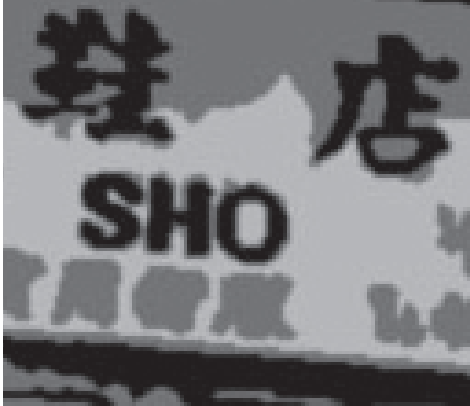


LANGUAGE, PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

THE FIGHT FOR MAINTAINING MINORITY HOME LANGUAGE

—A CHINESE-LANGUAGE CASE STUDY



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Introduction

What language should be taught? Who has the right to determine which languages will be learned? English-only policies and the expiration of the *Bilingual Education Act*, which is now replaced by *No Child Left Behind*, make it clear that English is the official language of schools in the United States (Nieto, 2002; Spring, 2002, 2007) with the emphasis moved from the goal of maintaining students' home languages while learning English to a focus of ignoring minority students' home languages (Bennett, 2007). The bottom line is that the dominant group determines what language or languages will be learned in school (Bennett, 2007; Spring, 2002, 2007).

In order to maintain their home language, culture, and identity, minority groups have had to fight for their home languages and for broader issues of social justice (Soto, 1997; Valenzuela, 1999; Wang, 1995; Wang & Phillion, 2007). Speaking and maintaining a home language has been asserted to be a basic human right of minority students and their families (Baker, 2000).

In order to fight language prejudice and discrimination, minority parents, community members, and students have had to negotiate with school administrators

and board members (Soto, 1997; Wang & Phillion, 2007), and have waged protests and walk-outs (Valenzuela, 1999) to show their desire to maintain their home language, culture, and identity and to fight for quality education.

Part of this battle has been legal actions over language teaching and quality education. In 1974 in *Lau v. Nichols*, Chinese parents in San Francisco sued the San Francisco Board of Education for failing to provide equal educational opportunities to their children who lacked English proficiency (Wang, 1995; Wei, 2004). The parents won the case, thereby broadening the possibility of maintaining minority languages and culture in bilingual education (Baker, 2000). However, more than 30 years later educational inequality still confronts Chinese American students (Wang & Phillion, 2007).

Recently Chinese parents became involved with their children's fight to learn Chinese as a foreign language in a high school in a Midwestern university town after their children's request was denied by the school administrators. Chinese parents and Chinese community members met with school administrators and board members, stressing the importance for their children of learning Chinese as a foreign language in school.

A letter from a professor in the foreign language department at the local university was also presented to the school authorities, together with a letter signed by parents from the local Chinese community. The Chinese parents' request, however, was

denied, citing inadequate funding and a lack of Chinese teacher availability.

This article investigates the efforts of those Chinese American students and their parents and community members in seeking the right to learn Chinese as a foreign language. This article also examines the assimilative and oppressive nature of school language policies, the importance of learning Chinese as a foreign language for Chinese American students who are losing their home language, and the broader importance of fighting for social justice.

The following research questions guided the interviews and data collection:

1. What did it mean to Chinese American students and their parents when their actions failed?
2. What did it mean to Chinese American students and their parents once the school took away their home language and culture?
3. What is the importance—the essence—of maintaining the Chinese language and culture both at home and at school?

Theoretical Framework

Phenomenology, which answers the question of "what is the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience for this person or group of people" (Patton, 2002, p.104), provides the theoretical framework for this project. Phenomenology is appropriate for this project since I explore the essence of Chinese parents who

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were involved with their children's fight to learn Chinese as a foreign language in their high school and the parents' understanding of the educational inequality that they experienced.

As Patton (2002) states, "A phenomenological study... is one that focuses on descriptions of what people experience and how it is that they experience" (p. 107). In order to get full and deep descriptions of the Chinese parents' involvement and their actions, in-depth interviews helped elicit detailed experiences from the participants.

Literature Review

In order to understand the importance of Chinese parents' involvement with their children's actions against a discriminative and oppressive language policy and practice in school and their struggle for social justice, it is necessary to examine the related literature to see how minority groups fought for their home language rights and for social change and to see that Chinese parents' involvement with their children's action is not an isolated case.

Minority home languages and cultures play an important role in forming minority students' identity, which helps them know who they are and understand their "historical roots and cultural continuity" (Baker, 2004, p. 58). The importance of home language to minority students explains why dominant groups often try to take away minority students' language and culture and assimilate them into mainstream society (Nieto, 2002; Sleeter, 2005; Soto, 1997; Valenzuela, 1999). In addition, it explains why minority parents, on the other hand, always fight for maintaining their children's home language and culture (Soto, 1997; Spring, 2002, 2007; Valenzuela, 1999; Wang & Phillion, 2007).

It has been stated that oppressive and assimilative language policies marginalize minority students and tend to humiliate them (Nieto, 2002; Sleeter, 2005; Soto, 1997; Valenzuela, 1999). English-only policies drive minority home languages out of school, as English becomes the official language of education. Bilingual education, for example, which has been proved to be effective in helping immigrants learn subject matter and learn English at the same time (Gort, 2005), has been eliminated in several states. California in 1998, Arizona in 2000, and Massachusetts in 2002 passed laws to make bilingual education illegal (Gort, 2005; Soto, 1997).

Sleeter (1997), who studied multicultural teaching in standards-based classrooms, stated, "Even though good bilingual education promotes educational

achievement and English acquisition, it also supports bilingualism, which many monolingual Americans regard as anti-English and anti-American (a view which itself reflects historic amnesia)" (p. xii). Gort (2005), who studies the early bilingual and biliteracy development of English- and Spanish-dominant learners in Two-Way bilingual programs, argued,

bilingual education continues to be controversial not because it has not proven itself worthy as a pedagogical practice, but because it represents emancipatory and liberating education for traditionally subordinated groups whose voices have been silenced for too long. (p. 34)

hooks (2003) advocated the importance of denouncing social injustice although it is only the beginning of awakening hope in others. Freire (1970) insisted that praxis helps those oppressed critically examine social injustices and take action against social injustice for social change. "Social justice," as defined by Osborn (2006), who specializes in educational linguistics and second language education, "can be described as sharing power and benefits equitably" (p. 26). Social justice, as hooks (1997) argued, is a never-ending process of fighting against discrimination, exclusion, and oppression, which is practiced by those oppressed, caring, or committed people (as cited in Huerta-Charles, 2004).

Without taking action against inequality and hegemony from dominant groups, this ideal society can only appear in one's dream, because dominant groups control almost all the institutions and schools and they are reluctant to share their power with minority groups (Cooper & White, 2004; Spring, 2002). hooks (2003) reminds us that we need to challenge any form of domination and fight for democratic education and for social justice.

Parents' and community involvement with their children's action, therefore, plays a crucial role in identifying injustices and taking action to fight against social injustices (Huerta-Charles, 2004; Soto, 1997; Wang, 1995; Wang & Phillion, 2007; Wei, 2004). During this process, parents and community members set a good example for their children to fight for social justice. Students also have an opportunity to learn the history of the community, its development, and about parents' success stories and fighting for social justice.

In order to fight against social injustices, members of the communities learned to work together to help students identify social injustices and fight together for social justice and for social change (Horton, 1989). For example, parents from a Puerto Rican community in an industrial town

fought for bilingual education for their children (Soto, 1997), parents from a Chinese community in a Midwest university town fought for their children's right of learning Chinese as a foreign language (Wang & Phillion, 2007), and as noted earlier, parents in San Francisco succeeded in the *Lau v. Nichols* case (Wang, 1995; Wei, 2004).

Methodology

For this study, I began by creating an interview protocol of open-ended questions. I then selected participants who had a child or children in the local high school. I contacted prospective Chinese parents by email, stating who I was and why I was conducting the research. Next I contacted by telephone those who responded to the email and scheduled a date and time to conduct the interview.

I interviewed 12 parents; these interviews were taped. The interviews were conducted in Chinese. The intention was for the parents to be more confident in answering the interview questions since Chinese is their first language. I transcribed the data and translated the answers from Chinese into English.

A Description of the Community and Participants

The high school considered in this study is located in a small university town in a Midwestern state in the U.S. It has a diverse population of students: approximately 16 percent Asian (mostly Chinese students), 73 percent White, 6 percent Latina/o, 3 percent Black, and 3 percent multiracial. Only 6 percent of students received free lunch and 2 percent of students received reduced lunch in the high school in 2006-2007. Most of the Chinese students are from upper-middle class families with parents who are faculty members or re-

Table 1
Participants' Information

Name*	Schooling	Career	# of Children
Mr. Ren	Ph. D.	Faculty	2
Mr. Mao	Masters	Artist	1
Mrs. Liao	Ph.D.	Research staff	2
Mrs. Tong	Masters	Accountant	2
Mrs. Fan	Masters	Accountant	2
Mr. Miao	Ph. D.	Research Staff	1
Mr. Hong	Masters	Graduate student	1
Mr. Zang	Ph.D.	Engineer	2
Mrs. Hao	Ph. D.	Research staff	1
Mrs. Nan	Ph. D.	Faculty	1
Mr. Cao	Ph. D.	Research Staff	2
Mr. Zhan	Ph. D.	Faculty	2

* All names are pseudonyms.

search staff at the local university, while some work in local high-tech companies (see Table 1).

All of the Chinese parents speak Chinese, and most of them speak fluent English in the local Chinese community. Wang & Phillion (2007), in their survey of 18 Chinese parents, found that 70 percent of Chinese parents believed that they could speak fluent English and 30 percent of them good English. The Chinese parents' success in their own education made them believe education is very important for their children and their family. Moreover, the Chinese parents believed that their children's education was the responsibility not only of the school but also of themselves as the children's parents.

Because of this Chinese tradition of valuing education (Ran, 2001; Zhou, 1997), Chinese parents tend to be actively involved with their children's education. Furthermore, Chinese parents typically believe that academic success depends on hard work rather than simply on intelligence (Zhou, 1997) and they believe that it is the collective effort of a family and the school that contributes to the success of their children in school (Ran, 2001; Zhou, 1997), which is consistent with the statement that Chinese parents' involvement with their children's education tends to be very active (Trueba, Cheng, & Ima, 1993).

Results and Discussion

Through analysis of the data collected, I developed the following assertions: discrimination is part of Chinese parents' experience; school language policy is oppressive; learning Chinese as a foreign language in school is important for Chinese Americans to maintain their identity; and Chinese parents' involvement with their children's equal education is crucial to their children's academic success and their children's maintenance of their identity.

Being Discriminated Against: A Part of Their Experience

The Chinese parents and community members met with the school administrators and board members, stating why they supported their children's request to take Chinese as a foreign language. The high school administrators denied the Chinese parents' request, citing a lack of funding and the unavailability of teachers to teach Chinese. However, German, French, and Spanish are taught as foreign languages in the high school, and the Chinese parents questioned why the Chinese children are starting to lose their home language after they go to public schools? The high school

administrators' denial of the Chinese parents' request made Chinese parents rethink the school language policy and practice. Mr. Hong stated his experience of negotiating with the school board and administrators:

The Chinese parents' representatives and Chinese community representative met with school board and school administrators for three times. Each time I was humiliated because school administrators and board members' ways of talking about this issue made me think that they knew everything and we parents knew nothing. However, they couldn't provide any reasons that learning Chinese is not important. (interview, December, 14, 2006)

Mr. Ren commented on the school administrators turning down the request from the Chinese community,

It is well known that Chinese American students in the school have few problems of discipline, drug, gangs, and so on. The school administrators took them as students of no problems and they knew that Chinese American students are always good at following the rules and respecting the authority. That's why they didn't believe that Chinese students could make any bigger trouble. (interview, December, 10, 2006)

What Mr. Ren stated is consistent with the stereotyped image of Asians as the "model minority"; this stereotype allows schools to pay no attention to those Asian American students who need help from the schools' resources (Trueba, Cheng, & Ima, 1993; Walker-Moffat, 1995). Zhou (1997) and Trueba, Cheng, and Ima (1993) also reported that Chinese American students are still influenced by the traditional morality of obedience: following rules and respecting authority. However, Chinese American students' behaviors and morality do not mean that they do not need the help of school resources and the benefits of their democratic and political rights.

Mr. Hong holds a school administrator's license, and he has applied for school administrative positions many times, but has finally given up his dream of being a school administrator. Hong complained about the discriminative practice of the local school district in recruiting for school administrative positions:

In the local school district, Asian students take up about 18 percent of the school population. But there is no Asian teacher and no administrator, either, in the school district. It's unfair. Asian Americans are underrepresented. Asian American students have no role model, which might misguide Asian Americans that Asian Americans do not belong to schools. (interview, December, 14, 2006)

Trueba, Cheng, and Ima (1993) also find similar situations in other fields where there are few Asians at the managerial level even though Asians' overall education and performance are more qualified than their White counterparts.

Mrs. Nan reported an experience that her daughter had in kindergarten. Her daughter was placed in the ESL program because her home language is not English. After Mrs. Nan told the teacher that her daughter had attended daycare and preschool that were all English, her daughter was put back in the normal class. Mrs. Nan expressed her concern about how the schools could determine students' language proficiency based on whether children's home language is English. Discriminative practices in school marginalize minority students and their parents and community.

The Oppressive Language Policy and Practice in School

Because of English-only policies and the assimilative nature of schools (Spring, 2007), minority students have been deprived of their right to speak their home language at school. Students who speak a language other than English are too often treated differently from other students. Students from other language backgrounds are forced to speak only English at school, and what happens in school is extended to community playgrounds, the effect of which makes minority students feel that their home language and culture are inferior to English. Mrs. Fan stated that she found that her son, who is a fifth grader, spoke English to other Chinese Americans who can speak Chinese in the community playground:

I was surprised to see that my son and three other Chinese Americans spoke English in the community playground. On the way back home, I asked him why they spoke English to each other when they knew they all could speak Chinese. My son told me they just didn't want to speak Chinese, just like what they did in school. I feel sad they take that they can speak Chinese as a negative rather than an advantage. (interview, December, 15, 2006)

Mr. Tong stated a similar concern:

My son liked to speak Chinese at home before he went to school. After he was in school for about one month, he was reluctant to speak Chinese. He told me his experience. His teacher's facial expression and his White peers' looks made him realize that Chinese at school is not welcomed. He understood why his peers from Chinese community often responded in English rather than in Chinese. (interview, December, 10, 2006)

Mr. Zang was disappointed with the school language policy and was interested in the different attitude toward Chinese from one of his White colleagues:

There is no Chinese friendly environment for Chinese American students to practice speaking and using Chinese and to make them feel that they are proud of themselves as Chinese Americans in the school. I notice my daughter is losing her interest of speaking Chinese at home. The interesting thing is that one of my White colleagues sends her son and daughter to the Chinese School every Sunday and she is proud that her son and daughter can speak and write some Chinese. (interview, December, 12, 2006)

It is interesting to see the different attitudes toward Chinese, one from the school and one from a White parent. On the one hand, schools take away minority students' home language (Soto, 1997; Spring, 2002, 2007; Valenzuela, 1999); on the other hand, the White parent sends her children to the Chinese School on Sundays to learn Chinese. Merino, Trueba, and Samaniego (1993) reported that if mainstream students can speak Spanish it is a plus to that student, while Spanish speakers speaking Spanish is usually regarded as a problem rather than an advantage to their academic achievement (Ladson-Billings, 2007).

Mrs. Zhan compared her son's Chinese experiences in Singapore with those in the U.S.:

My son moved from China to Singapore when he was 5 years old. He went to school in Singapore from kindergarten to Grade 3, where there was good bilingual education. My son's Chinese proficiency improved there and he had positive attitude toward Chinese and Chinese culture. At 9 years old, he moved to the U.S. Because there is no Chinese friendly environment in the school, I can feel that he gradually chose to speak English at home and that he had difficulty in expressing complicated ideas. I believe that if the schools here could provide good bilingual education as schools in Singapore did, my son's Chinese would have continued to improve. (interview, December, 16, 2006)

Chinese parents realized that the oppressive language policies and practices must be challenged so that minority students have a home language friendly environment to learn in, which will help maintain minority students' home language and help family communication in their home language (Wong-Fillmore, 1991), help students' cognitive development (Baker, 2000; Cummins, 1981b; 1983), and facilitate their identity formation (Trueba, Cheng, & Ima, 1993).

Home Language Loss

Wang and Phillion (2007), in their survey of a local Chinese community, found that 80 percent of the children who possess good oral Chinese skills can read and write little Chinese. Overall, 40 percent of the children frequently use Chinese at home; 30 percent rarely use Chinese at home; and 30 percent sometimes use Chinese at home. These Chinese American students are losing their home language.

Language loss by minority students in American schools has been found and discussed for many years (Cummins, 1979, 1981a, 1981b, 1983; Krashen, 1988; Merino, Trueba, & Samaniego, 1993; Wong-Fillmore, 1991). Minority students' home language loss causes many problems: the loss of minority students' identity, home culture, family communication, wisdom across generations, and so on.

Minority students might be confused about who they are and why they are here in the U.S. (Trueba, 1993), why their parents cannot understand their values and behaviors (Zhou, 1997) and so on, because they do not know where they belong. After losing their home language and culture, these minority students will finally be assimilated into mainstream society, which is the apparent goal of American schooling practice (Nieto, 2002; Sleeter, 2005; Spring, 2007). As Trueba (1993) asserted:

The very basis of a democracy that protects interethnic peace and fosters respect for each other's ethnic identity is the commitment to respect each other's language and culture, especially in the instructional context. In other words, one of the instruments of control and exploitation is to deny people their language and culture rights, as well as their right to learn effectively. (p. 260)

Therefore, it must be asserted that school language policy and practice is a form of control and exploitation of minority students' language and culture, based on English-only policies and "subtractive schooling" (Valenzuela, 1999). As an example, Mr. Mao stated his concern about his son's language loss:

My son came to the U.S. when he was a third grader in China. He was a fluent Chinese speaker and he could write a lot and read a lot in Chinese. After he's studied in the public schools for 10 years, he can't read and write Chinese any more. He can speak little and understand little Chinese. When he came to the U.S. and was placed in Grade 3, my wife and I worried about his survival in the class because he could speak no English. To my surprise, he didn't want to speak Chinese at home when he was a six grader. (interview, December, 11, 2006)

Mrs. Liao expressed her frustrations and worries about their children's loss of the Chinese language. She found that her parents were disappointed when they knew that their grandson and granddaughter could not speak fluent Chinese and knew little about Chinese culture when they came to visit her last year:

I really feel sad about my children who can't speak Chinese when my parents were here. I could feel that my parents were not satisfied with what happened to their grandson and granddaughter because they knew that their grandson could speak, read, and write Chinese a lot before he moved here. My parents felt that their grandson and granddaughter were strange to them. They felt that they lost their grandson and granddaughter. I'm thinking whether it's a good thing or a bad thing to move to the U.S. If my husband and I hadn't move to the U.S. this embarrassing thing would not have happened. (interview, December, 17, 2006)

Could it be possible that Mrs. Liao's parents do not know the language policy and practices in the U.S. schools and therefore may blame their daughter and son-in-law for their children's home language loss? Mr. Liao even doubted their choice of moving to the U.S. because the schools have taken away their children's home language. Chinese parents and their children's action against social injustices is the beginning of fighting against language and cultural control and the exploitation of minority groups.

The Importance of Learning Chinese as a Foreign Language

After experiencing the home language loss, Chinese parents and their children realize that the only hope is that the high school can provide Chinese as a foreign language so that they might pick up some Chinese language and culture:

If the local high school could provide Chinese as a foreign language, it would have special meanings: students may feel that their home language is valued and they could receive credit and learn Chinese well. Chinese American students may learn Chinese reading and writing skills and acquire some culture, which might improve their Chinese learning and help them know who they are. (Mrs. Hao, interview, December, 17, 2006)

Trueba (1993) asserts the importance of competency of minority students' home language to minority students' identity formation and interpersonal communication:

Without a full command of one's own language, ethnic identity, the sharing of fundamental common cultural values

and norms, the social context of interpersonal communication that guides interactional understandings and the feeling of belonging within a group are not possible. (p. 259)

Chinese American students and their parents found that only European languages were provided as foreign languages. Why is Chinese not available as one of the foreign languages options in the high school? Chinese parents stated the importance of learning Chinese as a foreign language in the high school:

Populations who speak Chinese take up one fourth worldwide. Culture and trade relations between China are increasing rapidly. Local school administrators and school board members need to broaden their view and take the world into consideration rather than the local groups' interest and political interest. If the school offered Chinese as a foreign language, it would not only benefit Chinese Americans but also benefit mainstream American students because they had a chance to experience a new language and a new culture and a language skill for them to compete in the international arena (Mr. Miao, interview, December, 14, 2006)

Sleeter (2005) was concerned about the current foreign language competence of students in U. S. schools and colleges because of oppressive school language policies, and she asserted the importance of foreign language proficiency to Americans in international or cross-cultural communication. Sleeter concluded that, "If we began to expect that everyone master at least two languages (including English), our collective ability to communicate with the rest of the world would be greatly strengthened" (p. 7).

Chinese parents realized that the question of which foreign language to learn in school is not just an issue of funding and teachers' availability but a political one:

The local school only provides German, French, and Spanish as foreign language options. Those are European Languages. The teaching of European language and English-only policy in schools marginalize Chinese and Chinese students. Chinese students feel that Chinese is like a language used by aliens. The school language policy makes Chinese Americans feel that speaking Chinese is shameful. (Mr. Cao, interview, December, 15, 2006)

With this assimilative language policy and practice in schools, many possible bilingual speakers are being educated as English-only speakers (Baker, 2000). Taking away minority students' home language is a waste of minority students' home language resources (Baker, 2000; Gort, 2005). Minority students might become successful bilingual speakers if

schools could provide caring environment to minority students.

As Chinese parents stated, Chinese is the language used by the world's largest population. Moreover, political, cultural, and trade exchanges between the U.S. and China are increasing greatly. Without Chinese skills and culture, students may be limited in their participation in intercultural communication and international competition in the future.

Chinese Parents' Involvement with Their Children's Quality Education

Chinese families have the tradition of valuing their children's education (Ran, 2001). Chinese parents believe that discipline and hard work are more important than natural abilities on their children's path to success (Zhou, 1997). Trueba, Cheng, and Ima (1993) found that social class and cultural values are the important factors that lead Asian Americans to academic success. Chinese parents work with their children as tutors if they can or they hire tutors to help their children's academic needs if they cannot tutor their children (Trueba, Cheng, & Ima 1993).

Because of such cultural influences, it is reported that Chinese American students usually work twice as hard as their American peers (Zhou, 1997). Moreover, Chinese parents typically participate in teacher and parents' meetings in schools and care about how their children were taught at schools (Ran, 2001). Chinese parents often work as volunteer to be graders and to prepare for class or school projects that are related to Chinese culture.

Furthermore, Chinese parents believe that the whole family is responsible for the success of their children's education (Zhou, 1997). Therefore, if a child failed in school or had behavior problems in school, the family would feel shameful and lose face in the community. It is easy to understand why Chinese American students and their parents fought for their right to learn Chinese as a foreign language in the high school after they found that their children were losing their home language that represents their identity, culture, and family values.

As Trueba, Cheng, and Ima (1993) found in their study, "Most Chinese immigrants emphasize education at home. They feel that American schools are not demanding enough, so they create their own homework to augment their children's education" (p. 92). Chinese parents want to provide the best learning environment, enough resources, and the best support for their children (Kan & Liu, 1986), hoping that their children will succeed academi-

cally and win the fierce competition in the future career market.

Therefore, whenever Chinese parents find something good for their children's learning, they will try their best to provide that for their children (Ran, 2001) and they will fight for it (Wang, 1995; Wang & Phillion, 2007). Mr. Cao stated the reasons that Chinese parents place such high value on their children's education:

It's Chinese tradition to value younger generation's education. I believe that education of children is not only the responsibility of school teachers but also that of parents. My education experience and success story prove that without sound knowledge, excellent skills, and communication abilities, I couldn't survive in the so competitive environment. I think I have the responsibility to let my children know the competitive reality and life in front of them. (interview, December, 15, 2006)

Fighting for Social Justice

Chinese Americans have been influenced by Chinese morality, which makes Chinese Americans respect authorities (Zhou, 1997) and follow laws. However, discriminative practice in the local high school made Chinese parents realize that discrimination and social injustice cannot be negotiated and that they must take action to fight for social justice. Mr. Zhan analyzed the reasons that Chinese Americans fought for social justice:

Chinese traditions and values make them follow the rules and regulations made in schools. Parents usually trust school practice and teachers' classroom practice. They seldom take action. The high school administrators declined both Chinese students and their parents' requests at the excuses of funding and Chinese teacher problem. I believe that it is political. If all the Chinese families waged a protest or a sit-in against the school discriminative practice before the city hall, Chinese [language] course would be offered next semester. (interview, December, 16, 2006)

Learning and maintaining the Chinese language and culture are Chinese American students' basic human rights (Baker, 2000); these qualities determine who they are, help cross-generation communication at home, and help Chinese American students learn family wisdom and values (Wong-Fillmore, 1991). Moreover, the discriminative nature of school practice and oppressive language policies marginalize Chinese American students and other minority groups.

Furthermore, when dominant groups control educational institutions (Apple, 2004; Spring, 2002, 2007) and no minority groups' voices can be heard, schools

become the places where minority students' language and culture are taken away (Soto, 1997; Valenzuela, 1999). Students must learn to critically examine these social injustices and take action to fight against social injustice. Chinese American students and their parents will continue to fight for quality education and for social justice.

Conclusion

This article has examined why Chinese parents were involved with their children's action in fighting for quality education and for social justice. As a result of their children beginning to lose their home language—meaning that their children were also losing their culture and identity—as well as the importance of Chinese in the increasing international trade and cultural exchange, and the hegemony of European languages in the local high school, these Chinese parents and members of the Chinese community realized that they must get involved with and support their children's action by requesting the local high school to provide Chinese as a foreign language. In this case, parental effort came after their children's request was denied.

Although the effort failed even after the involvement of the Chinese parents, these parents believe that their actions demonstrate that the Chinese community is in strong support of their children's action for social justice and that Chinese parents value their home language, culture, and identity. Chinese parents' and their children's action demonstrate that they do not accept the oppressive and discriminative language policy and practice of American schools, that they will continue to challenge the hegemony of dominant groups, and that they will continue to fight for social justice.

The Chinese parents also realized that they need to develop a larger scale of protest against the school's discriminative and oppressive language policy and practice. Cannella (1997) stated, "the quest for social justice will always be a struggle, an encounter with different and diverse agendas, values, and views" (as cited in Huerta-Charles, 2004, p. 135). Although Chinese parents and their children failed in this specific fight for social justice, Chinese parents expressed their determination to continue to fight for their children's language rights and to fight for social justice.

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