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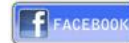
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Salomone, Rosemary, C. (2010) *True American: Language, Identity, and the Education of Immigrant Children*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

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Reviewed by Jennifer Harvey
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True American: Language, Identity and the Education of Immigrant Children sets out to link the broad themes of the language and the identity of immigrant children during this globally complex period as our diverse nation attempts to make sense of what it means to be “American.”

Rosemary Salomone compares and contrasts past and present educational trends and national perspectives on immigration, giving the reader an in-depth understanding of immigration while offering valuable suggestions about how policies and educational approaches could be changed to better reach the needs of immigrant youth.

Given Salomone’s examination of politics, law, education, and the influence of historical events both in the US and abroad, this book is strongly recommended for graduate

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students, researchers, and scholars interested in forming research agendas and developing much-needed studies, and for policymakers interested in situating current legislation and educational policies within our nation's history. While the author focuses on the US context, several paragraphs are devoted to comparisons between the US and the European Union (mainly France and Germany) which provide a more global perspective highlighting how different countries have handled the recent influx of immigrants and what we can all learn from one another. Even though *True American* is far from a practitioners' guide, it is also recommended for educators, administrators, activists and anyone interested in contextualizing his or her ideological beliefs about immigration, education and the plethora of complexities that arise with this controversial issue.

This book, which is divided into ten chapters, begins by devoting chapters one through seven to positioning political legislation, popular opinion, and common school practices among distinctive waves of immigrant migration and historical events such as World War I, the Great Depression, World War II, and the Civil Rights Movement. By detailing US language policy beginning in the 1800s and weaving her way skillfully to the present, Salomone reveals how current and past legislation have been both vague and contradictory, leaving much of the decision-making up to the state and local level or case by case court rulings throughout different periods of acceptance and rejection of immigrant language and culture. She explicitly reveals differences between previous waves of immigrant migration and contemporary patterns by examining the ways in which the global economy, national security, and technology make this a unique moment in time. She also discredits the past and present perception of a somewhat rosy path towards Americanization that ignores the detriments of language loss and cultural assimilation.

In the last three chapters of her book, Salomone effectively debunks myths about immigrants' so-called lack of desire and failure to learn English and the negative cognitive effects of being bilingual and participating in bilingual education. She does this by providing evidence of the widespread shift in English dominance between the 2nd and 3rd generation and citing work by Jim Cummins

(2000) about bilinguals' heightened metalinguistic awareness, divergent thinking, and concept/strategy transfer across languages and Ellen Bialystock's (2001, 2007) studies on bilinguals' higher levels of selective attention as well as how bilingualism protects against cognitive decline as one becomes older. Salomone ends her book by promoting the acceptance of cultural and linguistic diversity through additive bilingual education, dual language programs, and international high schools for recent immigrants, while simultaneously calling for legally bound individualized programs for English Language Learners (much like the Individualized Education Program of Special Education) which would work to determine appropriate class placement and testing accommodations on a student by student basis.

Salomone substantiates her claims empirically by employing evidence from previous studies, exploring several theories, and providing detailed explanations of Supreme Court cases and legislative policies. She also includes quotes from political figures, novelists, classical literature, and local newspapers to provide a more inclusive body of work that is properly situated among public opinion. Furthermore, while this work is largely based on findings by other researchers in the field, the author does include results from a small qualitative study that she conducted using semi-structured interviews with thirty immigrant law students about their experiences growing up in a bilingual family and their different perspectives on what it means to be an American in order to highlight the changing climate and hopeful trends towards more pluralism and respect of diversity.

Salomone's book contributes greatly to the growing field of research on immigrant youth and education. To her credit, few, if any pieces of work have attempted to tackle the extensive topics of language, identity, and education over such a large span of time in the US and European context. However, what makes *True American* unique is that it includes clear counterarguments to bilingual education and multiculturalism and respectfully reveals how these ideas developed and what historical events contributed to them. While sprinkled throughout the content of the first seven chapters and especially in the final chapters of her book, Salomone counters these perspective, her previously unbiased explanations allow

the reader to better understand these contradictory perspectives. A deep understanding of both sides of the argument is imperative to determining and defending ideological beliefs and implementing positive changes for immigrant youth.

Salomone tries her best to write as an objective researcher (and historian), though admits in her preface how “the journey here was not just intellectual; it was very personal” (p. ix). In addition to her educational accomplishments, her past experiences teaching English to immigrant and foreign students, her devising and supervising of bilingual programs, and her work helping to create the first International High School in New York have all shaped the way that she views and reports on the controversial issues presented in her book. She chose to write this book in order to explore the connection between language and identity in this time period and how it should affect policy and practice.

True American is a comprehensive book that can assist one in situating current immigrant complexities about language, identity, and education in a historical, political, and educational context. Salomone’s book could only be strengthened with the inclusion of more authentic quotes from her personal experiences. In her preface she mentions how her thinking for this book has been largely informed by discussions with people ranging all the way from taxi drivers to doctoral students in the United States and abroad (p. XI), however, she declines to include these perspectives (except from immigrant law students) in her book. The addition of these viewpoints would enhance one’s understanding about what it means to be a “true American.”

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