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# ONLY ENGLISH BY THE THIRD GENERATION? LOSS AND PRESERVATION OF THE MOTHER TONGUE AMONG THE GRANDCHILDREN OF CONTEMPORARY IMMIGRANTS

RICHARD ALBA, JOHN LOGAN, AMY LUTZ, AND BRIAN STULTS

*We investigate whether a three-generation model of linguistic assimilation, known from previous waves of immigration, can be applied to the descendants of contemporary immigrant groups. Using the 5% Integrated Public Use Microdata Sample 1990 file, we examine the home languages of second- and third-generation children and compare the degree of their language shift against that among the descendants of European immigrants, as evidenced in the 1940 and 1970 censuses. Overall, the rates of speaking only English for a number of contemporary groups suggest that Anglicization is occurring at roughly the same pace for Asians as it did for Europeans, but is slower among the descendants of Spanish speakers. Multivariate models for three critical groups—Chinese, Cubans, and Mexicans—indicate that the home languages of third-generation children are most affected by factors, such as intermarriage, that determine the languages spoken by adults and by the communal context.*

**H**istorically, generational shift has been associated with much assimilatory change in the United States (Alba and Nee 1997; Lieberman and Waters 1988; Neidert and Farley 1985). Nowhere has the impact of generation been greater than in the realm of language, in which a three-generation process of Anglicization has, by and large, prevailed. Stated schematically, the process occurs in the following way: some individuals of the immigrant generation learn English, but they generally prefer to speak their native language, especially at home. Thus, their children usually grow up as bilinguals, but many of them prefer English, even in conversing with their immigrant parents (Lopez 1996). The second generation generally speaks English at home when its members establish their own households and rear children. Consequently, by the third generation, the prevalent pattern is English monolingualism, and knowledge of the mother tongue for most ethnics is fragmentary at best. This model of Anglicization was first formulated by the sociolinguists Joshua Fishman (1972, 1980; see also Fishman et al. 1966) and Calvin Veltman (1983, 1990); for additional supportive evidence, see Stevens (1985, 1992).

Whether this pattern of acculturation, observed among European-ancestry groups, will apply to the same degree to the ethnic groups arising from contemporary immigration is an open question (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). The question has been sharpened by arguments that point up the advantages to be derived from ethnic cultural loyalties, as sug-

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gested by the academic benefits for the children in families in which the ethnic culture remains strong (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Zhou and Bankston 1998; cf. Mouw and Xie 1999). The arguments suggest the possibility that some families and communities, recognizing these advantages, will work to counteract the assimilative drift among their children. Language is a critical domain for assessing acculturation because it is a socially salient indicator of cultural difference and a marker of ethnic boundaries (Plotnikov and Silverman 1978). It is, to some extent, also a matrix for other cultural differences, such as the hierarchical family culture encoded in the complex pronouns of the Vietnamese language (Zhou and Bankston 1994).

In this article, we focus on the stage of the language-assimilation process that would appear to be the most problematic but has yet to be studied for the groups of the new immigration, namely, conversion to speaking only English. Few scholars of contemporary immigration have questioned that the vast majority of immigrant children quickly acquire English in the U.S. context (Portes and Hao 1998; Portes and Schauffler 1994; Rumbaut 1998). Thus, insofar as there is a debate, it concerns the viability of bilingualism (Portes and Rumbaut 1996, 2001). To examine this question, we investigated the home languages of third- and later-generation children from contemporary immigrant groups. We analyzed the outcome of speaking only English in terms of the characteristics of the parents, such as their education or employment in an enclave economic sector, and of the household, such as its composition or location in relation to ethnic residential concentrations. Because the number of third-generation children is still small for most of the new immigrant groups, we developed these models in the greatest detail for three large groups with a longer history of immigration: the Chinese, Cubans, and Mexicans.

## BACKGROUND

The United States has been multilingual from its beginnings, but was established early on as a society in which one language, English, occupies a hegemonic position and others must struggle to persist (Lieberson, Dalto, and Johnston 1975). Even in the contemporary period, when the three-generation model of Anglicization is under challenge, the acceptance of English by immigrants and their children seems beyond doubt. The socioeconomic payoff from learning English is underscored by the finding that the lack of English proficiency is a serious disadvantage in the U.S. labor market, even if it can be ameliorated for some self-employed persons and participants in ethnic economic enclaves (Chiswick and Miller 1988; McManus, Gould, and Welch 1983; Stolzenberg 1990; cf. Light 1984; Portes and Bach 1985). In any event, many contemporary immigrants arrive with some knowledge of English, whether as a result of education in their home countries or absorption from the English-language cultural products in worldwide circulation (Stevens 1994). Moreover, there is abundant evidence that English proficiency is almost universal in the second generation (Portes and Schauffler 1994). To this extent, then, the model of linguistic assimilation abstracted from the experience of previous immigrant groups remains unchallenged.

The most pointed questions about this assimilation model concern the loss of the mother tongue and thus the conversion to English monolingualism. One element that has come under scrutiny is the tacit assumption that full linguistic assimilation is necessary to attain opportunities for socioeconomic mobility, conventionally associated with entry into the mainstream. Some recent research has countered that bilingualism can bring equal, if not greater, benefits and that acculturation can lead to negative outcomes, as described in the new model of "segmented" assimilation (Portes and Rumbaut 1996, 2001; Portes and Zhou 1993). For instance, an economic incentive to maintain a mother tongue is built into the ethnic economic enclave model. Participation in such a subeconomy requires fluency in the ethnic culture and encourages the maintenance and possibly the transmission of the mother tongue across the generations. Bilingualism also may carry educational benefits.

Portes and Rumbaut (1996, 2001) argued that bilingualism is associated with cognitive advantages, especially when it is an educated, as opposed to “folk,” bilingualism and can lead to educational outcomes superior to those found among English monolinguals (see also Zhou and Bankston 1994).

The much-discussed phenomenon of transnationalism suggests an additional reason why bilingualism could have more staying power than in the past, at least for some segments of new immigrant groups. Many researchers have argued that contact with and travel to home countries have achieved a regularity for contemporary immigrants that exceeds by an order of magnitude anything observed in the past (Basch et al. 1994; Foner 1997; Levitt 2001; Smith 1998). Transnational immigrants often introduce their children to the homeland, thus giving the children an incentive to master the mother tongue to be able to communicate there (Levitt 2001).

In addition to the new incentives to preserve a mother tongue, there are the well-known effects of residential enclaves. Stevens’s (1992) research showed the importance of the size and geographic segregation of an ethnic group (see also Jasso and Rosenzweig 1990; Portes and Hao 1998). For large groups and those that are highly segregated, the opportunities to use a mother tongue are greater and thus so are the incentives to maintain it. Consequently, the end point of the linguistic-assimilation process is reached more slowly or not at all. These effects may not be a result simply of the use of the mother tongue in social interactions, but also of the presence of a supportive infrastructure, represented by ethnic-language mass media.

The questions about the conventional model of linguistic assimilation deserve to be taken seriously, but the empirical evidence needed to address them remains incomplete. Indeed, what evidence there is suggests that the pressures to convert to English dominance have not abated much. For example, Portes and Rumbaut’s surveys of the children of the 1.5 and second generations in Miami and San Diego found high levels of preference for using English, as well as a decline over time in competence in the mother tongue (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Rumbaut 1998).

In this article, we address these questions by examining the home languages of third- and later-generation children from some of the main contemporary immigrant groups, using two circa 1990 census data sets. (We have also included second-generation children as a critical comparison group.) So far, research on contemporary linguistic assimilation has focused on the immigrant and second generations (e.g., Espenshade and Fu 1997; Espinosa and Massey 1997; Portes and Hao 1998), presumably because the third is still small, given the origins of the new immigration in the 1960s. But the language socialization of the third generation offers a more decisive test of the three-generation assimilation model. The same can be said of the outcome we studied, English monolingualism, which has not yet been the subject of much investigation for the groups of the contemporary immigration.

Home language is the strategic site for our analysis because it is probably decisive for maintaining the mother tongue. As English becomes accepted out of necessity by ethnic groups as the dominant language in public spheres, the mother tongue is more and more restricted to use with social intimates, especially family members (Fishman 1972). Moreover, if children do not learn to speak a mother tongue at home, there is little probability that they will learn to speak it fluently, given the age limits on language learning (Krashen, Long, and Scarcella 1979; Pinker 1995).<sup>1</sup> We selected school-age children (age 6–15) for our analysis because a language transition may set in with the onset of schooling, given the dominance of English in most classrooms. The number of third- and later-generation children from most contemporary immigrant groups is, of course, still limited,

1. Although research has shown that adults are faster than children in comprehending and learning the rules of a new language, children who learn second languages eventually become more proficient on average than do adult learners, and their speech is less accented.

given that the revival of immigration dates to the 1960s. But the number is sufficient for us to analyze in some detail three paradigmatic groups with a longer history of immigration: the Chinese, Cubans, and Mexicans.

## DATA AND VARIABLES

Our main data source is the 5% Integrated Public Use Microdata Sample (IPUMS) of the 1990 Census (Ruggles and Sobek 1997). The census asks whether each member of a household speaks a language other than English at home and, if so, which language. (However, no information is collected about whether a mother tongue is the usual language spoken or how well it is spoken.) For those who speak other languages, a rating of their English-language proficiency is collected. But because all but a tiny number of U.S.-born children are proficient at English, we formulated the dependent variable for our analysis as a dichotomy: speaks only English versus speaks another language (and English). In short, our analysis contrasts English monolingualism with possible bilingualism ("possible" only because the actual competence in the mother tongue is not known).

To identify children in the third and later generations, we had to link them to their parents (see Oropesa and Landale 1997 for a similar strategy). Using the family-linkages feature of the IPUMS, we restricted the sample to children age 6–15 who were linked to at least one parent of the same ethnicity in the household. (The IPUMS has a great advantage over the PUMS for our purposes because of the family linkages it provides; these linkages allowed us to include many children who resided in households headed by someone other than a parent.<sup>2</sup>) We classified children as belonging to the third or a later generation when they and their parents (and/or stepparents) who were present in the household were all U.S.-born; second-generation children differ in having at least one foreign-born parent. We could not distinguish, however, between the third and fourth (or later) generations in the decennial census because we would have to have had information about the birthplaces of grandparents, which is not available.<sup>3</sup> We used two strategies to mitigate this problem. First, we present our analyses in two ways: (1) for all third- (and later-) generation children in a group and (2) for those in households in which at least one parent spoke a language other than English (labeled "mother-tongue homes"). The latter restriction eliminated a large number of fourth- and later-generation children in households in which only English was spoken, and it allowed us to examine intergenerational language shift directly. Second, we used the 1989 November Current Population Survey (CPS) to estimate the English-only percentage of the third, rather than a later, generation among the children of the Mexican group. We could do so because the CPS collected information about the birthplaces of the parents of every member of a household and thus identified the birthplaces of children's grandparents; however, of the groups of interest to us, only the sample of Mexicans is large enough to allow statistically credible estimates.

We drew on additional IPUMS data to shed light on a different aspect of contemporary linguistic changes. To be able to compare these changes across generations with those occurring among the descendants of earlier immigrants, we used mother-tongue data from the 1940 and 1970 censuses to ascertain the empirical degree of Anglicization in the groups whose experience gave rise to the three-generation model.

We took one other unusual step in our analysis of the 1990 data. Because intermarriage has such an obvious impact on household language (Grenier 1984; Stevens 1985) and because the relevant ancestries of the children (or grandchildren) of intermarriages may not always be identifiable through the race and Hispanic-origin variables (Waters

2. In the PUMS, we would have had to restrict the sample to children with a parent who was the householder because the family linkages to other household members are identified only for the householder. On average, about 5% of our sample would have been lost.

3. Nevertheless, for the sake of simplicity, we sometimes refer to the third- and later-generation group as the "third generation."



forthcoming), we also scanned ancestry data from the census to find them. For instance, Mexican children include those identified as Mexican in the Hispanic-origin variable and those for whom Mexican is named as an ancestry, regardless of their Hispanic-origin classification (Bean and Tienda 1987).<sup>4</sup>

Our multivariate analysis involved logistic regression modeling of the outcome of speaking only English versus speaking English and another language. The models included the following parental, household, and locational variables:

*Parental education.* Portes and Rumbaut (1996) have suggested that high-status bilingualism may be more viable than the folk variety. Highly educated parents' interest in the educational success of their children, however, may lead these parents to stress mastery of English in the home. Thus, we made no prediction about the effect of parental education, which we measured as the average educational attainment (in years) of the parents.

*Ethnic niche employment and self-employment.* We included two variables to measure aspects of the labor-market situations of parents that may be associated with persistent bilingualism. One variable was employment in an ethnic niche (a broader concept than that of the enclave), which we defined on the basis of a completed analysis of the labor-market concentrations of the new immigrant groups (see Logan et al. 2000; Model 1992; Waldinger 1996). If an industry sector showed up as an area of ethnic concentration in more than one metropolitan region (see Logan et al. 2000), we coded it as a niche sector and classified parents who worked in it as employed in a niche. Because small-business ownership may also create an economic interest in persistent bilingualism, we included a dummy variable to indicate if a parent was self-employed.

*Intermarriage.* Intermarriage has undeniable consequences for mother-tongue maintenance, given that the dominant language spoken in the households established by exogamous couples is generally English (Grenier 1984; Stevens 1992). For Spanish-speaking groups, though, marriages uniting individuals of different Hispanic origins (e.g., Mexican and Cuban) may not have the same effect. Hence, our coding distinguished an intermarriage within the Hispanic population from one involving a non-Hispanic spouse. For all groups, the reference category contained endogamously married parents, and a separate dummy variable identified cases in which only one parent was present.

*Presence of preschool children.* Because some research (e.g., Grenier 1984) has shown that bilingual parents are more likely to speak a mother tongue when there are preschool-age children in a home, we used a dummy variable set to 1 when children in this age range (0–5) were present.

*Presence of other non-English speakers.* It is obvious that the languages used by adults in the home affect the languages used by children. The presence of nonparental adults, such as grandparents, who speak a language other than English may influence the frequency of mother-tongue use. A dummy variable was set to 1 if one or more such adults were present.<sup>5</sup>

*Proximity to group residential concentrations.* We measured proximity in two ways using characteristics of the Public Use Microdata Area (PUMAs), the smallest unit of

4. Although this step appears sensible, it did not add a large number of cases to any group. Among the Mexicans, for instance, 5.7% of all third- and later-generation children were brought into the analysis by the ancestry criterion. We did restrict its application in one respect, however. To avoid including children whose mixed ancestry was the product of generationally distant intermarriage, we required that at least one parent indicate the relevant group membership through the race or Hispanic-origin question (as opposed to the ancestry question only). This is tantamount to requiring that the parent's racial/ethnic identity is with the group under study.

5. It would seem as if we also should have included a variable to indicate if both parents (as opposed to just one) spoke a mother tongue at home. In our early versions of the analysis, we included such a variable, but its correlation with the intermarriage variable was strong enough that the results proved unstable. Because intermarriage has long been viewed as a prime indicator of assimilation and is the subject of a lengthy literature (see Qian 1997), we opted to retain it and drop the additional home-language variable.

**Table 1. Percentage of Children (Age 6–15) Who Speak Only English at Home, by Generation**

Ethnicity	Second Generation		Third Generation		Mother-Tongue Homes: Third Generation	
	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>
Chinese	29.4	6,130	91.4	1,494	69.4	330
Japanese	67.7	1,701	97.4	3,066	79.5	283
Korean	42.5	3,272	90.4	153	66.4	31
Filipino	79.3	7,108	95.7	1,759	73.1	247
Cuban	19.1	4,159	78.4	577	52.4	231
Dominican	8.4	2,489	51.5	109	26.5	70
Mexican	12.3	53,459	64.1	56,113	48.9	39,199

identifiable geography in the IPUMS data; one is the percentage of the population of the PUMA that belongs to the group in question (e.g., Cubans) and the other, the percentage that speaks the language. Because they are strongly correlated with each other, we used only the second in our analysis. In addition, because residents of central cities are frequently located near concentrations of mother-tongue speakers, even when they do not reside in them, we also included a dummy variable for residence in a central city.

*Location in a bicultural region.* For some groups, it seems plausible that particular regions have emerged as cultural *entrepôts* and provide institutional support for ethnic languages and cultures, such as television and radio programming in the mother tongue (e.g., news or music from the home country); examples are the Miami metropolitan area for Cubans and Central and South Americans and the zone along the U.S.–Mexican border for Mexicans (Portes and Stepick 1993; Weeks and Ham-Chande 1992). Because of the institutional infrastructure in such regions, their impact on bilingualism should be distinguishable from that of residence in or near ethnic neighborhoods (which may be located outside bicultural regions). Using the PUMA geography, we defined such regions for each group that we studied in detail, along with separate dummy variables for the remainders of the states in which they are located.<sup>6</sup>

# FINDINGS

We begin with descriptive data about the frequency of English-only home language among the children of the second and third generations, presented in Table 1. Like most generational data in the study of ethnic change, the data in the table are intended to suggest the magnitude of the intergenerational linguistic shift. The precise magnitude of change cannot be inferred because, given the cross-sectional nature of the data, the second generation here may not be representative of the parents of the third.

For some groups, primarily Latino, only a small percentage of second-generation children, who, by definition, grow up in homes where at least one parent is foreign-born,

6. For the Mexicans, the border region is equated with the PUMAs in or containing counties touching the U.S.–Mexican border; the additional geographic variable contains the remainder of the states of Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas, as well as the rest of southern California. For the Cubans, the bicultural area is equated with the Miami primary metropolitan statistical area (PMSA), and the rest of Florida is represented by the additional geographic variable. For the Chinese, the Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco PMSAs are the bicultural zone, and the second geographic variable designates the remainder of New York and California.

Table 2. Percentage of Third- and Later-Generation Mexican Children (Age 6–15) Who Speak Only English at Home

Data Set	All Homes		Mother-Tongue Homes	
	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>
1990 IPUMS	64.1	56,113	48.9	39,199
1989 CPS				
Third generation	54.2	144	43.5	115
Fourth generation	61.2	224	43.1	153
Total	58.4	368	43.3	268
	n.s.		n.s.	

Note: n.s. = nonsignificant

speak only English.<sup>7</sup> For groups such as the Dominicans and Mexicans, just a tenth of the second-generation children are exclusively English speakers at home, whereas for the Cubans, the proportion is about one-fifth. The children in many Asian families, however, either have grown up in families where the use of English is common or have shifted to English. For instance, in the Filipino group, many of whose immigrants are familiar with English when they arrive in the United States, 4 of every 5 second-generation children speak only English. Even in some Asian groups that come from countries where English is not in common use, the percentage of monolingual English speakers is high: among the Koreans, 2 of every 5 second-generation children speak only English at home.

Yet, for all groups with enough data, there is a marked increase in the percentages speaking only English in the third (or a later) generation. These percentages are high for all Asian groups with enough third-generation children for statistically credible estimates—90% or more. But English monolingualism is also the preponderant pattern among the Latino groups, represented by three-quarters of the Cuban children and two-thirds of the Mexicans. Of the third-generation groups, the lowest figure is for the Dominicans, but it still represents one-half and thus a quintupling of English monolingualism between the second and third generations.

Even in homes in which at least one parent speaks a language other than English, there is a fairly high rate of English monolingualism among third-generation children, as is evident in the third column of Table 1 for “mother-tongue” homes. Although the rates of English monolingualism drop demonstrably from those found in the homes of all third- and later-generation children, they remain at two-thirds to four-fifths among Asian children and at approximately half for Cuban and Mexican children, the only Latino groups with enough cases to be discussed.

Another issue, which we can address in only a limited way with census data, is the decomposition of these rates by the third versus later generations. As we described earlier, it is possible to do so only with CPS data and then only for Mexican children (because the children of other groups are too few in the much smaller CPS sample).<sup>8</sup> Table 2 presents this decomposition. Although the evidence is somewhat ambiguous because of the lack of

7. The groups presented in the table include only those with at least 100 (unweighted) children in the third and later generations.

8. Third-generation children are defined as the U.S.-born children of U.S.-born parents, at least one of whom has a foreign-born parent (i.e., the children have at least one foreign-born grandparent). Fourth- (and later-) generation children are the U.S.-born children of U.S.-born parents whose parents are also U.S.-born. Because this generational classification requires knowledge of the birthplaces of the parents of the child’s parents, we restricted it to cases in which two parents were present.



**Table 3. Percentage With English Mother Tongue in the Second and Third Generations From Early Twentieth-Century Immigration: Children in the 1940 and 1970 Censuses**

Ethnicity	Second Generation (1940)	Third Generation (1970)
Austrian	53.9	95.6
Czechoslovakian	43.8	94.5
French	69.1	94.0
German	68.1	97.0
Greek	47.4	80.5
Hungarian	59.7	94.8
Italian	37.9	94.3
Mexican	7.9	26.3
Polish	33.7	91.6
Romanian	49.5	95.4
Russian	58.7	94.0
Yugoslavian	39.6	94.3

*Notes:* In 1940, the census question concerned the "language spoken at home in earliest childhood" and was asked only of sampled persons age 10 and older. Children age 10–15 were tabulated here. In 1970, it asked about the "language spoken in [the] home when he [sic] was a child." Children age 6–15 were tabulated.

statistical significance, the table demonstrates that there is not a sharp change between the third and later generations. Thus, it appears that, at least for one large Spanish-speaking group, the rate of conversion to only English tails off after the third generation. (Note that the CPS percentages for the third and later generations combined are a bit below those found in the IPUMS. This difference is largely due to our inclusion in the IPUMS analysis of children who are Mexican by ancestry, rather than Hispanic origin, because as the children of intermarriages in many cases, they are more likely to speak only English.)

How does the pace of Anglicization across the generations compare with the pace that occurred historically among the European immigrant groups whose linguistic assimilation is abstracted in the three-generation model? It is not possible to give a precise answer because of the shifts over time in the nature of the language data collected by the censuses (see Stevens 1999). But the mother-tongue data collected in the 1940 and 1970 Censuses provided us with a way to estimate roughly the magnitude of change, although our conclusions must take into account that mother-tongue data are likely to overestimate linguistic persistence (Stevens 1999).

For the major immigrant groups of the 1890–1920 period, Table 3 presents the percentages with no mother tongue other than English for the second generation in 1940 and the third generation in 1970. Given the limitations of the censuses' language data, this is the most appropriate comparison to Table 2.<sup>9</sup> Note that in 1940, the question concerned

9. The 1940 and 1970 data are located at plausible generational distances from the high-water mark of European immigration in the 1900–1914 period. Nonetheless, our choice was dictated by the limited possibilities of census language data. Before 1980, a question on language spoken was asked only twice, in 1890 and 1910, and only for persons who were unable to speak English (see Stevens, 1999:388). Mother-tongue data were

the “language spoken at home in earliest childhood,” whereas in 1970, it asked for the “language spoken in [the] home when he [*sic*] was a child.” A mother tongue other than English can be reported in the latter case even when the child never spoke it.

Despite the uncertainties created by the differences from the contemporary language data, the pattern in Table 3 is unmistakable for the European groups: Anglicization has occurred for the overwhelming majority by the third generation. Even in the second generation in 1940, between one-third and three-quarters of the Europeans had only English as their mother tongue. Yet the main non-European immigrant group remained outside this swift current of linguistic assimilation: of the second-generation Mexicans, less than 10% did not speak Spanish in early childhood. By 1970, in the third generation, 94% or more of the European groups were being raised in homes where only English was spoken (Greeks and Poles were the only exceptions). The rates of speaking only English were probably somewhat higher for the children themselves. Again, the third-generation Mexican children were different: three-quarters of them were being brought up in homes where Spanish was spoken (although the fraction of the children speaking Spanish themselves was undoubtedly less).

These high rates of conversion to only English are roughly comparable to those observed among the Asian groups today but are well ahead of those found among the Hispanic groups. For the contemporary groups, the process of Anglicization remains powerful, but it is hardly universal by the third generation. It is therefore of interest to look at the circumstances that tend to promote or to retard it, and for this we turn to logistic regression models. We limit our examination, however, to three groups, for which both sample size and theoretical relevance are high. Of the three, the most important case is the Mexican one because it probably fixes the outer limit of what is possible in preserving bilingualism. The large size of the group, its concentration in states along the Mexican–U.S. border, and its lengthy history in the United States should all be conducive to the establishment of an infrastructure supportive of Spanish. The Cuban case adds the dimension of a business and professional elite, numerous among the early waves of Cuban immigration (1959–1961). This case is interesting, in part, because common arguments about the viability of bilingualism contend that bilingualism is most feasible for high-status families, who are seen as the most able to cultivate a bilingualism involving fluency in both languages (see, for example, Portes and Rumbaut 1996). Last, the Chinese are still the largest Asian ethnic group and one that has been renewed by substantial post-1965 immigration; of the Asian groups with a substantial third generation, they are the only one with a rate of English monolingualism below 95%.<sup>10</sup>

Table 4 presents the estimated coefficients from logistic regression models for the three groups. The dependent variable contrasts the child’s speaking only English (1) with speaking another language and English (0). We do not limit ourselves to the third (and later) generation: we also present the equivalent models for the second generation to

collected in most censuses between 1910 and 1970, but typically for the foreign-born only. The first time such data were collected for the U.S.-born (10 years and older) was in 1940. However, we could not estimate the mother tongues of third-generation ethnic groups in the 1940 data because the mother-tongue and other sample characteristics, including parents’ places of birth, were collected for only one member of each household. When that person was a child, we could know his or her mother tongue and the birthplaces of his or her parents, but not those of the grandparents, because the parental birthplaces are missing in the records for the child’s own parents. The only time that mother tongue and parental birthplaces were collected for all members of sampled households was in 1970. Hence, we had to use the data of that year to estimate the language characteristics of third-generation groups.

10. The Japanese and Filipinos are the other groups with numbers large enough to permit an analysis. We did not include the Japanese because they not a major group in the contemporary immigration stream (and, quite likely, given the concentration of Japanese immigration in the early part of the twentieth century, the third- and later-generation group is composed mainly of fourth-generation descendants). We excluded the Filipinos because of their high rate of English monolingualism, attributable partly to the status of English as an official language of the Philippines (Stevens 1994).

**Table 4. Logistic Regressions of Home Language: Only English (1) Versus English and a Mother Tongue (0), Children Age 6–15 by Generation**

Variable	Chinese	Cubans	Mexicans
<b>Second Generation</b>			
Parents' average education	0.115***	0.133***	0.161***
Intermarriage	2.498***	—	—
Intra-Hispanic	—	0.870***	0.417***
Extra-Hispanic	—	2.786***	2.006***
Not married	0.488***	1.030***	0.228***
Others' language	-0.903***	-1.193***	-0.999***
Preschooler present	-0.430***	-0.033	-0.316***
Enclave employment	-0.104	-0.143	-0.358***
Self-employed	0.011	-0.682***	-0.076
Chinatown/Miami/border	0.034	-0.756***	-0.328***
Rest of state	-0.034	-0.294*	-0.070
% language in PUMA	-0.034***	-0.026***	-0.016***
Central city	-0.234**	-0.277*	-0.030
Constant	-2.561***	-2.875***	-2.585***
<i>N</i>	6,130	4,159	53,459
<b>Third Generation</b>			
Parents' average education	0.095*	0.141*	0.148***
Intermarriage	1.048***	—	—
Intra-Hispanic	—	-0.432	0.609***
Extra-Hispanic	—	1.859***	1.412***
Not married	0.254	0.458	0.122***
Others' language	-2.296***	-0.946*	-1.067***
Preschooler present	-0.215	-0.282	-0.097***
Enclave employment	-0.170	0.297	-0.086***
Self-employed	-0.735**	-0.452	-0.033
Chinatown/Miami/border	-0.196	-1.709***	-0.648***
Rest of state	-0.510*	-1.080***	-0.230***
% language in PUMA	0.040	-0.029***	-0.020***
Central city	-0.744**	-0.322	0.366***
Constant	1.070	-0.097	-0.380***
<i>N</i>	1,494	577	56,113

*(continued)*

examine what may be distinctive about the situation of the third. For the third generation, we estimated the models separately for all children (second panel) and for those who had at least one mother-tongue-speaking parent (last panel). Because there is little distinction between these models in the second generation, the table provides only the model for all children (first panel). The means and standard deviations of the independent variables are presented as an appendix table.

(Table 4, continued)

Variable	Chinese	Cubans	Mexicans
Third Generation:			
Mother-Tongue Homes			
Parents' average education	0.082	0.152*	0.123***
Intermarriage	0.828**	—	—
Intra-Hispanic	—	0.157	0.545***
Extra-Hispanic	—	1.517**	0.974***
Not married	-0.146	-0.498	-0.230***
Others' language	-1.342**	0.502	-0.695***
Preschooler present	0.043	-0.185	-0.144***
Enclave employment	-0.237	1.061*	-0.070**
Self-employed	-0.174	-0.356	-0.038
Chinatown/Miami/border	0.038	-1.725**	-0.511***
Rest of state	-0.405	-0.162	-0.075**
% language in PUMA	0.040	-0.019	-0.016***
Central city	-0.294	-0.310	0.334***
Constant	-0.398	-1.680	-0.639***
N	330	231	39,199

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ 

Regardless of generation, the strongest effects relate to the composition of the home and, by implication, the languages that are spoken by adults. The most uniformly powerful influence stems from whether the parents are married exogamously or not. Among Hispanics, this effect must be qualified by whether an intermarriage is to someone of another Hispanic origin or to a non-Hispanic; if the former, then the effect is much smaller or, in the case of the Cuban third generation, not significant. But if the marriage crosses an ethnic boundary that also is associated with different mother tongues, then the odds that a third-generation child will speak only English are increased by a factor that ranges from 2.6 ( $e^{.974}$ ) to 6.4 ( $e^{1.859}$ ). In the Mexican third generation, even growing up in a home in which an intermarriage has not crossed the Hispanic boundary increases the odds of speaking only English by 70%–80%. The effect of intermarriage is generally larger in the second generation than in the third. Its greater ability to discriminate between those who speak only English and the bilingual in this generation is probably linked to the great likelihood that the children of immigrants who have married endogamously speak the mother tongue.

Also looming large in almost all the equations (with third-generation Cubans in mother-tongue homes the exception) is the presence in the home of other adults (nonparents) who speak a mother tongue. Their presence greatly reduces the odds that the child will be monolingual. When grandparents or aunts and uncles who speak a mother tongue live in the home, the frequency of conversation in the mother tongue increases, and, depending on the English proficiency of these adults, the child may be encouraged or required to speak to them in the mother tongue. The weakest of the home-related variables is the presence of a preschooler. In the third generation, only among the Mexicans is the hypothesized effect detectable, and it is small, implying a reduction of 10%–15% in the odds of English monolingualism. However, it has a somewhat larger effect in the second generation.

In addition, despite the expectation that the cultural resources in high-status families may promote fluent bilingualism in children, the probability that a child will speak only

English increases with the parents' average educational attainment. This effect is consistent and is present in both generations (the only nonsignificant coefficient is found among the third-generation Chinese in mother-tongue homes). The effect is substantial in the Spanish-speaking groups: among the Mexicans, for instance, four years of education increases the logit by 0.5–0.6, increasing the odds of English monolingualism by 60%–80% (depending on the equation).

Otherwise, socioeconomic effects seem inconsistent. Self-employment of a parent has two significant effects: among all third-generation Chinese and among second-generation Cubans. In both cases, these effects are substantial and in the predicted direction (i.e., they favor bilingualism). The absence of any effect in the large Mexican group, however, suggests that a parent's self-employment does not have a general effect on a child's home language. The evidence of an effect of parental employment in a niche sector is even less impressive. The significant effects in the predicted direction are limited to the Mexicans (a significant coefficient among the Cubans is in the other direction); and their magnitudes are small, especially in the third generation.

Geographic factors loom large among the Spanish-speaking groups, but much less so for the Chinese. Proximity to residential enclaves enhances the prospect that third-generation Latino children will speak Spanish. Specifically, the percentage of the language group in the residential area (PUMA) has a sizable effect among both Cubans and Mexicans. Given the wide range in the percentage of Spanish speakers across residential areas, the magnitudes of the coefficients, which represent the effects of a change of one percentage point, are deceptively small. In any event, they are supplemented by the effects of residing in a bicultural region, the border area in the case of Mexicans and Miami in the case of Cubans. (Residence in another part of Florida also has a sizable effect on the likelihood of speaking Spanish among all third-generation Cuban children.) The overall effects of geography are substantial. In the case of Cubans, a child growing up in a Miami area where half the residents are Spanish speaking has an odds of being bilingual that is 20 times that for a child living outside Florida in an area where just 5% speak Spanish (this estimate comes from the equation for all third-generation children). A similar comparison for Mexicans yields a smaller effect but one that remains substantial—the odds increase fivefold for a child growing up along the border. For the Chinese, the effects of geography are spotty: in the second generation, residing in a PUMA of Chinese concentration enhances the prospects that the child will speak Chinese, but this is not true in the third generation.

Residing in a central city has inconsistent effects. Among all third-generation Chinese, residing in a central city retards the shift to only English; this is also true, albeit to a more limited extent, among Cubans. Paradoxically, among Mexicans, the effect is in the other direction. We draw no firm conclusion from this pattern.

One can gain a view of the overall impact of the major effects in these models from the simulation that we present in Table 5. The outcome is the probability of a child speaking only English. Aside from generation, the independent variables are as follows: *family situation*, which contrasts a household in which the parents are endogamously married and a relative who speaks the mother tongue is present against one in which the parents are exogamously married (and one parent is non-Hispanic in the cases of Cubans and Mexicans) and no other relative speaking the mother tongue is in residence; and *communal context*, which is a comparison of residence in an area (PUMA) that is part of a bicultural region for the group and a third of whose residents speak the mother tongue and residence away from a bicultural region (i.e., outside a state containing one) and in an area only 3% of whose residents speak the ethnic language. All other variables in the models are held fixed in all the scenarios.<sup>11</sup> For the Chinese, the story is dominated by

11. The assumed high value for the density of mother-tongue speakers, .33, represents the upper boundary of the variable's range among the Chinese; it is average for the Mexicans and moderately above average for the



**Table 5.**     **Simulation of the Probability That Children Speak Only English at Home, by Generation and Home and Community Contexts, for Chinese, Cubans, and Mexicans**

	Parental Endogamy		Parental Exogamy	
	Ethnic Community	Nonethnic Community	Ethnic Community	Nonethnic Community
Chinese				
Second generation	.040	.101	.557	.771
Third generation	.738	.508	.988	.967
Cubans				
Second generation	.017	.072	.473	.807
Third generation	.117	.637	.687	.967
Mexicans				
Second generation	.075	.154	.622	.787
Third generation	.273	.567	.818	.940

*Notes:* Ethnic exogamy is defined as marriage to a non-Hispanic for Cubans and Mexicans; the endogamy and exogamy conditions are defined also to differ in terms of other relatives in the household. An ethnic community is defined as a PUMA that is located in a bicultural region of the group and a third of whose residents speak the mother tongue; a nonethnic community is a PUMA located outside a state containing a bicultural region and only 3% of whose residents speak the language. The assumptions about other variables are that parents have 12 years of education, no preschooler is present in the home, parents neither are self-employed nor work in an ethnic niche, and residence is in a suburb.

generation and family situation. In the third generation, all the probabilities are at least .5, demonstrating that the children of this generation, whatever their family and communal contexts, have a high likelihood of not being bilingual; however, an exogamous family context pushes the probability close to 1. In the second generation, there is a much wider range of variation, from .04 to .77. Relatively little of this variation is associated with residential location; it is determined mainly by the ethnic-linguistic homogeneity of the adults with whom a child lives.

Generation, by itself, is not as powerful among the Cubans and Mexicans. To be sure, the children of the third generation do, in every comparison, have a higher likelihood of speaking only English, but there is still a wide variation in this probability. Both family and community contexts play important roles in determining whether children will be bilingual: when both are supportive of the use of the mother tongue, the probability of bilingualism is high; when neither is so, then the probability is low. But what happens when only one is supportive and the other is not? If the family context is not supportive, then the probability of exclusive use of English is generally high, and especially so among Mexicans. If the family context is supportive but the communal context is not, then the probability is closer to 50–50, but it is still substantially different from what it is when both contexts reinforce each other. A glance at the second generation shows that the community context has only a minor role. Consequently, the simulation demonstrates again the conclusion that the community context plays a special role in the persistence of bilingualism in the third and later generations.

Cubans (see the appendix table). In addition, we fixed parental education at 12 years, and we assumed that parents are neither self-employed nor employed in an ethnic economic niche. We posited also that the family resides in a suburb and that no preschooler is present in the home.

## CONCLUSION

The results of this analysis would seem to have important implications for some critical questions regarding contemporary immigration, such as whether it represents a break from the patterns of past immigration eras. Many scholars of recent immigration have argued that a number of factors, such as its diversity and its embeddedness in transnational circuits, distinguish it from that of a century ago. In this respect, our analysis yielded mixed results. As of 1990, the rates of only English for the third generations of a number of groups suggest that Anglicization is occurring at roughly the same pace for Asians as it did for the Europeans who arrived in the early twentieth century, but is slower among the descendants of Spanish speakers.

In all the groups that we could examine, the majority of third- and later-generation children speak only English at home, which implies that, with probably limited exceptions, they will grow up to be English monolinguals who have at most fragmentary knowledge of a mother tongue. Granted, we could not identify third-, as opposed to later-, generation children, except among the Mexicans. But for the Asian groups, the percentages of children speaking only English are so high (90%–95%) that this condition must characterize large majorities of the third generation. For the Mexicans, the CPS data, which modestly understate the percentage who speak only English, show that it also characterizes about half the third-generation Mexican children; allowing for the underestimation suggests that the true figure is almost certainly in the 50%–60% range. In the case of Cubans, the onset of immigration in 1959–1960 suggests that the third generation dominates the group we have examined, three-quarters of whom speak only English.

Attention naturally gravitates toward the children who are reported to be bilingual at home—to what extent are they truly bilingual, speaking a mother tongue proficiently and with regularity? Regrettably, one cannot say from census data, which collect admittedly rough judgments of proficiency only for English. However, the data collected by Portes and Rumbaut (2001) about the children of the second generation demonstrated a decline in competence in the mother tongue over time and thus a gradually emerging English dominance. It seems highly likely to us that the same must be even more true of the third generation, who are, of course, raised by second-generation parents.

Nevertheless, for the Spanish-speaking groups, the conclusion that there are some differences from the past seems to be justified. Our analysis demonstrated some staying power for Spanish, especially when familial *and* communal contexts are supportive. That parental exogamy usually leads to a home in which English is the dominant language is not surprising. But, for the children of the third and later generations, the pressures to speak English exclusively are sufficiently strong that parental endogamy is, by itself, not enough to preserve the mother tongue. The communal context is also important, and bilingualism is substantially higher among children living in ethnic neighborhoods in regions where a biethnic culture has emerged. Thus, third-generation Cuban children growing up in or near Miami and similar Mexican children growing up near the U.S.–Mexican border are considerably more likely than their peers elsewhere to speak Spanish at home. The nature of this geographic effect deserves more analysis than we can provide here. Knowing whether it is due to the prevalence of Spanish on the street and airwaves, the effects of bilingual education (such as the Spanish-language academies in Miami), the impact of a large number of new arrivals with limited proficiency in English, or still other factors can tell us whether the forces supporting Spanish may be extended to other regions of the United States as their number of Spanish-speaking residents grows as a consequence of sustained immigration.

Appendix Table A1. Means and Standard Deviations of Variables Used in the Logistic Regression Analyses

	Chinese		Cubans		Mexicans	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Second Generation						
Parents' average education	13.68	4.27	12.45	2.97	7.99	3.92
Intermarriage	0.16	0.36				
Intra-Hispanic			0.15	0.36	0.04	0.19
Extra-Hispanic			0.17	0.38	0.07	0.25
Not married	0.07	0.25	0.22	0.42	0.17	0.38
Others' language	0.16	0.37	0.22	0.42	0.35	0.48
Preschooler present	0.26	0.44	0.29	0.45	0.49	0.50
Enclave employment	0.43	0.50	0.26	0.44	0.64	0.48
Self-employed	0.24	0.43	0.20	0.40	0.10	0.30
Chinatown/Miami/border	0.22	0.41	0.51	0.50	0.25	0.43
Rest of state	0.25	0.43	0.12	0.32	0.45	0.50
% language in PUMA	4.97	7.33	42.07	32.10	36.46	25.82
Central city	0.34	0.47	0.32	0.47	0.34	0.47
N	6,130		4,159		53,459	
Third Generation						
Parents' average education	14.39	2.26	13.23	2.27	11.61	2.58
Intermarriage	0.59	0.49				
Intra-Hispanic			0.04	0.20	0.01	0.09
Extra-Hispanic			0.55	0.50	0.24	0.43
Not married	0.19	0.39	0.34	0.47	0.33	0.47
Others' language	0.03	0.17	0.07	0.26	0.16	0.36
Preschooler present	0.34	0.47	0.33	0.47	0.39	0.49
Enclave employment	0.22	0.41	0.15	0.36	0.37	0.48
Self-employed	0.18	0.38	0.15	0.35	0.08	0.28
Chinatown/Miami/border	0.12	0.33	0.11	0.31	0.21	0.41
Rest of state	0.20	0.40	0.22	0.42	0.41	0.49
% language in PUMA	2.79	4.81	14.32	20.22	27.96	24.23
Central city	0.17	0.37	0.23	0.42	0.24	0.43
N	1,494		577		56,113	
Third Generation: Mother-Tongue Homes						
Parents' average education	14.48	2.33	13.01	2.63	11.28	2.77
Intermarriage	0.45	0.50				
Intra-Hispanic			0.07	0.25	0.01	0.09
Extra-Hispanic			0.44	0.50	0.13	0.34
Not married	0.19	0.39	0.38	0.49	0.33	0.47

(continued)

(Appendix Table A1, continued)

	Chinese		Cubans		Mexicans	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Third Generation:						
Mother-Tongue Home (cont.)						
Others' Language	0.09	0.29	0.13	0.34	0.21	0.41
Preschooler Present	0.35	0.48	0.39	0.49	0.39	0.49
Enclave Employment	0.23	0.42	0.16	0.36	0.38	0.49
Self-Employed	0.25	0.43	0.13	0.34	0.08	0.27
Chinatown/Miami/Border	0.19	0.39	0.19	0.39	0.26	0.44
Rest of State	0.24	0.43	0.31	0.47	0.46	0.50
% Language in PUMA	3.48	5.68	21.68	24.98	32.99	25.30
Central City	0.29	0.45	0.24	0.43	0.24	0.42
N	330		231		39,199	

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