

Overview

This book is about Coral Way Elementary school and the events that took place between 1961–1968, seven years that changed the landscape of education in the United States and arguably around the world. These six years allow readers to experience the social, political and educational context in which the Coral Way bilingual program was conceptualized (1961–1963), how the early two-way immersion model of bilingual education in the United States was implemented and subsequently changed (1963–1968) and the outcomes of the Coral Way ‘experiment’ based on student achievement data and interview data from the program’s participants. For readers’ reference, I build the context of the program based on political events that took place in Cuba and the United States between 1960 and 1962, and describe the Cuban refugee context and Operation Pedro Pan, which brought more than 14,000 unaccompanied youth to the United States by late 1962 (Conde, 1999). I also discuss the larger field and context of bilingual education in the United States, noting that although Coral Way is believed to be the first two-way immersion bilingual education program in the United States, bilingual education programs were not uncommon in the United States and were especially prevalent for German and Dutch speakers up until World War II (Baker & Wright, 2017; Ovando, 2003).

Based in its historical context and the model of bilingual education it followed, Coral Way is undoubtedly a legacy in the field of bilingual education, and its teachers and leaders its pioneers. Prior to this volume, we have had little knowledge about what happened during the formative years of the program’s development and, more importantly, what decisions were made that led to this particular model. Despite our limited knowledge, books on bilingual education, dual-language education and two-way immersion programs have referenced Coral Way to varying degrees. For instance, some scholars have referenced Coral Way in single

lines (Bearse & de Jong, 2008; Boyle *et al.*, 2015), short verses (Anderson, 1971; Berney & Eisenberg, 1968; Castellanos & Leggio, 1983; Craig, 1995; García & Otheguy, 1985; Hakuta, 1986; Jacobson, 1974; Lyons, 1990; Ovando, 2003) or, rarely, as a complete chapter (Mackey & Beebe, 1977; Pellerano *et al.*, 1998). A more recent study of language ideologies and uses in Coral Way as a K-8 center was conducted by MacKinney (2016), with some limited treatment of its sociohistorical roots. However, none has thoroughly examined the Coral Way program itself, nor the nature of the experiment aimed at building bilingualism and bilitracy among both native Spanish- and native English-speaking children. The Coral Way bilingual program¹ contributes to the history of bilingual education in the United States and offers an extensive review of the early days of the first known two-way immersion program in the United States.

Readers of this book will find data derived from more than 900 pages from the school and the Ford Foundation archives; oral histories and interviews conducted with educators and students affiliated with Coral Way; newspaper articles and journal articles. Material artifacts, school photographs and imagery have also been examined, as well as any literature mentioning or describing Coral Way in academic textbooks, journals, theses and periodicals. Quantitative data on the achievement of students who participated in the Coral Way experiment between 1963 and 1966, although sparse, are also included for readers to examine. But perhaps most telling are the voices of the teachers and students, some of whom recall their conversations with their parents, now deceased, about their education, and who retrieve their memories of the days at Coral Way while acknowledging, ‘I don’t know if I’m coloring [my memories] with nostalgia, but everybody seemed pretty happy, in spite of... the trauma of having to leave Cuba and what was happening in Cuba at the time’.² We must remember that memories are shaped and reshaped over time, and although 50 years have passed for many of those who participated in the experiment, Orestes Gonzalez’s earlier quote is a resounding and confirming sentiment across many of the students.

I provide additional context for the current Coral Way K-8 Center in both the Prologue and Epilogue of this book, and in the Epilogue I connect Coral Way Elementary (the experimental bilingual program) to the Coral Way K-8 Center today. In Chapters 1–6, I offer readers the opportunity to examine the bilingual education program and experiment between 1961 and 1966. Chapter 1 describes the context and influx of Cubans to the Miami area between 1960 and 1962 and into 1963, when the bilingual education experiment began. Readers will note that

particularly in education, context plays an essential role in how leaders build teams of support and how teachers and aides conceptualize their work with students. Teachers also negotiate the context of education as they implement instructional practices and navigate educational programs and policies (Darling-Hammond, 2017), particularly with students learning a second language (Coady *et al.*, 2016). This is because language is an integral part of our individual and social identities and of the language policies that we enact.

Chapter 2 discusses the bilingual education program model, which some readers might know as a two-way immersion or a 50:50 model of bilingual education. In today's terminology, this model of bilingual education is increasingly referred to simply as 'dual language'. However, readers should caution that dual language as a term did not exist in the 1960s, and today the term 'dual language' eclipses some important variations across programs when it is used. In the 1960s, the Coral Way program was referred to simply as the 'bilingual school'. In this book, I retain the original terminology used by the early founders of the program when I cite their stories and data from the archives, but I refer to the program model as two-way immersion in the book's Epilogue in order to keep with current terminology. However, labels do matter and I am sensitive to the variation in terminology used by scholars, teachers and politicians, and how this affects public perception of bilingualism and bilingual education.

The Coral Way bilingual program itself went through several important student and teacher configurations over the first few years of its implementation. It was, after all, an experiment and was described this way by its early visionaries. I describe the challenges that teachers faced in determining which students were considered native Spanish and native English speakers. Chapter 2 also includes images from student report cards, which demonstrate the development of the model between 1962 and 1963 and how serious the educators were in building a second language for both English- and Spanish-speaking students.

Chapter 3 describes teacher education and how Cuban aides, who were primarily highly educated, former teachers in Cuba, were trained to become teachers who taught Spanish- and English-speaking children through the medium of Spanish. This chapter notes the emphasis on teacher professional development during the summer months of 1962 and 1963 and work that was funded by the Ford Foundation. The summer professional development emphasized the need for teachers to conceptualize instruction in two languages and to collaborate in order to design and implement a new curriculum.

Chapter 4 narrows in on the innovation and development of the *Miami Linguistic Readers* and literacy development for bilingual children, the use of the audiolingual teaching method and educational curriculum in general. The Miami Linguistic Readers, like Coral Way itself, was considered a groundbreaking curriculum, composed of teaching materials, student books, ‘big books’ and workbooks for children learning English as a second language. The curriculum and materials were later used and distributed nationally, and readers can find examples of the books in mainstream online storefronts. I provide some visual examples of the readers in this book as well.

Chapter 5 attempts to answer the question that readers, teachers and scholars of bilingual education frequently ask: Did the experiment work? And if so, how? Using both qualitative data derived from documents and material artifacts and oral histories and interviews, in addition to student achievement data from limited sources, readers are presented with answers to these questions. The answers are not restricted, however, to data on student learning, or even bilingual development assessed using oral and written assessments. The answers lie in the voices of the students who graduated from Coral Way, their life experiences and the extended networks that they built and maintain to this day. Answers also derive from parents and teachers of Coral Way. Notably, not every child enjoyed the Coral Way bilingual program, and as we continue to conduct oral histories with graduates of the first class, this point is elucidated.

Chapter 6 discusses the building of a bilingual network. I use data and information from the Coral Way archives on visitors to the school, and I refer to new and emerging bilingual education programs that appeared somewhat simultaneous to and immediately after the establishment of Coral Way. Finally, I conclude this book with an Epilogue and, like the Prologue, provide readers with connections to bilingual education policies in the current context. As previously noted, I connect the Coral Way bilingual program to today’s two-way immersion programs, referred to frequently as ‘dual language’. Ultimately, I argue that scholars and educators in the field of bilingual education face the daunting yet essential task of making known the multilingual landscape of the United States, the language-as-resource paradigm in education (Ruiz, 1984) and our collective work as ‘movement intellectuals’ (Machado-Casas *et al.*, 2015: 33). Our future is rooted in our past. To paraphrase social historian David McCullough (1992), how can we know who we are and where we are going unless we know where we are from, the courage shown and the price paid to get here?

Notes

- (1) Coral Way was a monolingual (English medium) neighborhood elementary school from 1936 until 1962. In 1963, it began a two-way program with first-grade students and became a fully bilingual (two-way immersion) school by 1967–1968. It remains a fully bilingual school today.
- (2) Gonzalez, O. (2008, March 26) Interview by R. Ruiz [audio file]. Coral Way Elementary. University of Florida Digital Collections. See <https://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00065599/00001>.

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