factor, in contrast to monolingualism, which begins to seem more traditional and more provincial by comparison. This dichotomy, with English-only tradition on one end and emerging multilingualism on the other, elides histories of local multilingualism, heritage languages, and Indigenous languages. This sort of discourse also appears in defenses of bilingual education, as though the only goal is achieving an economic advantage (Katznelson and Bernstein, 2017). In this sense, this bill is actually quite similar to some English-only policies: Both link the fate of the economy to rising levels of multilingualism.

At the same time, this policy also has a twist: Its authors used the possibility of multilingual people moving in to argue *against* an English-only policy, rather than for it. They flipped the script. In our interview, I asked Jessica

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Fitzwater how she and her colleagues decided to "foreground … the business community and different industries." She explained:

FITZWATER: We really felt that for some of our more conservative colleagues, whereas for me … this is the right thing to do, and that's enough of an argument for me, making the economic argument, we thought, was really important, and it is a…
FLOWERS: Valid?
FITZWATER: It's a powerful, valid argument.

In this exchange, she answers thoughtfully, by explaining that although "for me … this is the right thing to do, and that's enough," economic arguments offered a more "powerful" rationale for the repeal for her "conservative colleagues." When I interjected and said the economic argument was "valid," she echoed the sentiment; she could marshal substantial quantitative and qualitative evidence to support this argument. In other words, flipping the economics script was the rare, possibly the only, strategy that she, her supporters, and her skeptics could all find persuasive. They used the same kinds of economic terms and sources, but with a more multilingual orientation toward language, in order to advance their goal of repealing the English-only policy.

Economic arguments for individual or societal multilingualism are common (Grin, 2003; Duchêne and Heller, 2012; Park and Wee, 2012). According to Flores (2013), "the desire for flexible workers and lifelong learners to serve service-oriented and technological jobs" has become *the* top policy justification for promoting multilingualism, ahead of cognitive, social, cultural, or historical reasons (p. 500).[7] However, while the scholars above tend to approach the economics of language policy by focusing on "acquisition planning," otherwise known as teaching and learning, in Frederick the focus was more on "status planning" (Spolsky, 2004, p. 11). The worst-case scenario here was not Americans lacking the language skills to secure jobs and contracts but rather multinational corporations skipping over Frederick for being too English-oriented and instead planting their new offices in some other part of Maryland or, even worse, Virginia.

Concerns over the local economic landscape had been brewing for several years, not so much because the economy was struggling but because it was finally succeeding. As far back as 2008, Charles Jenkins cited rising school district costs as one reason why he wanted an English-only policy (Chapter 2). On the other side of the political spectrum, one of the bloggers for the site Frederick Local Yokel remembered how much shabbier the area seemed when she first moved there. At the time of our interview, the three women who founded this site had lived in Frederick for ten, sixteen, and twenty-nine years,

[7] Flores uses the term "plurilingualism" instead of "multilingualism," in keeping with the preferred terminology of the European Union (the specific topic of his article).

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respectively, and had just started blogging a few months back. As one of the writers described what Frederick was like when she first moved here, she explained how the downtown area, which surrounds a creek, used to be "all concrete," with just "plywood bridges" and "blank" storefronts, while today it is "much, much different." Her tableau was difficult for me to picture, since by the time I visited, the downtown area was a beautiful hub of stone bridges and bustling local businesses. It was hard to imagine it struggling.

She attributed the rise in prosperity to the local influx of biomedical and biotech businesses and military initiatives. For example, Fort Detrick is a longtime employer in the county, but the army base's cancer research center became elevated in 2012 to a "Federally Funded Research and Development Center" (National Cancer Institute, 2015). Other top local employers included Leidos Biomedical Research, AstraZeneca (pharmaceuticals), Lonza Walkersville ("Biological media, cultures & reagents"), and Life Technologies (Maryland Department of Commerce, 2015). People wanted these businesses to stay and thrive, and more businesses *like* them to move in, but they worried that the English-only policy was a repellent to more cosmopolitan corporations and employees, and so they developed a two-pronged approach to flipping the economics script. First, I briefly discuss how the bill's cosponsors undermined the idea that the ordinance was saving the government money. Next, I turn to how a variety of participants forwarded the alternate theory that a repeal could actually make the government and the community money. Finally, I explain how and why this strategy started to eclipse some of the others.

Assessing the Fiscal Impact

One way people yoked economic success to multilingualism was to unyoke it from monolingualism. Fitzwater, Keegan-Ayer, and others all did so by critiquing the original promise of the English-only policy to reduce government costs. Crucially, they also cited county budget data and a fiscal report to support the idea. The county's finance director prepared a fiscal report that asserted that repealing the English-only policy would result in "No fiscal impact." In other words, whether the policy were in place or not, it would not make any difference to the government's bottom line. Once this report came out in July, council members brought it up during council meetings, media interviews, and to me.

In addition to the report, they also turned to actual raw budget data. For example, they provided quotes on the county budget in an interview with the local newspaper (Loos, 2015, August 7). The newspaper article featured a table with the county's interpretation services budget over the past decade, as well as interpretations of that table from six out of the seven council members (Loos, 2015, August 7). The table offers information that could be interpreted any number of ways. Some years, costs go up; other years, they go down, and

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of course there is no agreement about what numbers would be appropriate, or what annual variation could be normal, for a community with a given demographic makeup and population size. Overall, though, the county spent much more on interpreting services in 2015 than it did the previous decade – from $8,183 back then to $59,084. However, it is hard to tell what role the English-only policy played in that trajectory. For example, I could imagine many of my participants from earlier chapters suggesting that the cost might have risen to $100,000 or more if it were not for the policy's deterrent effect. Everyone offered a slightly different reading about why costs had risen, not gone down. The article quotes Keegan-Ayer as saying, "I'm looking for a precipitous drop from when the ordinance went into effect, … and I don't see that drop," except for a brief one-year decline from 2012 to 2013. In our interview, she added that she had decided to "track how much money is actually being saved" and had found that much of the budget went to American Sign Language interpreters, which the English-only policy does not officially affect (following the ProEnglish template, it included an exception for anything relating to the Americans with Disabilities Act).[8] These literacy practices of sponsoring, citing, and interpreting this fiscal report are examples of flipping the economics script. At no point did these writers suggest that money does not matter or that language rights are priceless, or anything along those lines. Instead, granting that money does matter to nearly everyone, they concluded that the most effective way to criticize the English-only policy's economic discourse about multilingualism would be to offer their own.

Making the connection between economic development and accepting multilingualism became central to the repeal campaign. For example, in the midst of a longer explanation of why they thought the repeal happened, one of the Frederick Local Yokel writers explained that while the English-only policy was "specifically targeted at Hispanics," one of the consequences of the policy was that "biomedical firms," which employ "a lot of Asian workers," would also be alienated. The misunderstanding they describe here is painful to contemplate: that "biomedical firms" might not care about the English-only policy if only they understood that it was *really* targeted at "Hispanics," and not their own "Asians." Furthermore, this story makes sense only if one recognizes a dichotomy between Latinx people, on one hand, and people who contribute to the economy, on the other. This dichotomy is flawed, of course (Pimentel, 2015). Perhaps for that reason, as they fleshed out this narrative, they also distanced themselves from all the parties involved by adding that for them "it's not justifiable on any level." After all, this account flatters no one: The English-only policy is racist, and business owners care only if it might affect their own employees.

[8] But see Croft (2015, July 3) for a disability rights critique of the English-only policy.

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The Frederick Local Yokel blogger's caveat echoes Fitzwater's aside at the beginning of this section, where she stressed that "whereas for me, this is the right thing to do." Both are conveying that they understand English-only discourse but do not endorse it. I interpret such statements as acknowledgments of the difficulty of flipping the script. On one hand, they knew the economic arguments were important and evidence-based: The English-only policy *did not* result in obvious government savings, there *are* large companies who consider moving to Frederick because of its proximity to military bases and bigger cities, those companies *do* tend to employ a more transnational and multilingual workforce than currently exists in Frederick, some of these potential transplants *were* openly expressing fear of the English-only policy, and repelling potential STEM workers *could* threaten the area's fragile economic success. Furthermore, treating multilingualism as an economic resource is certainly more justifiable than many other ways people have historically treated the concept of using more than one language variety: as a problem (Ruíz, 1984), an aberration (Pavlenko, 2014, p. 12), a deficit (Shapiro, 2014; Dyson, 2015), or a "destructive" force (May, 2001, p. 205). And yet, for all the promise of economic arguments, the repeal's supporters knew that there were other facets of the policy that mattered too.

Jessica Fitzwater encapsulated some of these other facets as the more "emotional side of it." When I asked if there were ever any disagreements over how to frame the repeal bill, she responded by saying that while they did not disagree per se, she did have "discussions" with activists and nonprofits about how much to emphasize the emotions surrounding the English-only policy:

FLOWERS: Was there any time when you disagreed among yourselves about how exactly to frame it, or how to publicize it or anything?

FITZWATER: I don't want to say disagree, but, mmm, some…

FLOWERS: discuss?

FITZWATER: discussions, yeah, I mean, one of the things that came up is in 2012, when it was first passed, there was a big push by Casa de Maryland and the Frederick Immigration Coalition locally, which works a lot with Casa, that they had a lot of signs, and kind of, like, a big rally before, and they sort of … it ended up kind of feeding into it being an emotional issue, and … and rather than trying to make it more of an issue of, you know, economic development for the county, the county moving, you know, into the twenty-first century, which is what we tried to talk about, like, 'What kind of workers and businesses do we want to attract? What do we want our tourism to be, who do we want to be coming to visit or live or work in Frederick County? And what how is this impacting people's willingness to do that?' basically, and so, we did have, kind of, discussions about, you know, 'let's not … we're not going to have a rally beforehand, we're not going to have, like, signs,' we didn't want it to feed into the potential kind of, like, emotional side of it, even though, obviously, emotions came out at the hearing, because it is emotional for

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> people on both sides, but we didn't want to add fuel to that fire, basically. I'd say that's maybe one of the things that came up.

In this exchange, she explains that while organizations like Casa de Maryland and the Frederick Immigration Coalition had held protests in the streets in the past, her view at the time was "let's not … we're not going to have a rally beforehand, we're not going to have, like, signs." She added that "we didn't want it to … feed into the potential kind of, like, emotional side of it, even though, obviously emotions came out at the hearing, because it is emotional for people on both sides, but we didn't want to add fuel to that fire." As she goes, she sets up several dichotomies and positions herself in relation to each one. She distinguishes between "we" and "they" throughout, although the meaning of each of those words changes. Sometimes it's "we" the politicians versus "they" the activists, other times it's people who want to use rational arguments versus people who want to use emotional arguments, people who prioritize the economy and tourism versus people who prioritize immigrant and human rights, and even people who are versus are not into making signs.

By asking about moments of disagreement, I did invite this sort of dichotomous answer, of course. And every protest movement has internal debates and divisions. What interests me is what all these dichotomies add up to: a sense that, on one hand, there are reasonable, linguistically tolerant people just looking out for the economy and, on the other, there are immigrants and people of color who are too emotional. While the repeal bill did successfully pass, this moment showed one of the risks of trying to isolate multilingualism and the economy from the broader language policy situation. It is tempting for policymakers to pit rights and resources, race and the economy, affect and logic against each other. On the other hand, I have to say that I do not think the repeal would have been so successful if she had not adopted this strategy.

Connecting Language to Race

The English-only policy's racist reputation played a significant role in animating the repeal campaign. From many people's perspectives, the original policy exacerbated ongoing racism against Black, Latinx, and Asian American people in the area, and it made white residents look like unwelcoming Frednecks (a well-established local portmanteau for Frederick rednecks). Participants drew attention to all these connections and tried to offer alternatives.

Whites Only and English Only

Jay Mason emphasized the policy's ties to anti-Black racism. Mason has served on the Frederick County Board of Education and as President of the organization Eliminating Achievement Gaps, and he is involved in a number

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of other local causes. Like Jessica Fitzwater, he is also an elementary school teacher. He gave me a call after seeing a flyer I gave to a friend of a friend. After saying he was calling about my study, the next thing he asked was what *I* thought about English-only policies. I had heard that his friend was relatively conservative, and based on that information, I assumed that Mason would have similar views, and I was worried about alienating him if I answered too bluntly. So, I said something about how I probably would not pass a law like that if it were up to me, but I was trying to keep an open mind. I quickly realized that I had misread him, however, and I regretted responding so breezily. He was very critical of the policy, found it to be racist, and noted that the term "English only" evoked the "Whites Only" signs that were so ubiquitous in the Jim Crow era.

Mason spoke at the public hearing about the repeal bill, at the suggestion of Jessica Fitzwater. In preparation for our upcoming interview, I watched streaming footage of Mason speaking at the public hearing, where he described the analogy to Jim Crow in depth. In his statement, he explained what his parents experienced as Black people in Frederick, before connecting that history to the present situation. He described what his parents went through: "They had to walk around and see a lot of signs that said, 'Whites Only.' That word 'only' speaks unacceptance. 'English only' speaks unacceptance." As he spoke the phrase "whites only," Mason raised his hands to shoulder level and moved them in unison in a rectangle, as if to trace one of the signs that characterized so many businesses and institutions before and during the 1960s civil rights movement. He then tied that phrase to the second phrase, "English only," not just by listing both but by emphasizing the word in common – "only."

Later, during our interview, he said that during the public hearing, he had "felt like we were back in 1950 all over again." In response, I asked him why he thought people felt more comfortable speaking about language-based exclusion than about "explicitly" racist exclusion. He laughed, sighed, and paused in quick succession, which made me realize that, as a white person, I had already assumed too much in the way I asked the question. I rethought the question: "Although maybe there was some explicitly racist stuff?" This time, he did reply, by saying, "I felt like they were explicit." Mason was not alone in connecting language policy to racism. When the people involved in the repeal mentioned any political action in the area from more than ten years ago, it was much more likely to be related to the Civil Rights Movement than to any other social movement. A lot of local politics continues to revolve around racism, anti-racism, and, more recently, the Black Lives Matter movement.[9]

The point was to show how ideologies and histories of language and race have shaped each other in ways that have consequences. Mason's and other

[9] On local Black Lives Matter activism, see Loos (2016, July 17).

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local activists' approach reflects the fact that race is a social construction, but it nevertheless plays an important role in people's lives (Roberts, 2011). People's experiences with and beliefs about language and race unfold in complex ways: While people can certainly use language and literacy to challenge racism, scholars who adopt a raciolinguistic perspective have argued that, in practice, entrenched language ideologies continue to pathologize people of color, regardless of how they actually speak or write (Flores and Rosa, 2015; Flores and Rosa, 2022).

While Jim Crow policies like the ones Mason describes were common around the United States, their legacy in this area is particularly potent in conjunction with local histories of slavery and, into the present, Ku Klux Klan activity. While the Klan peaked in 1920s in some parts of the country (Rawlings, 2016), Maryland and a few other states saw a resurgence in the late 1970s (Sims, 1996, p. 267). In the 1990s, the Klan was so well established in the town of Thurmont, in northern Frederick County, that a resident could identify a business "as the local Klan bar," where one could find members "there every Saturday night and most others" in two specially reserved booths (Davis, 1998, p. 33). Sims (1996) draws particular attention to Klan activity in Gamber, Maryland, a few miles from the Frederick County border. Several of my participants remembered Klan activity either firsthand or through their parents' experiences.

These phenomena are not just rooted in history but are continuing to unfold. During my first week in the county in 2015, I heard about and attended a protest against the Klan in the town of Braddock Heights. The Klan had raised enough publicity about the event that by the time I heard about it from a participant, there was already a Facebook event for people planning a silent walk around the proposed cross burning site. (Ultimately, I did not see any actual cross burning – I heard that they failed to get the correct kind of burn permit in time). Shortly after, someone poured a can of red paint over a bust of Justice Roger Taney to call attention to the statue's continued, controversial display in downtown Frederick (Fifield, 2015, October 11). One of Taney's former local properties has been made into a museum, complete with slave quarters (Historical Society of Frederick County, 2012). The city (not county) government had vacillated over what to do with the bust for years, and before the paint incident people had poured motor oil on and wrapped fabric around the statue on various occasions (Fifield, 2015, October 11), but it was not removed until March 2017 (Masters, 2017, March 18). Of course, these contemporary events are at least as much about people trying to move on, away from the Klan and Taney, as about the Klan and Taney themselves, but it is still striking to see slavery and segregation be a topic of genuine debate. These ongoing struggles against what Monroe (2021) calls "confederate rhetoric" made Mason's public hearing statement all the more resonant (p. 2).

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Racism against Asian American and Latinx American People

At the same time as all this activism around anti-Black racism, the past decade had also been a time of heightened local xenophobia and immigrant rights activism, particularly in the context of Latinx and Asian immigrants. As I touched on in earlier chapters, there were many reasons why immigrants were the center of attention in recent years: There had been immigrant rights protests around the country in 2006, Maryland had narrowly passed its version of the DREAM Act in 2012, county law enforcement had partnered with federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement through the 287(g) program, and former county commissioner Young had explicitly expressed a desire to make Frederick "the most unfriendly county in the state of Maryland to illegal aliens" (Anderson, 2011, November 13). Among local activists, I never sensed any real tension between civil rights, immigrant rights, and economic activism, perhaps because so many of them felt that the English-only policy was an attack on all three.

The writer for Occupy Frederick found Young's policies to be particularly galling. After reading a few posts about the English-only ordinance on the Occupy Frederick Facebook page, I messaged the account and eventually interviewed the writer who maintains and updates the site. He is a longtime activist who also studied economics in college and later worked as a union organizer. He got interested in Occupy Wall Street when it started in 2011, around the same time that County Commissioner Young was introducing a number of new initiatives. This writer saw parallels between "the big bankers" in New York City and "the local Tea Party." In fact, at the public hearing in 2012 about the original ordinance, most of the protesters were affiliated with Occupy Frederick. In addition to writing for the Facebook page, he also spoke at the same public hearing as Jay Mason. Throughout summer 2015, he wrote several Facebook posts about his own views on the issue. He quoted and linked to posts by Jessica Fitzwater (Occupy Frederick, July 9), summarized what happened at county council meetings (Occupy Frederick, August 18), and drafted a "sample email" message that people could send to the government in support of the repeal (Occupy Frederick, July 21).

In these posts, he often made a point of connecting the English-only policy to its official sponsor, by describing it as "Blaine Young's English-Only Ordinance" or "Mr. Young's opinion." On the surface, he was just stating a fact about sponsorship, but I also sensed that he was trying to convey some additional information to his local readers. When I asked him about why he decided to write about the issue, he answered bluntly and irreverently:

> The county has always had a problem with race, OK. Blaine Young's an opportunist. He's also a racist. But he sees an enormous political opportunity for himself here. So he

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immediately moves into this English-only stuff, which you've read is meaningless on the surface, but it's like a little check box. 'Blaine Young opposed illegal immigrants,' which means, in Republican code, 'He's a racist,' OK?

In this interview excerpt, he connects Young to racism, to opportunism, to opposition to undocumented immigrants, all in one utterance. He also suggests that the policy was a "check box" for Young to prove his Republican ethos. In his framework, all these concepts are nearly synonymous, and they all point to each other.

This part of our interview struck me for a couple of reasons, the first of which was how deftly he untangled this web of English-only discourse. As a researcher, I always go in thinking I will have to do a lot of reading between the lines, but in this case, he spelled it out quite plainly. As Jay Mason's and the Occupy Frederick writer's experiences show, however, race was actually quite an explicit and central part of the repeal campaign's discourse. Second, given Occupy Wall Street's white-washed reputation (Milkman, Luce, and Lewis, 2013, p. 5), I was not expecting to see Occupy Frederick focus on racism to this extent. This example and the fact that Jessica Fitzwater invited Jay Mason to talk at the public hearing (despite the fact that she herself favored more economic arguments) both showed me that while certain people might have favored some strategies over others in certain situations, they all also embraced multiple strategies and worked with and on behalf of others. I will return to this theme later.

While Mason and the Occupy Frederick writer were acting relatively independently of the local government, connecting language to race was also an important strategy within the county's HRC. Like many similar commissions around the United States, the HRC emerged out of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, first as the "Inter-Racial Committee" and then later in its current form. Over time, the HRC has expanded its scope to include transnational issues: They organize an annual Naturalization Ceremony and weigh in on the county's 287(g) program (which authorizes local law enforcement to help deport undocumented immigrants) (Human Relations Commission, 2014, June 24). Soon after she entered office, Jessica Fitzwater started serving as the government liaison to the HRC. In February 2015, she asked the commission to "create a package to present to the council in the future" about repealing the English-only policy (Human Relations Commission, 2015, February 24). What resulted was a two-page resolution.

The chair of the HRC, Angela Spencer, was one of many who worked on the resolution (I discuss her stance on collaboration more in the section on collective action). Spencer is from Texas and has taught English as a second language in adult education and prison contexts. When I met her, she worked as an instructor teaching classes like cultural diversity to law enforcement and correctional officers for the state and had recently won a statewide teaching

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award. She joined the HRC in 2008, after seeing an ad in the newspaper, and so had been a member for about seven years when we met. As a Black woman, who has often been the only one in the room, she has seen a lot. During our interview, she told me about a particularly unsettling ice breaker experience, one in which when she had attended a local event where she was "the only minority in the room of about 200 non-minority people," someone approached her and remarked, "I'm sure you feel like you're at a KKK meeting!" Whether despite such experiences or because of them, she was highly dedicated to her volunteer work on the HRC: She put in enough hours that she joked that her acquaintances sometimes wonder, "Aren't you employed with them?!" When I looked up Spencer to double-check some facts for the book, it did not surprise me that during the pandemic, she took on a new role as a community vaccine outreach project coordinator through the Asian American Center of Frederick, a role that likely saved lives. Back in 2015, she and her colleagues called for a repeal on several grounds.

Their two-page HRC resolution touches on race, rights, language, the economy, and history. The authors contend that the English-only policy is inconsistent with their mission "to monitor and recommend civil rights policy" and with the "belie[f] that one of the most vital and valuable aspects of daily life in Frederick County is its diversity and cultural heritage where all races, religions, ages, and cultures are welcome, as should be all languages." The history of European immigrants also gets a mention, in a clause recognizing the county's "long history of multiple languages over the last three centuries, including our rich German heritage." Finally, the text includes a description of the local economy that is both more accurate and more elegant than most: "[G]overnments, businesses, and individuals in Frederick County communicate freely and openly, most often in English but in many other languages as well." This document suggests that there is no inherent need to pit economic, social, cultural, political, or anti-racist arguments against each other. In contrast to Fitzwater's concerns over allowing any of the "emotional side of it" into the conversation, this document openly brings together multilingual and raciolinguistic arguments. Audiences seemed to appreciate the resolution, both out in public, by reposting it on several social media pages, and within the county council, by copying select passages directly into the repeal bill (I discuss the details of the copying later in the chapter).

And yet, while some parts of the resolution did reappear in the bill, the parts about racism and civil rights did not. Ultimately, race played an important role in the discourse of public hearing, social media and blogs, and the HRC's resolution, but not as much in the bill itself or in the discourse of the bill's sponsors at the time. To return to Jessica Fitzwater's discussion of why she did not want the situation to become too emotional, she and her council colleagues

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may have considered racism and rights to be too risky of topics to include in the most *official* aspects of the campaign. At first, I interpreted this divide in terms of the absence or presence of race. However, that was not quite right. My sense is that the divide was over whether to focus on racial justice for people of color or whether to focus on white people's reputations.

The Fear of Being a Fredneck

Instead of naming racism and xenophobia explicitly, some of the people involved, particularly white people, preferred to focus on how the English-only policy might make white people look bad. I did not pick up on the importance of whiteness at first because it manifested primarily through a trope that I initially deemed negligible, both because it was just one or two words and because it seemed like a throwaway joke. Namely, I repeatedly encountered white people expressing how they did not want to be seen as unwelcoming rednecks.

At a public hearing, one man (who I did not interview) expressed concern that outside corporations would not want to come there if it meant dealing with "Frednecks" (Frederick + rednecks). People in the audience laughed, and I initially wondered if their reaction was out of recognition of a known term or shock at a new one. In fact, "Fredneck" has been a word on Urban Dictionary since 2006, with the definition: "The inhabitants of Frederick, Maryland, who are mostly hicks and rednecks" (Vizzue, 2006, April 25). A secondary definition of the same word elaborates on the meaning and offers twenty-three different defining characteristics of a Fredneck, from "talks like a hick" to "doesn't know manners" to "brags to everybody about guns." The level of detail here suggests the figure of the Fredneck is well established.

Several of my participants echoed this sentiment. For example, a Frederick Local Yokel (2015, July 21) blog post briefly mentioned that the policy "makes us look like uneducated, backwoods … rednecks," and in our interview, one of the writers added, "this looks unwelcoming." Very similarly, when I asked Keegan-Ayer how she decided to support the repeal, she talked about the economic problems with the old policy and concluded her answer by saying:

KEEGAN-AYER: And, I thought, 'So, this is basically, in my opinion, just an unwelcoming image for Frederick County, and is that really the way I want it to appear?'

FLOWERS: Mhmm.

KEEGAN-AYER: And, I just decided, no. And so, we repealed it.

In both situations, they flip the economics script, but they punctuate their statement by drawing attention to how it makes them look, literally: "look like," "image," "appear." In other words, it's not just about materially fewer dollars in the local economy, it's also about the perception of "us," or "my county."

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This kind of discourse was not just internal to the group of people working against the English-only policy. Supporters of the original law were well aware of it, and the issue has been salient since well before either local language policy existed. For example, I asked Hayden Duke about his sense of the pro-repeal side's tactics, and he immediately brought up the unwelcoming redneck phenomenon:

FLOWERS: Did you have the sense that they had sort of a unified argument they were making? Or, even within a side, was there lots of variation?

DUKE: I think for the prorepeal side, it was… 'You're making it unwelcoming, you're making us look like a bunch of hicks, you're making Frederick look like a backwater.'

As Duke emphasizes through a list of three rhythmic, similarly structured reported utterances, there was a strategy of drawing connections between acting "unwelcoming" and being "hicks" in a "backwater." As Duke's comment demonstrates, the figure of the unwelcoming redneck was legible to people across the ideological spectrum.

As a white person, I identify with how these white Frederick County residents felt. When I hear about white people doing something racist in my predominately white hometown, or at one of the predominately white schools I have attended or worked at, or in one of the predominately white college towns I have lived in, my first and sometimes my only feeling is personal shame, and like I wish I could just disappear, rather than any impulse to work toward justice. This sort of reaction has consequences, though.

Ultimately, this campaign turned out to be partially, but crucially, a struggle over the meaning of white identity. The only two viable options for white identity here appear to be the *unwelcoming redneck* and their polar opposite, the *welcoming host*. Anxieties over white identity (rather than racism and racial justice) thus threatened to oversaturate the discussions about this language policy's connection to race. There are serious limitations to this discourse about unwelcoming Frednecks versus welcoming white people. One, people of color only appear as people to invite in or keep out, rather than as people with agency. Two, people of color only appear as stereotypes, whether as poor, undocumented immigrants or as cosmopolitan, STEM moneymakers. Three, white people only had two entrenched archetypes to align with, both of which seem to unilaterally control property and other people's mobility (the only difference is whether they bring people in or keep them out). King and Bigelow (2019) capture a similar dynamic in their study of Minnesota language policy, in which the trope of "Minnesota Nice" can override all sorts of other considerations about why only white people are in power in the first place.

This situation made me rethink a text that I have long appreciated. Ever since I read it, I loved the description of English-only policies as an "unwelcome

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mat," because it is so vivid (Wilgoren, 2002, July 19). I still do. But I used to think the point was that a welcome mat would be better, and perhaps that was the original speaker's point. There are other options, though. The limitation is with the mat, not the precise message on the mat. Who gets to decide what kind of message to send? And why is there such a narrow doorway in the first place?

To be sure, deciding to be welcoming rather than unwelcoming can be powerful: This move in Frederick toward redefining whiteness contributed to one of the few repeals of an English-only policy in US history, ever. While Frederick County did successfully repeal their English-only policy, more widespread policy change may be difficult until discussions of language are driven more by people of color, transnational migrants, and multilingual people and less by monolingual white Americans worried about whether they appear unwelcoming. I now turn to the strategy focused not on the economy, nor on race, but on language itself.

Questioning the Nature of English

In addition to advocating for multilingualism and against racism, participants also used a third strategy: questioning the nature of English itself. In debates over this sort of language policy, most people tend to focus on the "only" aspect of "English-only," as in "should English be the only language?" but people can also raise questions about the "English" half of that phrase, as in "What even counts as English?" Paradoxically, this strategy was less common but more highly praised than the first two. In other words, talking about multilingualism and racism was common yet controversial, while questioning the nature of English was rare yet popular when it did happen. Unlike the economic discourse about multilingualism, which argued for the value of multiple different languages (each associated with different nations around the world), this move was more about articulating the problems with taking such boundaries for granted. The difference is between a multilingual orientation toward communication in multiple languages and a translingual orientation toward the ways that "communication transcends individual languages" (Canagarajah, 2013, p. 6). From a translingual perspective, language use is inherently translingual because there are not clear boundaries between languages.[10] In part, this is because people mix and match linguistic forms as part of everyday life, as in phenomena like code switching. But it is also about

[10] Scholars vary over whether they view translingual practices as inherent or situational: Are everyone's language practices translingual, or are some more translingual than others? In my view, language practices are inherently translingual (see Canagarajah, 2013, p. 56, 2017, p. 56), but I agree with Bou Ayash (2019), who argues that it is possible to "[turn] up the volume" on translingual "activism" (p. 141). Ultimately, I am interested not so much in whether language can be pure but rather in how language policymakers view language as pure (or not).

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the more fundamental fact that even a single language contains multitudes. Modern English is a hybrid of Old English, French, and many other linguistic varieties, for instance. Questioning what counts as "English" is a way to question the basic premise of having a monolingual language policy. In this section, I discuss how county council member Jerry Donald exemplified this strategy at a public meeting, to local acclaim.

Jerry Donald teaches high school social studies by day and serves on the county council by night. During the repeal campaign, ProEnglish singled out Donald for criticism, perhaps because his vote may have seemed up for grabs. Unlike Fitzwater and Keegan-Ayer, Donald was not one of the main sponsors of the repeal bill, and his district does not include the city. For these reasons, people who wanted to keep the English-only policy seemed to believe that Donald could be persuaded to vote to keep the English-only policy. For example, ProEnglish (2015, August 12) posted a meme on Facebook saying, "Jerry Donald supports policies that hurt assimilation … Call [his work phone number] and tell Jerry Donald to keep official English on August 18." Only nineteen Facebook accounts shared that meme, but a few days later, seventy-nine Facebook accounts shared a subsequent post by ProEnglish (2015, August 17), which included both his phone number and county email address. As a result, his office received many critical phone calls and emails from those organizations' members and supporters. To explain what this time in his life was like, Donald compared the experience to the time when he had made an unpopular call as a football referee and had a large crowd of people all yell at him at once.

By the night of the final vote, Donald had decided to interrogate the English-only policy's underpinnings by framing his public comments as a sort of dialogue. The same night as the vote, he posed a number of questions about how the policy was defining the English language. For example, he mused:

> We keep using the phrase English. Is "burrito" in it? I don't know. I mean that sounds strange, but we gain thousands of words REGULARLY. Do they count, or not? I don't know. That's a question.

At first, the questions seemed rhetorical, meant for the whole room of people to ponder, but then he started actually posing questions to a county attorney named John Mathias (who had helped with the drafting of the English-only ordinance). Donald asked about the first clause in the ordinance, labeled clause "A":

> DONALD: … Actually, let's start with letter "A." "The English language is the official language of Frederick County." Now, in other ordinances, we define things. How are we defining this? Oxford Dictionary? Webster's Dictionary? Doesn't say American English. What's the definition we're working with?

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MATHIAS: Well, the uh, I mean, when a term's not defined … under the typical legal principles, you look at the common usage of the words, and, I think, you know, I don't have a problem knowing what the English language is in terms of the…

DONALD: OK

The county attorney went on to say that the county has used a 2007 edition of Webster's Dictionary to clarify definitions in the past. Donald wondered aloud how the government was supposed to handle words that had come into use after 2007. Through these questions, he was taking advantage of the fact that people in the English-only movement generally "fail to define English" (Horner et al., 2011, p. 309). After some more exchanges back and forth, the attorney grumbled, "I don't appreciate being your foil. It's getting a little annoying, frankly." He may have been annoyed because Donald was asking questions that they both already knew the answers to: The government did not have a perfect definition of what English was, because there *is* no perfect definition. In the moment, Donald eased up on questioning the county attorney, but he continued to lay out his issues with the ordinance.

Donald made the case that English is not really controllable by anyone or anything and that therefore an English-only policy is untenable on practical grounds. He described how English is "a complete free market," where "things come and go and move on" beyond our control. "English moves," he argued, and trying to legislate language is like "trying to nail currant jelly to a wall."[11] Later, in our interview, he made it clear that he was not just describing a contemporary phenomenon of globalization; he cited the way Middle English grew out of Old English and French and the long history of language contact in the United States between English, Yiddish, Spanish, and other languages. When I asked how he developed this perspective, he mentioned his general knowledge of US and world history, as well as Bill Bryson's (1994) popular book *Made in America: An informal history of the English language in the United States*, which devotes space to language contact among Indigenous people, enslaved Black people, and early settlers.

Donald's description of English's impurity reflects several increasingly accepted theories about the impossibility of drawing clear borders around the English language (Nero, 2001; Canagarajah, 2013). Historically, English has never been unitary: Old, Middle, and Modern varieties of English are different enough that they are considered to be all the same language only because of nationalist ideologies (Milroy, 2001, p. 549). Furthermore, contemporary

[11] US president Theodore Roosevelt popularized the simile of nailing currant jelly to a wall a century earlier, both in news interviews and in personal letters (Decker, 1986). Roosevelt was also an early supporter of English-only policies. The fact that Donald would reference Roosevelt is typical of his familiarity with US political discourse and ability to adapt this discourse toward progressive ends.

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registers of English, like legal, medical, and academic discourse, feature terms from Latin and Greek as a matter of course. In other words, Donald made a persuasive argument not by eliding the linguistic complexity of the issue but by articulating it in all its messiness.

I was curious how Donald decided to focus on linguistic complexity. During our interview, he explained, "I really kind of felt like I had to sell why I was voting the way I was voting to the public, because, honestly, if you had to poll my district, it would probably have been to keep the old law." When I followed up and asked, "Why do you think so many of them would be in favor of keeping it?" he replied, "It's a rural district." In the moment, we moved on to other topics, but as I've thought about it more, my sense is that what matters is that the district is not just rural but rural, white, and conservative. While Donald is a progressive Democrat, his district is fairly conservative, and he won his first election in 2014 by just twenty-five votes. So, he had reason to be worried. What I find fascinating is that while scholars sometimes think of translingual approaches as being esoteric or out-of-touch, this policymaker thought it was a good way, maybe the only way, to persuade his constituents that the English-only policy was problematic. And I think he was right.

Other people in the community welcomed Jerry Donald's discourse, whether they were in the room that night or watching the live stream. The bloggers I interviewed singled out his performance as particularly persuasive. Toward the end of my interview with the Occupy Frederick writer, I asked if there were anyone else he would recommend that I contact, and he mentioned Jerry Donald immediately and began by saying "Oh, he's awesome. He's awesome." He went on to explain: "At the hearing on the repeal, he made the most compelling argument against this English-only law that I have ever heard. He broke it down, basically saying, how do you define what English is?" This compliment is an example of how open people were to different strategies: The Occupy Frederick writer focused mostly on economics, race, and immigration in his own discourse but went out of his way to bring up and endorse Donald's angle too.

The bloggers for Frederick Local Yokel also singled out Jerry Donald's performance. In a post from the night of the repeal vote (August 18), they attributed his rhetorical abilities in part to his background in education. They wrote, "Props to Jerry Donald for pointing out that the English-Only ordinance was a loser from the right-hand side, in that it created unnecessary and meaningless legislation to govern a free-market and constantly evolving language environment. Leave it to a teacher to go all debate team on it and show us he can rock it from the other angle." Aside from the praise, what is notable about this blog post is how it repeats Donald's own use of the term "free market" in his public statement. This finding resonates with other recent work on how policymakers, scholars, and teachers can associate both multilingualism and linguistic

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fluidity with a capitalist framework, in settings ranging from European Union language policy (Flores, 2013) to the field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) (Kubota, 2016). The translingual approach may have appealed so strongly to people precisely because it synthesized a more familiar understanding of language as a resource with an incisive new set of questions about how language is defined and quantified in the first place. The way they identify him as a teacher, capable of going "all debate team on it," is also notable. At their best, these two figures, the teacher and the debate team member, share a reputation for engaging in dialogue, introducing new knowledge, and being flexible. I think it is these qualities, in addition to the language-specific discourse, that resonated with people.

The language component was important, though. At the start of my interview with the Frederick Local Yokel writers, they raised the issue as soon as I asked how they decided to write about the repeal in the first place. I was expecting them to answer in terms of county politics or the amount of news coverage it was getting, but instead, we had the following exchange:

FREDERICK LOCAL YOKEL WRITER: As an issue for me, I'm really interested in just the idea that you can regulate language. It's super weird, right?
FLOWERS: Yes! (laughs)
FREDERICK LOCAL YOKEL WRITERS: (laughing)
FREDERICK LOCAL YOKEL WRITER: It's a Germanic language. It's got heavily French vocabulary from…
FLOWERS: Mhmm.
FREDERICK LOCAL YOKEL WRITER: 1066? (laughs)
FLOWERS: Yeah.
FREDERICK LOCAL YOKEL WRITER: And just that alone, like, kind of motivated me to…
FLOWERS: Mhmm.
FREDERICK LOCAL YOKEL WRITER: Think about it in a certain light too.

She suggests that of all the things to regulate, targeting language seems "super weird," and goes on to situate the current debate in the history of English in Britain. Furthermore, for her these were not fringe issues but the primary reason ("that alone") she wanted to write about the issue. At that point, her fellow writers chimed in to add the history of multilingualism and language mixing in the United States, including in the context of the Acadian and French Creole communities in the Northeast and Louisiana.

This kind of discourse about language even started to extend beyond the immediate context of the language policy debate, into discussions of other topics. For example, in a post from the same night the repeal took place, the Frederick Local Yokel (2015, August 18) writers were covering a completely separate issue. The county council had disagreed about how to handle the issue,

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and in the blog post they described the ensuing "kerfuffle." Then, in an aside punctuated by dashes, they asked, "[I]s that an English word??? Who cares! Yay!" They are drawing attention to and then making fun of the question of what counts as an English word. In doing so, I see them participating in the same kind of discourse as Jerry Donald: They are all showing that there is no pure, natural version of English. Just as Phil Dumenil reminded me in Chapter 2 that "Kathy, it's politics!", Jerry Donald and these bloggers reminded me that it's still about language too.

What are the takeaways from Jerry Donald's successful strategy of questioning the nature of English? Among scholars, there is a sense that this sort of translingual approach is risky, in that it is too theoretical. The thinking goes that while it may be true that there is no one single definition of the English language (or any language), it might be more effective to focus on practical implications of language policies. In this case, though, questioning the meaning of "English" was part of a successful effort to repeal an English-only policy. What's more, Donald garnered praise from progressive activists in the city of Frederick without seeming to lose support from his district out in the county. When he was running for reelection, he used this issue as a talking point. Donald was reelected in 2018, and yet again in 2022.

Highlighting the Role of Collective Action

As I have tried to emphasize, this was not a campaign associated with just one person, one group, or one origin story. Instead, the people involved highlighted the role of collective action in their work, and this practice of highlighting is the fourth and final discourse strategy of the campaign I want to examine. This strategy functioned as a sort of harmonizing mechanism, by depicting the repeal as a group effort, but also as something that a lot of different people and groups conceived of independently. These two facets of the strategy may seem contradictory, but the common thread is that there was never a sense of one author or one inspiration for the bill. As a result, there was very little pressure on the bill's sponsors to seem like they had all the power or all the answers. Instead, by the end of the campaign, they could point to many different sources of inspiration and requests that they take action. This strategy also framed the English-only policy as unpopular and undemocratic, given how much community support there was for a repeal. The practice of highlighting is important here. As discussed in Chapter 2, there is nothing notable about laws *being* coauthored or cosponsored. What is notable, however, is what parts of the policymaking process people choose to make most visible.

More than the other strategies, which seemed to ebb and flow, this one seemed ever-present, including in interviews. My interview with Angela Spencer (the chair of the HRC at the time) offers one of the clearest examples.

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We had just started talking about the 2012 English-only ordinance, and I was asking what she thought of it:

FLOWERS: What did you think? At the time?
SPENCER: Well, initially, I was … honestly, well, first, let me tell you about the Human Relations Commission.
FLOWERS: That's fine.
SPENCER: So, our ultimate goal is to speak with one voice, so even if we disagree with some things, we agree to disagree, OK? So that, as a body, we speak with one voice, so, we all discuss everything and have open conversations.

In this interaction, after I asked the question about 2012, she started to answer, but then switched gears and asked me to let her talk about the HRC instead. I was confused at what seemed to be a non sequitur, but I was also curious, so I said, "that's fine." I quickly realized that she was actually gently steering me away from my individualistic framing and inviting me to focus on her group instead. After describing how the HRC's "goal is to speak with one voice," she did go on to explain how they had interpreted the policy. As the interview went on, I tried to adapt to her framing, with some slip-ups. For example, I self-corrected in the middle of asking a question about something she had cowritten:

FLOWERS: And how did you … and how did the HRC get involved in writing the resolution supporting the repeal?

I was starting to ask about her actions, then changed tack and rephrased the question to be about the group, and put extra emphasis on the word "HRC" to try to emphasize my correction. I do want to note that I did not completely ignore the role of the individual and that none of my participants were unilaterally opposed to discussing their own motives or actions. Instead, I just realized that I tended to get more detailed answers if I asked about groups. While I have introduced this strategy through an interview example, in the rest of this section I want to focus on two key texts that resulted from this strategy: a petition in favor of the repeal and the text of the repeal bill itself. Both texts grew out of collaborative writing *and* were taken up due to purposeful highlighting of that collaboration.

The Petition

One of the first topics people discussed at early planning meetings was the possibility of a petition, according to Fitzwater and Spencer. In spring 2015, Angela Spencer told me that members of the HRC had started collecting signatures in support of repealing the English-only ordinance, both on their own and by sharing the petition with "civic groups, faith-based groups, community and neighborhood" groups. According to minutes from one HRC (2015, April 28) meeting, "everyone was asked to fill at least a page and bring them to the next

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meeting." So, this was a collective effort to show community support. The petition soon started to appear around town: Keegan-Ayer, for example, recalled coming out of church one day and seeing the petition out in front, along with people who explained to parishioners leaving the building "what it was for, and what it was all about." This moment shows that the goal was not merely to collect signatures from people who already wanted a repeal (although those signatures did become important later). Rather, the petition helped build what Keegan-Ayer called the "groundswell of support" for the repeal in different ways at different stages of the campaign.

In moments like the after-church event, the petition created an occasion to discuss language policy. Spencer got even more specific and explained to me that it allowed people to "have that conversation, to say, 'How do you feel about this? And would you like to sign?'" As her two-part question suggests, the goal was to raise the issue and, if possible, also get a signature. Floating the idea of a repeal was particularly important because while many people were aware of the 2012 policy, it had not been a very visible issue in the years since. These interactions were informative not just to the people being asked to sign but also for the people seeking signatures, in that they had more opportunities to hear people's own arguments and experiences regarding the language policy.

While it began as a conversation starter, by the end the petition functioned more like physical evidence. Specifically, it became an entextualization of public opinion (literally) that could be contextualized in subsequent events (Silverstein and Urban, 1996; Oddo, 2014; Andrus, 2015). In other words, people could take the petition into new situations and offer it as concrete proof that the English-only ordinance was controversial, or even unpopular, and that the democratic thing to do might be to repeal it. For example, at the public hearing, a community activist came up to the podium and held up the petition so that the council and the audience could all see it. She said the petition had 1,000 signatures, and as she lifted it up, she asked anyone in the room who had signed to stand up. In her statement, she also talked about the ordinance's potential to harm local businesses, dissuade new business from moving to town, and its lack of potential to save the county money. So, she meshed two strategies: She argued for the repeal by flipping the economics script and by emphasizing the collective action behind this position, as manifested by the thick stack of paper and at least three people coming to their feet.

While the prior example hinged on the numbers of people who signed, Jessica Fitzwater used the petition's list of addresses to make a slightly different point in a public interaction with her colleague Kirby Delauter. Delauter had just argued that they should keep the original ordinance because his district was generally fine with it and his office had received many phone calls and emails in favor of keeping the ordinance intact. I suspect both of his claims were true.

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However, the petition's existence allowed Fitzwater to respond skeptically. She asked how he knew his district's opinion and, more pointedly, if he knew if all those calls and emails were really coming from within Frederick County, much less from his district. After all, ProEnglish had sent out social media and email alerts about the upcoming vote, which included the phone and email contact information for the county council. The issue had also been in the national news. Although it never quite came to this point, because Delauter moved on, Fitzwater told me later that she was prepared to use the addresses in the petition to "show how many people [who signed] were actually in his district." In other words, she could show that a certain number of people in his district were on her side, while he could not necessarily do the same with his office's phone calls and emails. Both county council members were citing their constituency, but Fitzwater had the written addresses at her fingertips. Over time and across different situations, then, the petition helped build grassroots support, demonstrate that support, and, finally, bolster the other strategies.

The Repeal Bill

Like the petition, the bill was both a result and an emblem of collective action. Rather than highlighting public support, however, the collective action involved in writing the repeal bill was more contained to the county government. Even within the government, there was a certain amount of winnowing, sifting, and sorting, so that some kinds of discourse made it into the final bill more than other kinds. In other words, if compiling the petition was about collecting as much evidence of community support as possible, writing the bill itself was about collecting *and then filtering*.

When I asked the bill's two sponsors who wrote the bill, they both listed many people and sources. A "county attorney" (Keegan-Ayer) and "some county staff" helped write the bill, both by expanding on "bullet points" that Fitzwater provided and by doing additional "research" on what the "typical arguments" against English-only policies might be (Fitzwater). Keegan-Ayer also talked about getting the idea for the bill's structure – a long series of clauses – from texts she had encountered in her former career on Capitol Hill. Over time, she had developed genre knowledge about the multiple functions and affordances of policies, which she drew on in this situation when confronted with people who wanted the bill to accomplish only the bare minimum. Specifically, she recalled that the county attorney initially just wanted to bluntly convey something along the lines of "we want to repeal it," which reminded me of Charles Jenkins' goal in 2006 to pass an English-only policy that simply stated "English is the official language of County government" (Chapter 2). However, once again, a longer version won out. Keegan-Ayer remembered countering the attorney with "No, we want … we want there to be

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reasons why we're repealing it." The opportunity to lay out the many reasons for the repeal was one appeal of this structure, but a related reason was genre: She was drawing on the kinds of policy texts – resolutions, bills, proposals, briefs, reports – she had worked with before to create something innovative (Tardy, 2016). When she described to me how she mixed and matched different kinds of wording from different kinds of texts she had seen in the past, she gestured with her hands in a way reminiscent of someone picking out paint swatches, or ordering from a menu.

Just as Keegan-Ayer drew on several sources of inspiration for the policy's structure, Jessica Fitzwater played a comparable role in collecting material for the policy's content. Her position as the government liaison to the HRC was key. Early on, Fitzwater had suggested that the HRC propose something about the possibility of a repeal to the council. According to Angela Spencer, the HRC and Fitzwater then had a sustained "conversation about the document [and] what exactly our statement would be," and then the text was "compiled together." As I discussed in the section on race, this resolution made a very holistic argument against the English-only policy, by deftly weaving together subarguments about the economy, race, diversity, culture, tolerance, and general quality of life in the community. Afterward, Fitzwater, Keegan-Ayer, and the county staff used this resolution as the source material for the final draft of the bill. In other words, Fitzwater created a sort of policy loop by encouraging the HRC to write the resolution and then incorporating some of it back into the bill.

As content moved through this loop, though, its meaning did narrow. For example, both documents share the following statement, except for one word in the middle, marked by brackets: the English-only "Ordinance, and the perception it has created, [is/constitute] a barrier…" The difference between whether the ordinance "is" a barrier (according to the HRC) and whether it "constitute[s]" a barrier (according to the bill) seems to merely mark a register shift to a more formal or legal lexicon. However, the sentences also end differently, which is not just about the register but about orientations toward language. In the resolution, the barrier is "to making Frederick County the very best place to live, work, and raise a family." Although that may sound vague, in the context of the whole document, each of those three terms, *live, work*, and *raise a family*, calls back to other parts of the text: "live" points to the parts on multiculturalism and civil rights, "work" points to those parts plus the ones on the local economy, and "raise a family" points to all of the above as well as the parts about education. So, the resolution is talking about a social, cultural, educational, and economic barrier. The meaning of "barrier" is much more specific in the bill, however. There, the sentence ends with "a barrier to good business and impedes the growth and development of business and commercial endeavors in Frederick County." In this version of the clause, the focus

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is purely on the economy. Of course, there are other clauses in the bill that are less business-oriented. The point is that while the bill is transparently intertextual and coauthored, it is *not* just a more concise or more polished version of the HRC resolution, or any of the other discourse from the campaign. Rather, flipping the economics script clearly became the most enshrined strategy. The robust local discourse about race and rights appears more obliquely, in words like "tolerance," "diversity," and "multi-linguistic acceptance," and there is no mention of questioning the nature of English. As a policy becomes more streamlined, it may also become more limited. At the same time, an official policy's narrow focus does not, and indeed cannot, erase the more expansive vision of a long-term, communitywide campaign.

Conclusion

Years ago, as I was beginning to analyze what happened in Frederick County, one of my colleagues attending the American Association for Applied Linguistics conference live-tweeted a question. The question caught my interest because it was from a language policy presentation about how scholars could more effectively inform and influence policymakers on language issues. While I care about the answer to this question (and wish I had the perfect answer), my inclination has always been to begin with the exact opposite question. When I hear questions about how scholars could better inform policymakers, I flip the question around: How do the actual experiences of language policymakers, in all their complexity, inform and influence how I understand language? After all, most of what I have learned about language policymaking I learned from actual language policymakers.

So, I want to conclude by distilling what this case study might mean for broader conversations about language policies and language ideologies. In Frederick County's repeal campaign, politicians and activists used four main strategies to undo their English-only policy without damaging their reputations or their future election prospects. They flipped the economics script, they showed how the policy was racist, they questioned the nature of English, and they emphasized that this campaign was a team effort. People like Jessica Fitzwater and M.C. Keegan-Ayer argued that the English-only policy was actually hurting, rather than helping, the local economy. Others, like Jay Mason and the writer for Occupy Frederick's Facebook page, argued against the original ordinance on the grounds that it was part of the county's longer history of racism. Jerry Donald and the bloggers for Frederick Local Yokel took a more translingual approach, by questioning the very premise of English-only policies, which rests on assumptions about English being completely unitary and separate from other languages. At the same time, flipping the economics script risked overshadowing the other strategies. The bill's cosponsors seemed to

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perceive the economic strategy as the most likely to win over skeptics, and in a predominantly white, middle-class community, this was a shrewd move to make. Because discourse about race and the nature of language appeared more on the margins of the campaign (on anonymous blogs, in audience comments at public hearings, and from a politician who was not an official sponsor), the notion that language policy is merely about how to maximize economic and communicative efficiency remained largely intact.

Throughout my writing and research process, it has been so tempting to point to one of these strategies as "the best," whether that means the most accurate, the most persuasive, or the most just. The truth is that they are all valuable. In addition to their individual strengths, there is an added advantage to combining them. I would argue that a combined approach is ultimately more effective than trying to deploy any one in isolation. Communication is translingual, multilingualism has economic consequences, *and* language cannot be separated from race in the United States. Melding different approaches does not necessarily have to be an individual undertaking or something that happens in one communicative event. In other words, there is no need for the language policy text itself to cover all possible bases, there is no need for one person to stand up and weave together all these approaches in one definitive speech, editorial, or mission statement, and there is no need for a group of like-minded people to present a united front. In Frederick, people unevenly distributed their discourse strategies across genres, audiences, and situations, which may actually be more likely to lead to policy change than any steady drumbeat of talking points, even if that change is always partial.

Another insight is that plenty of people have already moved away from a monolingual orientation to language, if they ever were there in the first place. My participants did not so much choose to work on language policy as they were thrust into language policy work by the fact that they all lived in a community with an English-only ordinance. Nevertheless, they were able to navigate the policymaking process with aplomb. Tracing, listening to, and centering how people engage with language policies in their own communities, from their own perspectives, toward their own ends, show that it is possible to resist and rewrite English-only policies and that one does not need to be a linguist to do so. In fact, as all the activists I discuss in this book demonstrate, experience in community organizing, labor organizing, social movements, teaching, debating, accounting, writing for public audiences, forming and maintaining social ties, and just being enmeshed in one's communities may be just as important.

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