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A Grounded Approach to Citizenship Education: Local Interplays Between Government Institutions, Adult Schools, and Community Events in Sacramento, California

Following a grounded, bottom-up approach to language policy (Blommaert 2009; Canagarajah 2005; McCarty, 2011; Ramanathan, 2005), this paper investigates available resources and discourses of citizenship in Sacramento, California to those situated within the citizenship infrastructure. It analyzes how the discursive framing of local and national educational policies affects prospective citizens and the ways that resources and discourses differ across educational sites. These sites include a government field office, citizenship classes at adult schools and community centers, and a law school-sponsored citizenship fair. This article argues that adult schools and community events introduce their own *de facto* and *de jure* policies, in conjunction with top-down governmental policies that tend to reduce the complexity of naturalization at the expense of full participation. Both top-down and bottom-up educational policies consequently affect prospective citizens' understanding and enactment of citizenship.

1 Introduction

This article investigates the depiction and enactment of citizenship education in Sacramento, California by those that comprise its infrastructure. To do so, it takes a grounded approach to citizenship education, focusing on available resources and discourses of citizenship in various sites in Sacramento. Within the larger Sacramento metropolitan area, 10,620 naturalizations occurred in the 2012 fiscal year. The majority of these new citizens were married, unemployed or working inside of the home, and originated from countries including Laos, Ukraine, Mexico, the Philippines, India, and Vietnam (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2012).[i] These naturalizations were only a portion of the 158,850 immigrants who became naturalized in the state of California during this time period. In the United States as a whole, almost 900,000 petitions were filed for U.S. naturalization during the 2012 fiscal year, with 84% of the applicants successfully becoming naturalized citizens (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2013).

The citizenship sites relevant to this article include the Sacramento-based USCIS [United States Citizenship and Immigration Services] government field office (both within the office and its website), citizenship classes at adult schools and community centers, citizenship fairs, and naturalization application workshops. These sites are *educational spaces*, which for the purposes of this paper are defined as any area where meanings of citizenship are transmitted and negotiated by those involved in the naturalization process, either directly or indirectly. Within these spaces, the type of education that

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transpires is typically a one-directional transfer of knowledge and advisory guidance from someone in power (field officer, instructor, lawyer, staff) to the naturalization applicant.[ii] Primarily, the learning that occurs in this context is a growing understanding of the naturalization process, which consists of learning how to complete the N-400 application for naturalization and preparing for the oral naturalization interview. This type of learning is often rote, decontextualized, and practical and is not a rich co-construction of meaning between interlocutors (see Banks, 2008; DeJaeghere, 2008; Gordon, 2010; Loring, 2013a).

Understanding the type of learning, available resources, and particular ways of framing citizenship in these domains is consequential because it helps shape the journey which prospective citizens undergo as they work through the naturalization process, and can affect how they in turn come to understand what citizenship means and how they choose to enact it. Therefore, the research questions guiding this analysis are: What educational policies affect prospective naturalized citizens at both the national and local levels? How is citizenship education discursively framed by those who work within a local citizenship enterprise? How do educational resources for naturalization applicants differ across these sites? Qualitative research methods, including ethnography, interviews, and textual analysis, were employed to investigate these questions.

2 Defining citizenship and citizenship education from the bottom-up

The word "citizenship" is a multifaceted term that takes on varying interpretations in different contexts (Loring, 2013b). When used by the U.S. federal government, citizenship is described in terms of rights and responsibilities; political theorists additionally reference membership, community, and participation (Castles, 1998; Marshall, 1950; Touraine, 1997); citizenship instructors mention lifestyles, such as living without the fear of deportation, that native-born citizens have always taken for granted (Loring, 2013a); and the U.S. news media often equates *citizenship* with desirable ethics, values, and principles (Loring, forthcoming).[iii] Recently, scholars have shifted to analyzing citizenship in terms of what it permits, namely access to fuller participation (Heller,

2013; Ramanathan, 2013; Wiley, 2013; Wodak, 2013). More than exclusively referring to civic or legal participation, *full participation* is the ability to access any or all societal resources constrained by language, literacy, and culture, such as health care (Ziegahn et al., 2013), professional jobs (Ricento, 2013), equal edu-cational opportunities (Lillie, forthcoming), and language communities outside one's nation-state (McPherron, forthcoming).

This article is informed by these more expansive views that consider citizenship alongside issues of engagement, access, and participation, and similarly takes a broad view of *citizenship education* as any process through which citizenship knowledge emerges. This interpretation diverges from UNESCO's definition of citizenship education as "educating children, from early childhood, to become clear-thinking and enlightened citizens who participate in decisions concerning society" (UNESCO, 2005, p. 1). From this perspective, citizenship education is treated as a curricular subject, which is then further investigated in terms of effectiveness (Keating, Kerr, Benton, Mundy, & Lopes, 2010) and its bearing on global culture (Zajda, Daun, & Saha, 2009). However, this component of citizenship education, which is comparably labeled *transformative citizenship education* (Banks, 2008) and *critical citizenship education* (DeJaeghere, 2008), is just one dimension of citizenship education. In a more generalized sense, citizenship education is given an emic interpretation in this article, defined as the wide variety of ways that citizenship knowledge is transferred (be it from public discourses, teachers, community members, websites, pamphlets, etc.), which may or may not lead to participation, tolerance, or deeper understanding. In this vein, I follow scholars such as DeJaeghere (2008) and Sim and Print (2009) who analyze the pedagogical practices and perspectives of citizenship instructors in Australia and Singapore, respectively. Grounded representations of citizenship education further encapsulate the fact that more comprehensive definitions of these terms are not necessarily shared by those involved in the Sacramento citizenship enterprise. For many of them, citizenship is seemingly the singular legal process whereby U.S. immigrants apply for and study for the naturalization test. Therefore, it is necessary to approach citizenship and citizenship education as policies that are affected by both the top-down and the bottom-up, informed by government policies as well as by the attitudes of those who implement the policies.

The top-down approach to language policies is the traditional approach, in that it has a macro focus and is concerned with how institutional policies affect those without agency (see Canagarajah, 2005). In the case of citizenship, the top-down perspective originates from USCIS, which portrays American citizenship in terms of certain dimensions; it is idyllic, collective, tangible, and testable (Loring, 2013b). These facets are part of a larger "cultural script that includes family, solidarity, a strong work ethic, belief in the value of education, contribution to the nation, and assimilation" (Gordon, 2010, p. 3). Indeed, many of these values are manifested in the USCIS-produced naturalization material (Baptiste, forthcoming), where the application and subsequent interview require knowledge of "principles of American democracy" and "rights and responsibilities" (Applicant performance on the naturalization test, 2008). USCIS's depiction of citizenship contributes to everyday understandings of American nationalism, which, as they become more routinely and subliminally reiterated, form their own brand of banal nationalism (Billig, 1995).

Passing the naturalization interview and reciting the oath of allegiance to the U.S. is the culmination of an immigrant's path to naturalization. The naturalization process begins by submitting a twenty-one page English application (N-400 form) and paying a $680 application fee. Until 2013, the application was ten pages and included questions about the applicant's name, family, residence, employment, and eligibility; it now includes additional questions about group membership and affiliations, illegal benefits attainment, military service, and renunciation of foreign titles of nobility.[iv] During the approximately five-month waiting period for a scheduled naturalization interview, applicants can enroll in a citizenship preparatory course or access study material from the USCIS website, which includes a question bank of one hundred history/civics questions and their prescribed answers, as well as a list of 93 English vocabulary words used in the English reading/writing portion of the test (Study for the test, n.d.).

The naturalization interview consists of a one-on-one appointment with a USCIS field officer. It is conducted in English, thus it is a *de facto* policy enforcing English usage in a country that is not *de facto* monolingual (McNamara & Shohamy, 2008). It includes a history/civics portion and an English language portion; the history/civics requirement is met by answering six of ten questions correctly from the aforementioned pre-published list. The English requirement includes a reading, writing, and speaking portion. For the reading and writing portions of the test, applicants are given three attempts to produce a correct sentence that is given to them in either the written or oral modality, such as "California has the most people" and "They want to vote." To pass the English speaking requirement, applicants are asked questions from their submitted N-400 naturalization application.[v] Of the various components of naturalization, many citizenship instructors believe the English requirement is the most challenging for applicants (Loring, 2013a); from observations and recordings of naturalization interviews, Winn (2000) noted that no applicants (10 of 67) failed solely on the history/civics portion. As assessed by the naturalization test, citizenship is a top-down process of meeting objectives that are identified in government policy: good moral character, knowledge of American history/civics, and English proficiency.[vi] Compared to the naturalization policies of other countries,[vii] Koopmans, Statham, Giugni, and Passy (2005) label the present-day U.S. as *multicultural/pluralist* (along with countries such as Canada, Australia, Britain, and Sweden), in that citizenship is easier to obtain and ethnic minority groups are encouraged to retain cultural differences. But

arguably, this is a *de jure* assertion representative of official policies and laws, and is not indicative of *de facto* practices (see Wiley, 2013 for examples of current anti-immigration public discourse).

Researchers are revisiting these traditional, top-down notions of citizenship, defining citizenship as an on-going, dynamic process, rather than a static attribute that an individual gains after passing the aforementioned naturalization interview (see Loring & Ramanathan, forthcoming; Ramanathan, 2013). These scholars, in researching citizenship in relation to language policy and language ideology, align with those in the language policy field who highlight the necessity of supplementing traditional top-down policy research with bottom-up research (Blommaert 2009; Canagarajah 2005; McCarty, 2011; Ramanathan, 2005). Bottom-up research includes the perspectives and practices of individuals, who, by being affected by top-down policies, often reformulate their own policies through accommodation, resistance, and transformation (McCarty, 2011; Ong, 1999). This results in a rich pool of *local knowledge* (Canagarajah, 2005) that is vital to understanding policy in a holistic way. Through analyzing educational policies in their relation to naturalization applicants, I examine *local knowledge* of what it means to be "an American citizen" from those involved in the citizenship infrastructure.

3 Methodology

The data for this study come from a larger pool of dissertation data, which consisted of ethnographic observations, interviews, governmental and pedagogical documents, and linguistic landscape signage. The data sources spanned adult schools, community centers, community-sponsored events, a USCIS field office, and national articles and blogs written about citizenship. Specific to this article is information concerning available resources and predominant discourses at the aforementioned sites. Additionally, a follow-up interview was conducted with the founder of a local citizenship fair.

3.1 Site descriptions

Four types of sites comprise the data for this research: the USCIS field office, two public adult schools, a community center, and a law school-sponsored citizenship fair. Each site is described in more detail in the following sub-sections. All sites are located within Sacramento, the capital city of California and the thirty-fifth most populous city in the U.S. For comparative purposes, demographic information from the 2010 U.S. census is provided for the city of Sacramento, the state of California, and the nation as a whole (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).[viii]

As Table 1 illustrates, Sacramento is more racially and ethnically diverse than California, which itself is a highly diverse state in the U.S. There are higher percentages of foreign-born residents and linguistically diverse home environments in Sacramento than in the U.S., with the state of California having higher percentages than both. The education levels are largely constant across the three regions.

The four observed sites were chosen to encompass a wide sampling of resources and discourses accessed by prospective citizens, which will be contrasted with the top-down resources available from the USCIS online portal. The fact that all local sites provide free, subsidized, or low-cost services to the community suggests that the majority of applicants who seek assistance will turn to one of these sites. While all sites assist applicants with various stages of the naturalization process, the differences in how citizenship is discursively constructed demonstrate the complex landscape of citizenship education.

Table 1: Comparative demographics for Sacramento, California, and the U.S. in 2010

	Sacramento	California	United States
Popula-tion	**466,488**	**37,253,959**	**308,745,538**
Race/ Ethnicity	• White (non-Hispanic): 34.5% • Hispanic or Latino: 26.9% • African-American: 14.6% • Asian: 18.3% • American Indian: 1.1% • Two or more races: 7.1%	• White (non-Hispanic): 40.1% • Hispanic or Latino: 37.6% • African-American: 6.2% • Asian: 13.0% • American Indian: 1% • Two or more races: 4.9%	• White (non-Hispanic): 63% • Hispanic or Latino: 16.9% • African-American: 13.1% • Asian: 5.1% • American Indian: 1.2% • Two or more races: 2.4%
Education	• High school graduate or higher: 82.1% • Bachelor's degree or higher: 29.4%	• High school graduate or higher: 81% • Bachelor's degree or higher: 30.5%	• High school graduate or higher: 85.7% • Bachelor's degree or higher: 28.5%
Median household income	$50,661	$61,400	$53,046
Foreign born persons	22.1%	27.1%	12.9%
Language other than English spoken at home	36.8%	43.5%	20.5%

Public adult schools

Two public adults schools' citizenship classes were observed from one to five months from September 2010 to November 2011. Ford School for Adults,[ix] comprising 1,640 students,[x] offers an afternoon and evening citizenship/ESL class for twenty dollars a semester. From September 2010 to February 2011, I observed sixty-one students in attendance, who were primarily women, around 40-65 years old, and of Chinese, Hmong, and Mexican backgrounds. Their English language proficiencies encompassed a wide range from beginning to near-fluent. The instructor, Mr. Morris, is a 77-year-old retired high school principal. He follows a traditional teaching approach, in which students practice the test material by (re-)writing the given answers, which he then reviews orally. He occasionally introduces a lesson that provides deeper background information on a tested concept, but concludes his lesson by emphasizing the

basic response provided in the USCIS study material ("that's all you need to know"), which mirrors top-down portrayals of citizenship. Students frequently receive handouts (an average of 6.3 per class meeting) that provide pertinent information guides produced by USCIS, ancillary handouts from citizenship curricular websites, or ones designed by Mr. Morris. Students in his class additionally obtain practical handouts and forms such as a multilingual voting guide, voter registration, passport application, other USCIS applications, and a breakdown of the naturalization application stages.

The second citizenship class observed is Wilson Adult School, serving a population of approximately fifty predominantly Caucasian students. The school offers two levels of Adult ESL and a citizenship class, to about fifteen primarily middle-aged Spanish and Russian-speaking students of intermediate English proficiency. The class teacher, Ms. Lara, is a naturalized American citizen, who uses Russian translations in classroom instructions, lessons, and handouts as a pedagogic tool. Her teaching strategy relies on exact memorization of the test content, achieved through constant oral and written repetitions. Ms. Lara provides her students with the N-400 application for citizenship, the one hundred history/ civics test questions in either English or bilingual in English-Russian, civics and conversational English sample writing sentences, and sample questions for the oral interview.

Community center

The Asian American Community Center [AACC] is a non-profit organization that provides assistance to the community's immigrant, refugee, low-income, and limited English-speaking population. Founded in 1980, the AACC now employs seven people in its main office, with about twenty-five paid and volunteer staff members center-wide. Its offices provide assistance with career services, tax forms, and citizenship applications. The center distributes a citizenship workbook, available in English, Mandarin, Vietnamese, and Tagalog, produced by a larger community organization, which includes all relevant publications by USCIS in addition to application instructions and a sample completed application.

AACC offers free ESL and citizenship classes, taught by Ms. Maria (the regular teacher) or Ms. April (the substitute teacher and co-founder of the organization). While both teachers frequently deviate from the test material, Ms. Maria does so to practice reading fluency and pronunciation and Ms. April does so to actively discourage memorization. The majority of the Chinese and Vietnamese ESL student population stay for the subsequent citizenship class, but the citizenship class is smaller (about seventeen people instead of thirty) with an older age demographic. On average, the AACC students have a lower level of English proficiency than the Ford School and Wilson Adult School students. Another service that the AACC provides is free naturalization workshops, in which volunteers and staff assist attendees with completing their N-400 natura-

lization applications, one in which I participated as a volunteer in 2012.

Citizenship fair

Giovanni Law School in Sacramento, partnered with other legal clinics in the community, sponsors an annual citizenship fair which provides assistance in completing and filing the N-400 naturalization application. Initiated in 2009 by Professor Alvarez, herself a naturalized U.S. citizen and an immigration and international human rights lawyer, the free fair accommodates approximately three hundred people, with resources to assist the first 150-200 attendees. According to Professor Alvarez, the attendees are largely Latino and Russian, except for one year in which attendees spoke twenty-three different languages. News of the fair reaches attendees through flyers, advertisements, and radio announcements that Giovanni Law School provides to local organizations. The fair is staffed by ninety to one hundred law students, ten to twenty staff and faculty from Giovanni Law School, twenty to thirty lawyers working pro bono, and ten interpreters. Although the fair is advertised as running from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., the volunteers work until 6:00 to 7:00 in the evening double-checking applications ("final attorney review.")

USCIS field office

The local USCIS field office serves twenty-three counties in Northern California; this is where applicants receive their naturalization interview. Duplicating and replacing forms are the other key areas of customer service provided. The most common types of inquiries involve green cards, case status, passport stamps, and citizenship/naturalization (Loring, 2013b). Approximately seventy people are seen a day, and while appointments last for as long as needed, most are fifteen to twenty minutes. A customer service appointment is scheduled either online through the government website (using the *Infopass* service) or through an automated machine inside the field office. Entering the field office involves photo identification, body scans, and security guards.

My access to this site was through scheduling an *Infopass* appointment online, which allowed me to ask field officers questions during my scheduled appointment time, observe *de jure* and *de facto* operational policies in the waiting room, and collect linguistic landscape data of instructional signage in the building. The data described in this chapter are primarily from an interview conducted with a USCIS field officer in one of the private naturalization interview rooms.

3.2 Data collection and analysis

As mentioned, the type of data collected consists of ethnographic field notes and observations, interviews, and document analysis. The ethnographic observations were conducted at the aforementioned sites, the interviews were held with citizenship instructors (Mr. Morris, Ms. April, and Ms. Maria), Professor Alvarez from the Giovanni law school fair, and Mr. George, a field officer from USCIS. Analyzed documents consisted of published

documents, flyers, and booklets regarding citizenship at each of the educational venues observed.

The nature of the research questions and the topic of citizenship itself necessitate a holistic, qualitative research approach. Qualitative methods allow for particular meanings of citizenship to emerge from *detailed descriptions* of citizenship venues and *direct quotations* from those within the citizenship enterprise (Patton, 1980). Drawing from the grounded theory approach to qualitative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987), I simultaneously collected and analyzed data. This allows emergent meanings of citizenship to arise in tandem with ethnographic observations, uncovering a *thick* (Carspecken, 1996), descriptive explanation: "the integration of micro- and macrolevels of contextual data" (Watson-Gegeo, 1992, p. 52). Because there is no singular meaning of citizenship, ethnography is an effective methodology to elicit the multiple perspectives of citizenship that exist. In conducting an ethnographic study, I endeavor to understand how individuals define citizenship them-selves. I acknowledge that striving to attain local knowledge from an emic perspective is an ideal, for it is never truly possible for a researcher to become a complete insider (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Villenas, 1996).

4 Findings

This section is organized into two strands; the first is a description of available resources and prominent discourses from USCIS, and the second is an account of resources and discourses in local educational sites.

4.1 USCIS: top-down resources and discourses

The citizenship portal on the USCIS website is structured to provide information for three groups of people: applicants, instructors, and organizations. Applicants can download the N-400 naturalization application and study material for the naturalization interview (which includes a complete question bank of one hundred history/civics questions and approved answers, vocabulary lists for the English reading and writing portion, and printable flashcards for English vocabulary words and history/civics questions). This site has become increasingly multimodal, with text, audio, video, and interactive exercises; and multilingual, with some resources translated into Spanish and Chinese. I have argued elsewhere that the citizenship test requirements (and study material) limit English literacy to sentential, surface-level meanings, ignoring more globalized and comprehensive realms of literacy; accuracy is promoted over fluency, and language is tested and taught as a discrete skill (Loring, conditional acceptance).

The other key resource available to prospective citizens is to schedule an *Infopass* appointment at a local field office. Scheduling an appointment online inevitably requires computer access and literacy, but instructions are available in numerous languages: English, Spanish, Haitian Creole, Vietnamese, Chinese, Tagalog, Russian, Portuguese, French, Korean, Polish, and Arabic. As mentioned in Section 3.1, applicants can use such appointments to ask questions about their N-400 application.

To assist citizenship educators, the USCIS portal provides instructors with materials such as lesson plans and activities, educational products, and online training seminars (Teachers, n.d.). Closely related, but geared towards establishing new citizenship education programs, is the *Organization* tab (Program development, n.d.). Organizations can access documents such as "Expanding ESL, civics, and citizenship education in your community: a start-up guide" and "Citizenship foundation skills and knowledge clusters."[xi] The first document provided to community organizations is a start-up guide for new citizenship/ESL programs. It includes sequential information that begins with identifying a need in the community, building a staff, establishing funding, and determining course content and assessment. The impetus for beginning such an endeavor is described as follows:

These programs help immigrants improve their English language ability so they can participate more fully in American life. Helping students learn to navigate America's many complex systems and to understand American culture will help them establish a new life in this country. (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2009, p. 3)

This theme of cultural participation is one echoed in other realms of the citizenship enterprise, as will be discussed, and is even one of the hundred questions on the history/civics test.[xii]

In the second document, citizenship knowledge is segmented into *foundation skills*, which are defined as "overarching skills that facilitate the learning of other content areas," and *knowledge clusters*, which are "the specific content areas that applicants need to increase their chances of success during the naturalization interview and test" (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2010, p. 1). English proficiency (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) is counted as a foundation skill. The discourse used to describe foundation skills emphasizes the word "basic," in phrases such as "basic conversation words," "basic commands", and "basic conversations in English" (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2010, p. 2). Foundation skills also include the ability to "locate information and resources to determine eligibility for naturalization, find the appropriate application forms, prepare for the naturalization interview and test, and travel to the USCIS offices" (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2010, p. 3). The words "locating", "analyzing", "synthesizing", and "evaluating" appear on this page, comprising many of the higher order thinking skills on Bloom's taxonomy of critical thinking (Krathwohl, 2002), which is a hierarchical ranking of cognitive understandings from concrete and simple to abstract and complex (Bloom, 1956; Krathwohl, 2002). The USCIS document clarifies that these skills are not required to pass the naturalization test, but are provided to help applicants prepare for the exam. In-

deed, as the next section will demonstrate, some citizenship teachers recognize this and incorporate these types of lessons into their curriculum (Loring, 2013a). Importantly, learning how to navigate government websites to obtain information and access required forms is an ability that elderly applicants may lack, and their main alternative is to visit the local USCIS field office, which in some cases is over one hundred miles away (Loring, 2013b).

The knowledge cluster skills include (1) understanding the naturalization process, (2) American history, (3) American government, and (4) integrated civics. Understanding the naturalization process is an area that relates closely to many of the abilities described as foundational skills; the last three correspond to the three subsections of the history/civics portion of the test. Stated justifycations for teaching immigrants information in these content areas are: "to help new immigrants feel part of this shared experience" and to "help immigrants feel connected to their new communities and adopted country" (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2010, p. 7). Thus, this language relates to larger dis-courses about the shared values, common ties, and interconnectedness that unify American citizens.

4.2 Local educational sites: bottom-up resources and discourses

In addressing the resources and discourses present in the four local education sites, I will frame the discussion around (1) challenges and obstacles, (2) language assistance, and (3) perspectives towards citizenship at each site.

Challenges and obstacles

Adult schools offering citizenship instruction provide (semi)weekly practice with regards to the history/civics and English portions of the naturalization interview. This involves group work, individual writing practice, and choral repetitions modeled by the instructor. While the focus is direct assistance with the naturalization interview, peripheral areas of citizenship learning are sometimes addressed, such as logistical information about the USCIS building, application wait-time, and community dimensions of citizenship (Loring, 2013a). At the Ford School, this community dimension plays out in classroom visuals (photos of former students who have recently become naturalized), supplemental curriculum (bringing students' native cultures into the discussions) and discourses that treat the class as a unit and showcase individual accomplishments ("I'd like to introduce to you [the class] a new citizen"). Students are encouraged to learn about their classmates' naturalization process while learning about the necessary requirements which results in a shared goal of naturalization.

Lacking, however, is the extent to which teachers can assist students with legal issues. Mr. Morris at Ford School for Adults cautions, "you [the teacher] start playing lawyer and you can get into a lot of trouble quick with people, like give them advice that's incorrect." His students will occasionally bring their N-400 application

after class for assistance, where Mr. Morris will clarify its stated instructions and assist students in completing it. For issues in which he cannot advise, he directs students to free services such as USCIS *Infopass* appointments, explaining that lawyers who charge clients for free services "really take advantage of these guys."

Another challenge for adult schools is the fact that students generally do not receive one-on-one help. Many instructors regularly rely on handouts that require students to mark correct answers or write in answers, and only the most vocal students participate during oral class reviews. Therefore, many students do not receive practice in oral English until immediately prior to their interview date, when they are included in more individualized practice. During many of my classroom observations of oral worksheet review, some students were unable to self-correct their answers because of the teacher's reliance on the verbal modality. These teaching practices have significant consequences for students who likely do not have equal productive and receptive abilities in English.

At the AACC, citizenship classes face many of the same obstacles as the adult schools, however one crucial difference is that their office staff are specifically trained to assist students with filling out N-400 applications. Their staff provides this service within their offices and during citizenship fairs and application workshops that they themselves host. Unlike the citizenship fair at Giovanni Law School, the AACC fair is not completely staffed by lawyers. According to Ms. April, their staff members "were trained to get as much preliminary information as possible; if they [the applicants] needed to see a lawyer regarding some problem then we would send them in a room right away."

The citizenship fair at Giovanni Law School is predominantly staffed by lawyers, and thus is able to provide full legal advice to all attendees, concluding in individual final attorney review sessions. They strive to provide a comprehensive experience for applicants during the fair itself, which includes taking and paying for pictures and copying, then mailing the completed application. Consequently, the wait-time for attendees is higher, and a significant obstacle is the sheer volume of attendees. As mentioned, approximately seventy to one hundred people who arrive later in the day are turned away. The sole purpose of the fair is to assist applicants with completing the N-400 application; according to Professor Alvarez, earlier attempts to include mock interviews with USCIS personnel and citizenship test workshops with undergraduate students was too "messy" because "trying to do too much is not helpful."

Professor Alvarez believes the main challenge that their citizenship fair faces is the inability to conduct follow-up sessions with fair attendees or take on more difficult cases (for example, an applicant with a recent DUI on record). She describes this practice as a decision to be "risk-adverse" at the expense of turning some clients away: "If there's any question that the interview might get a little tricky, we do not represent those individuals in a citizenship fair. We tell them that they should really go

get a lawyer to take their case." She explains a hypothetical scenario with a citizenship fair attendee, in which she would tell the client that she would not continue the application process:

And they get upset, you know, [they say] 'I've wasted my time, I've been waiting for a long time' and I have to say to them 'I appreciate your frustration but we don't do any follow-up, we have limitations, we can't accompany you to the interview. And with your history, you're going to need an advocate. Even though you feel like it's a waste of time, what I'm telling you is very helpful to you.'

Despite these obstacles, Professor Alvarez believes their services are "the minimum that should take place in order to do something ethically and professionally."

Receiving assistance at the USCIS field office is an option that eliminates the peripheral members of the citizenship infrastructure and supplies a direct answer from a government employee to the naturalization applicant. This method of support obviates a "lot of hearsay out there," sometimes generated by citizenship instructors who have not taken the test themselves or have never been to the field office, according to USCIS officer Mr. George. However, not all applicants take advantage of the opportunity to ask questions at a USCIS office, which Mr. George believes is one of the main obstacles applicants face during the naturalization process: "A lot of the time people have enough time to prepare but they don't come into the office."[xiii] Faced with the strict protocol for entering a government building and the online appointment-making system, many immigrants are presumably intimidated by or unable to successfully receive assistance directly from USCIS.

Language assistance

Before broaching the topic of *how citizenship is talked about*, it is necessary to address the issue of *in which language is citizenship talked about*? The extent to which the various educational spaces offer multilingual assistance is dependent on the resources available and personal perspectives of local policy makers. In citizenship classes, the language instruction ranges from English-only instruction, to some L1 (first language) translations, to extensive L1 translations (Loring, 2013b). Ms. Maria at the AACC, who believes that the English requirement is the most difficult aspect of the naturalization interview, follows a strict English-only policy in class. She admonishes a Chinese couple for speaking to each other in their L1, telling them "You're supposed to speak English." Thus, she is a strict proponent of language immersion and does not consider L1 use to be a beneficial metalinguistic tool or scaffolding device (Grasso, 2012). Mr. Morris, although a monolingual English speaker, will employ some Spanish words to try to facilitate student comprehension, such as "*mucho dinero* [a lot of money]" and "a promise to be *leal* [loyal]." On the other hand, Ms. Lara at Wilson Adult School translates individual words, entire sentences, and

sets of instructions in Russian while she teaches. This practice is designed to aid her largely Russian-speaking class, but ignores the few Spanish speakers present. In a setting with a large student population, the choice of which language(s) to use and which language(s) to allow the students to use has significant implications as to which students are supported and which students are excluded.

At the observed AACC application workshop, applicants attend for one-on-one help, and thus, it is easier to provide accommodations in applicants' native languages. The languages in which the staff can assist are: English, Russian, Ukrainian, Hindi, Punjabi, Chinese, Vietnamese, Hmong, Tagalog, and Korean. Most applicants speak an Asian language, fitting in with the target group of the organization. The AACC volunteers and staff refer to non-English language assistance as "being helped *in language*." For instance, English monolingual volunteers are told that applicants in the waiting area need assistance "in language," as an explanation for why they are not yet helped. This expression is noteworthy because it ignores the fact that all attendees are assisted in language, which then treats English assistance as the norm.

At the Giovanni citizenship fair as well, the majority of applicants received help in a language other than English. The tables where the law students meet with clients have placards which list the language(s) spoken at that table. In 2011, the languages provided were: English, Spanish, Cantonese, German, Hindi/Punjabi, Armenian, Romanian, Tagalog, French, Farsi, Vietnamese, Russian, Arabic, Hmong, Mandarin, and Korean. In 2013, the flyer for the fair was distributed in English, Portuguese, Hmong, Korean, Russian and Ukrainian, Spanish, and Urdu. According to Professor Alvarez, this linguistic reality "frustrates my English speaking [law] students. Some of the frustration is 'why don't they speak English?' and we try to talk about that. But some of the frustration is just having to lose control and rely on an interpreter to help you through the process."

The reason why Professor Alvarez chooses to make multilingual assistance widely available is based on the legal jargon of the naturalization application. She believes that the English requirement of the exam is "fairly basic," but that "the possibility of doing harm with filling out the form if people don't understand what you're asking is huge." She repeatedly mentions "balance" as a guiding policy factor; the fact that "speaking to them [applicants] in their native language can build trust, and they really appreciate the effort. But it also potentially keeps them from pushing themselves to experience what it might be like to go through the [naturalization] interview." These decisions to include multilingual assistance are possible both because of the one-on-one interaction between client and lawyer and because of the availability of multilingual staff and interpreters. It is often not feasible for citizenship instructors to provide this level of multilingual help, and additionally, all interviewed instructors believe English is the most difficult aspect of the exam (Loring, 2013a).

Those who make an *Infopass* appointment in the USCIS field office enter a website which is largely English-dominant, although there are some signs translated into Spanish. About half of the posted signs in the *Infopass* appointment-waiting room (five of nine) and hallway (four of ten) are bilingual in English and Spanish, with the vast majority of Spanish usage acting as a direct translation of the English message (Loring, 2015). The purposes of signs in the *Infopass* appointment-waiting room and hallway are to give directions, specify interactional protocol, or provide additional information. The sings that include Spanish are primarily the first two types; only one bilingual sign imparts supplemental information. In the hallway, pamphlets and signs are provided in Spanish, but the only other languages present (French and Haitian Creole) are on signs specifically concerning Haitian refugee status in 2010. The language practices in the USCIS field office exemplify *erasure* (Irvine & Gal, 2000), in which less prevalent languages are ignored.

This *de facto* linguistic language practice contradicts the stated practice of language assistance, according to Mr. George. While he acknowledges that most people bring an English-speaking translator to their appointment if need be, he says, "If you come here and don't speak English, we can usually say 'wait a minute' and we can find someone in the back who speaks that language. Chinese, Russian, Arabic… I wouldn't say we have all languages covered, but I'd say for the majority of languages we have someone here who speaks it." In all these sites, when the teaching mission is to provide assistance with a task, there is a propensity for multilingual assistance, with a desire to match the language proficiency of the applicants. When the teaching mission is to strengthen the applicants' English proficiency, then there is greater variation of linguistic practices in line with the instructors' teaching philosophy. The instructtors' teaching philosophies are understandably affected by nationalist discourses that link English with American identity and educational discourses that either emphasize English-only instruction or view L1 use in a language classroom as an educational resource (Grasso, 2012).

Perspectives towards citizenship

For all sites described, the predominant tendency is to equate *citizenship* with preparing for and passing the naturalization interview. Instructors, organizers, volunteers, lawyers, and field officers tend to teach the minimum of what the applicant needs to know to be successful, and "being successful" is interpreted as "obtaining legal citizenship status." These are views that limit citizenship to its official, legal, and tangible nature, ignoring other critical and participatory notions of what citizenship enables (Loring, 2013b). However, the personal perspectives of those involved in the citizenship enterprise affect how they frame citizenship. These opinions concern the fairness of the naturalization test, personal enactments of citizenship, tensions applicants face during the naturalization process, and inter-

pretations of the meaning of U.S. citizenship. The latter two opinions are depicted in the following table for the various citizenship educators interviewed:

Table 2: Perspectives of citizenship educators

	Instructors (Mr. Morris, Ms. April, Ms. Maria)	**Lawyers** (Prof. Alvarez)	**USCIS Field Officers** (Mr. George)
Main obstacles applicants face during process	English, monetary cost of application	English, good moral character requirement, lack of legal services	Negative outside influences, having wrong information
What it means to be a U.S. citizen	Having taken-for-granted and guaranteed rights that are less easily stripped	Political participation or ability to receive certain benefits	Being physically present in the U.S. and having good moral character

While there is some variation between the citizenship instructors at the Ford School for Adults and the AACC, they agree that their students have the greatest difficulties with the English requirement of the naturalization test and the cost of the application fee ($680). All instructors discuss what citizenship means to them using the expression "take for granted," highlighting certain rights and responsibilities that native-born citizens do not appreciate (see Loring, 2013a). These encompass legal rights (right to vote), legal consequences (living without the threat of deportation), and the right to full participation (access to societal resources) (Ramanathan, 2013).

In accordance with the citizenship teachers, Professor Alvarez believes that a lack of English proficiency is the main reason why applicants delay their citizenship application. But she also believes that immigration law has become increasingly strict with respect to its good moral character requirements (in which applicants are asked about their group affiliations, criminal history, and prior illegal infractions). In her euphemistic words, "people have blemishes in their lives," which can amount to prior illegal actions. Additionally, the financial cost and lack of legal services are other deterrents that she sees.

She provides two answers to the second question in Table 2; the first is personal and the second is based on observations. She herself equates citizenship with political participation, saying, "for me it's the number one reason, to be a responsible member of society." However, she acknowledges that the clients that she interacts with do not necessarily share her view:

I think the reality is that many are not motivated by political participation or social change, although some of them are. Many view citizenship as a necessary step to be able to attain certain benefits, whether immigration benefits, or social welfare benefits, or simply stability in the country.

Predictably, these benefits are listed on the Giovanni Law School's citizenship fair flyer. The naturalization incentives provided are: voting, family reunification,

eligibility for government jobs, security from deportation, and access to healthcare. The first three benefits are also emphasized in a USCIS-produced document, along with "obtaining citizenship for children born abroad," "traveling with a U.S. passport," and "showing your patriotism" (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2012). It is noteworthy that "showing your patriotism" is listed alongside these other tangible benefits as a "right only for citizens" (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2012), indicating that USCIS policy depicts patriotism as an expression of national commitment that permanent or temporary residents do not (or cannot) share. Also notable is the fact that security from deportation and access to healthcare are not mentioned in USCIS documents, but are arguably leading motivators for applicants to become naturalized (see Loring, 2013a).

Mr. George of USCIS takes a different approach, not seeing any component of the naturalization process as unfairly detrimental for applicants. Rather, he believes that "outside influences," such as incorrect information applicants receive from non-USCIS educators, prevent applicants from applying in a timely manner. While Professor Alvarez views the good moral character requirements as an obstacle, Mr. George *defines* U.S. citizens in terms of these requirements. Thus, he states, "I think that you are 'here' and 'willing to know the laws, and have good moral character, like we talked about.' I mean, I don't think you should be a citizen if you killed two people and do drugs and have been arrested so many times." In sum, the citizenship teachers answered this question in a philosophical sense, the lawyer responded in terms of participation and benefits, and the field officer defined citizenship as it is represented in government policy and discourse.

5 Implications

This article has investigated the predominant resources and discourses available to prospective citizens in the Sacramento citizenship enterprise, often determining that citizenship dialogues and support differ across educational sites. Those who attend a citizenship class can expect to receive assistance with naturalization test preparation. This largely includes a teaching strategy of *teaching towards the test*, as other citizenship knowledge is often overlooked. When citizenship teachers do teach peripheral information, it aligns with the foundation skills that USCIS emphasizes in its online resources. Prospective citizens who visit a community center can additionally expect to receive one-on-one assistance in completing the naturalization application, either in the office or through a special event such as an application workshop or citizenship fair. Legal-sponsored citizenship fairs have the benefit of attorney review and assistance with determining eligibility. Not only do these venues shape applicants' own perspectives towards citizenship and naturalization, but they also affect their opportunities for full participation.

The educators in these sites can be described as actively working to eliminate obstacles that stand between applicants and the legal status of becoming American citizens. This entails teaching test content, processing applications, and answering personal questions. Assisting applicants with this specific agenda expedites their time spent as permanent residents, when they are living without certain rights and protections. Thus, these educators are creating opportunities for applicants' future participation in activities such as voting, running for office, and serving on a jury, that USCIS repeatedly emphasize as key rights that distinguish citizens from non-citizens.

As mentioned, however, *full participation* is more than civic and legal opportunities, but is also the option to pursue any and all societal resources available to American residents (Heller, 2013). Along this vein, the type of citizenship assistance described in this research does not fully provide opportunities for long-term meaningful citizenship interactions, namely social belonging and participation. The assumption is that once legal citizenship is attained, many of the inequalities that applicants experience will disappear, and they will immediately become legitimate American citizens. This view neglects the other ways that immigrants are excluded from full participation -- through inequalities in language assistance, public policies, access to employment, and discriminatory discourse, -- which do not talk about or treat naturalized American citizens as equal members of society. Policies and discourses which establish hierarchies of inclusion create dis-citizens, rather than full citizens (Ramanathan, 2013). Individuals who feel as though they are not full-fledged citizens can feel a sense of disjointedness towards their adopted nation which can subsequently affect their participation in local and national American society.

This research is significant because it highlights a situation in which top-down and bottom-up educational policies are layered and sometimes at contrary purposes. Depending on the site that applicants choose to attend, the availability of resources differs to varying degrees. Each site presents unique challenges and obstacles, which applicants either know or learn about through experience. These sites can either invite applicants to receive assistance, through providing multilingual assistance or offering counsel with the trickier components of naturalization law, or adhere more closely to the "English-only" *de facto* policy of U.S. naturalization. How those involved in the citizenship enterprise interpret the journey of the applicants they support consequently affects the policies they enact at the local level. These bottom-up conceptualizations of citizenship and their resulting enactment in citizenship education shape the degree of immigrant inclusion and empowerment and give citizenship its fullest meaning.

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Endnotes

[i] These countries are listed in decreasing frequency. There is also a large number of naturalized citizens who were placed in the categories "other" or "unknown" for these demographic statistics.
[ii] This is from the perspective of the applicants; those "in power" are learning about citizenship and immigration at a more personal level, above and beyond what they could learn from textbooks or legal documents.
[iii] This is seen in phrases such as "good citizenship" and "citizenship award."
[iv] New questions include: "Were you ever involved in any way with any of the following: genocide; torture; killing, or trying to kill, someone; badly hurting, or trying to hurt, a person on purpose; forcing, or trying

to force, someone to have any kind of sexual contact or relations; not letting someone practice his or her religion?"

ᵛ Applicants who are older than 50 years old and have lived in the U.S. for at least 20 years, and applicants who are older than 55 years old and have lived in the U.S. for at least 15 years are exempted from taking the English reading and writing portions of the test. Applicants who are older than 65 years old and have lived in the U.S. for at least 20 years additionally are given a simplified version of the history/civics test.

ᵛⁱ As dictated by the Immigration and Nationality Act § 312, this proficiency level is "an understanding of the English language, including an ability to read, write, and speak words in ordinary usage" but see Loring (2013b).

ᵛⁱⁱ France is an example of an *assimilationist* or *republican model*, in which acquisition of citizenship is easier but requires cultural and linguistic assimilation. Countries such as Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and Israel are labeled as *ethnic or exclusive* in that there are many institutional and cultural barriers to citizenship, especially for migrants and their descendants (Koopmans et al., 2005). Naturalization in Japan is also seen as an exclusionary due to its strict requirements (residency, good moral conduct, financial independence, and renunciation of prior nationalities) and lack of alternative paths to citizenship (Kashiwazaki, 2000). Unlike the U.S., South African policy does not bestow citizenship to children born in the country to temporary or undocumented parents (Klaaren, 2000).

ᵛⁱⁱⁱ Other races/ethnicities from the U.S. census data, not included here, were White (no additional information given as to Hispanic/Latino ethnicity), and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander; for these reasons the total percentage is not 100%.

ⁱˣ This school name, and all other names of individuals and institutions are pseudonyms.

ˣ The school attendance calculation is from January 2011 and comprises both Ford School and its sister branch.

ˣⁱ The *Organization* category, and these documents in particular, were chosen for a close analysis because they were distributed by a USCIS officer in a recent TESOL Convention session, in which a dozen citizenship instructors and program administers attended.

ˣⁱⁱ Question #55 is "What are two ways that Americans can participate in their democracy?" Answers are: "vote; join a political party; help with a campaign; join a civic group; join a community group; give an elected official your opinion on an issue; call Senators and Representatives; publicly support or oppose an issue or policy; run for office; write to a newspaper."

ˣⁱⁱⁱ This interview was held at the USCIS office and thus could not be audio recorded. This quote comes from my hand-written notes and follow-up field notes immediately after the interview concluded. When single-quotes are used, they represent verbatim quotes written during the interview itself.