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Identity Crisis: Effect of Immigrant Replenishment on Spanish Language Use Among US-born Mexican Descendants

ABSTRACT

Immigrant replenishment may affect assimilation patterns of US-born descendants by maintaining the use and relevance of the language of origin. This study asks, how does Mexican immigrant replenishment affect Spanish language use among adult US-born Mexican descendants? Descendants include members of the second or later generations. I propose that greater exposure to Mexican immigrants will encourage adult US-born Mexican descendants to maintain their ethnic origins, especially language of origin. Therefore, the higher the rate of immigrant replenishment, the more likely respondents will speak Spanish at home. I analyze a five-year cumulative data file of the US American Community Survey (ACS) from 2011 to 2015, which represents 5 percent of the US population. The ACS uses stratified cluster sampling to collect data from 15,637,457 respondents. The sample is limited to US-born Mexican descendants, who were 25 years of age, married, and heads of households or spouses thereof. This limited the analysis to 187,212 respondents. I found that college attendance and higher family income decrease the odds of speaking Spanish at home. I also found that as immigrant replenishment increases, the odds of respondents speaking Spanish at home increases and decreases. As immigrant replenishment increases, respondents with Hispanic spouses are more likely to speak Spanish at home. However, respondents with non-Hispanic spouses are less likely to speak Spanish at home, which may be a result of sharpened intragroup boundaries created by new immigrants. The results confirm that Mexican immigrant replenishment significantly affects speaking Spanish at home for adult US-born Mexican descendants.

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Identity Crisis: Effect of Immigrant Replenishment on Spanish Language Use Among US-born Mexican Descendants

In recent decades, the United States has seen a substantial growth in its immigrant population, which has led sociologists to question how these new immigrants and their descendants will assimilate into American society. Traditional theories of assimilation have been based on the experiences of early twentieth century immigrants from Europe. However, today's immigrants find themselves in a much different environment than their earlier European counterparts. Not only has the economic, social, and political environment of the US changed, but the characteristics of the immigrants themselves have also changed. The new arrivals are very distinct in two ways. First, unlike the earlier wave of immigrants, much of the new wave come from Mexico and Mexican phenotype is typically different than that of the American mainstream. Given that race is one of the most important criterion for classification in American society, these physical differences may signal ancestry, nativity, and even legal status to others (Jimenez 2008). Second, and perhaps more paramount, this wave of immigration has been ongoing – that is, it has been replenishing. Jimenez (2008) refers to this continuous influx of immigrants as immigrant replenishment. These physical differences in conjunction with immigrant replenishment challenge the relevance of previous assimilation theories to this group of immigrants.

Immigration literature has found that early twentieth century European immigrants and their children experienced “straight-line” assimilation into American society (Gans 1979). That is, increased exposure to American culture leads to each subsequent generation becoming increasingly absorbed into American society. Future generations may eventually cease to identify

with their ethnic origins in exchange for an American identity. Symbolic ethnicity (Gans 1979) may then form, so that an individual's ethnicity is no longer salient to their identity and daily life, but instead can be elicited at any voluntary moment. However, due to the differences between today's immigrants and twentieth century European immigrants, recent arrivals and their descendants are not experiencing symbolic ethnicity. Instead, today's immigrant descendants are undergoing segmented assimilation (Portes and Zhou 1993; Portes and Rumbaut 2001). In other words, different minority groups experience different life outcomes depending on factors such as the history of the first generation, speed of acculturation, economic and cultural barriers, and strength of family and community ties. However, these prevailing theories of assimilation do not take into consideration a new possible determinant of assimilation – immigrant replenishment. This research seeks to challenge traditional theories of assimilation by testing the effect of Mexican immigrant replenishment on the assimilation of Mexican descendants. In this study, assimilation is measured by speaking Spanish at home because language use is one of the most cogent indicators of assimilation (Alba et al. 2002; Jimenez; Shin 2011).

Each subsequent generation of early twentieth century European immigrants became increasingly accustomed to American culture through movement to less ethnically dominated neighborhoods, college attendance, upward intergenerational mobility, and ethnic intermarriage (Jimenez 2008). These are the functions of classic assimilation models, which allowed future generations of European descendants to experience symbolic ethnicity. However, these models fail to consider the impact of immigration patterns on assimilation patterns. Unlike their European counterparts, Mexican descendants are exposed to high rates of immigrant replenishment. Those who are in areas of high replenishment are surrounded by first generation

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immigrants, who are a constant reminder of their ethnic origins, including language, and of their differences with the American mainstream. Therefore, I hypothesize that the higher the rate of Mexican immigrant replenishment in a given metropolitan area within the last decade, the more likely Mexican descendants in that metropolitan area will speak Spanish at home.

HISTORY

Mexican immigrants have a long-standing history of migration to the US, which has resulted in today's mix of first generation immigrants, second generation individuals, and later generation descendants living among each other (Jimenez 2008). The first big wave of immigration came at the turn of the twentieth century because of the Mexican Revolution and growing demand for agricultural industry labor (Macias 2006; Jimenez 2008). However, this demand was fueled by discrimination against Mexican immigrants. Racist beliefs held that Mexicans were unintelligent, lazy, and overall inferior to whites (Macias 2006). These beliefs perpetuated a dual-wage system of labor where positions were divided on ethnic lines and Mexicans occupied the lowest paid positions, thus Mexicans became a heavily disadvantaged group in the agricultural industry (Macias 2006).

In the 1920s, while quotas were being placed on European immigrant groups, Mexican immigrants were being sought after for cheap labor, but under the impression that they would eventually return to their country of origin (Jimenez 2008; Gratton and Merchant 2013). This form of employment was popular among Mexican immigrants because it allowed for economic mobility (Jimenez 2008). However, Macias (2006) argues that this was not ultimately an advantage for Mexican immigrants. Although this employment offered a source of income that may have been better than what was available in Mexico, it limited opportunities for Mexican immigrants.

Although most immigrant groups at this time experienced discrimination, European immigrants had an advantage over Mexican immigrants. Unlike Mexican immigrants, they settled in urban areas where their children had access to libraries, museums, public education, and employment opportunities that were not available to their immigrant parents (Macias 2006). These groups of immigrants were also not constantly migrating like their Mexican counterparts. The agricultural industry, where Mexican immigrants were mostly concentrated, was far removed from cities and required constant migration to follow the seasonal patterns of crops. European immigrants' ability to settle in one urban area allowed their children to receive an education, but this was not the case for the children of Mexican immigrants who were constantly following work.

Xenophobia became more apparent around this time as Anglo workers feared their jobs were being taken away by Mexican immigrant workers (Macias 2006; Gratton and Merchant 2013). Even skilled Mexican workers were not integrated with Anglo workers. They were not allowed to join unions, they did not have access to jobs that matched their skill level, and they often had to limit their skills unless working with Mexican-origin clientele. The Great Depression exacerbated xenophobic beliefs and government-sponsored repatriations sent half a million Mexican immigrants back to Mexico. Those that remained faced de facto segregation in neighborhoods, churches, school, hotels, and more (Macias 2006).

In 1942, continued demand for cheap agricultural labor led to the Bracero Program, which supplied cheap labor in the Southwest. The end of this program marked the beginning of unauthorized Mexican immigration that continues to this day (Jimenez 2008; Gratton and Merchant 2013). However, unauthorized immigration was aided by employers and the US government. Employers found loopholes in the program that allowed them to hire unauthorized

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workers. Meanwhile, the government turned a blind eye to this practice. The Border Patrol did not heavily monitor the US-Mexico border during harvest season, Congress limited Border Patrol resources, and Congress also did not allow for the prosecution of employers who hired these workers (Jimenez 2008). Therefore, former braceros who stayed in the US became a source of social capital for future migrants (Jimenez 2008).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Assimilation Theory

Early twentieth century European immigrants and their descendants in the US influenced early assimilation theories. Straight-line assimilation theory developed from this group (Gans 1979; Waters 1994). It suggests that increased time spent in the US and exposure to American culture will result in each subsequent generation becoming more absorbed into the host society, eventually abandoning their ethnic identities for American ones, and becoming more economically successful than their predecessors. After several generations in the US, symbolic ethnicity emerges, which is when ethnicity is no longer a part of everyday life, but can be elicited at any voluntary moment (Gans 1979).

Segmented Assimilation Theory

More recent assimilation theories suggest that today's second-generation is experiencing segmented assimilation (Portes and Zhou 1993; Portes and Rumbaut 2001). This assimilation theory suggests that different minority groups will have varying outcomes depending on factors such as the history of the first generation, the speed of acculturation, economic and cultural barriers, and the strength of family and community ties. An immigrant group's contexts of

reception result in segmented assimilation. There are three contexts: government acceptance, societal acceptance, and community acceptance (Portes and Rumbaut 2001).

The first context of reception, government acceptance, includes active encouragement, passive acceptance, or exclusion (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). Active encouragement involves direct government assistance, usually in the form of economic resources. This includes job apprenticeships and financial aid, which provides immigrant groups who receive this assistance a unique opportunity for rapid upward mobility that is unavailable to other immigrant groups. Passive acceptance involves the government granting legal entry to the US, but there is no further attempt to help them adapt to their new environment. Exclusion, on the other hand, can lead to underground and disadvantaged existence (Portes and Rumbaut 2001).

The second context of reception, societal acceptance, has also been a challenge for Mexican immigrants. This is the host society's acceptance of newcomers. The speed of integration for new arrivals into the host society increases the more similar they are to the mainstream racially, socioeconomically, linguistically, and religiously (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). Earlier European immigrants were similar to American society in these categories, thus were able to assimilate quicker. However, Mexican immigrants differ from the US mainstream in every category. Race is a paramount criterion for classification in the US (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Gratton, Gutmann, and Skop 2007; Zhou and Lee 2007; Aguirre, Rodriguez and Simmers 2011; Vasquez 2011). Therefore, phenotype plays a role in societal acceptance regardless of class background, religion, or language.

Community acceptance is the third context of reception. It is common for recent arrivals to settle in ethnic enclaves. Research has shown that immigrants who arrive in the US to an existing, well-established community are more likely to achieve upward mobility (Fernandez-

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Kelly and Schauffler 1994). These immigrants have social capital because they have interpersonal networks, which can grant them access to jobs and important information, such as housing and schools, needed to survive and thrive in the US. (Tienda 1980; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Nichols 2012). The most effective networks have class differentiation because it allows for institutional overlap, which allows for a wider range of resources and opportunities (Boissevain 1974). Without a community, there is no support system to depend on or resources that they can acquire from them, therefore letting them to spiral into downward mobility.

A prosperous future requires that each of the contexts of reception be beneficial for immigrants. Determination and ambition can only get immigrants so far if the government, society, and their communities are not partial to them. "[T]heir future prospects will be dim if government officials persecute them, natives consistently discriminate against them, and their own community has only minimum resources to offer" (Portes and Rumbaut 2001:49). Therefore, without the support of the three contexts of reception, immigrants face a difficult road to upward mobility.

In addition to the contexts of reception, human capital, such as education and occupational skills, has a positive impact on immigrant and their children's outcomes (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). Waters (1994) describes three modes of incorporation for immigrants and their children: linear ethnicity, adversarial stance, and reactive ethnicity. Linear ethnicity occurs for those that arrive to the US with social and financial capital. Those that have strong community ties from ethnic organizations have access to job opportunities. This group's resistance to acculturation in the US helps give their children better opportunities. An adversarial outlook (Portes and Zhou 1993) towards the mainstream white society may occur in children whose parents do not have the resources to provide opportunities for their children. These children

associate strongly with their non-white American counterparts and take on their oppositional views, which highlight the discrimination in the US and devalue education for being part of the oppressive system. Lastly, reactive ethnicity is a strong reinforcement of one's ethnicity, which may form among those who are faced with a hostile, discriminatory, and unaccepting environment (Rumbaut 2008).

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study analyzes the effect of Mexican immigrant replenishment on Spanish language use among Mexican descendants in the US. Language use is one of the strongest indicators of assimilation. "Language is a critical domain for assessing acculturation because it is a socially salient indicator of cultural difference and a marker of ethnic boundaries" (Alba et al. 2002:468). Ceasing to speak the language of ethnic origin, in this case Spanish, would indicate a high degree of assimilation into American society. However, assimilation of second and later generation Mexicans has been complicated by immigrant replenishment, or the continuous influx of new immigrants, which has not been accounted for in neither traditional nor more nuanced theories of assimilation. Traditional theories of assimilation have suggested that there is a "straight-line" assimilation process, in which exposure to American culture leads to greater absorption into American society. However, more recent theories have disputed these claims based on differences in race and ethnicity. Specifically, the theory of segmented assimilation suggests that different immigrant groups will experience different outcomes based on how the government, society, and communities receive them. However, these theories do not explain the effects of immigrant replenishment, which appears to be exclusive to Mexican immigrants.

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Straight-line Assimilation and Today's Immigrants

Straight-line assimilation theory is complicated by today's immigrants and their children. First, the host society that was once mainly homogenous is now heterogenous – made up of groups with different characteristics (Gans 1979; Portes and Zhou 1993; Waters 1994; Portes and Rumbaut 2001). The US is now host to a diverse set of subcultures, where different racial and ethnic identities coexist.

Second, the way in which immigrants once achieved upward mobility has drastically changed (Portes and Zhou 1993; Waters 1994; Nichols 2012). The manufacturing industry once allowed access to job opportunities for unskilled workers, which included immigrants and their children. But the US economy has since shifted into a service economy. In addition to this economic restructuring, today's immigrants arrive with a variety of skills. Some arrive with greater human capital in terms of education and professional skills that qualifies them for high paying jobs. Others do not have the same degree of skill, which makes it more challenging to come across job opportunities.

Finally, non-white immigrants experience racial segregation and American racism to a far greater extent than foreign-born white immigrants have in the past (Portes and Zhou 1993; Waters 1994). Persistent racial segregation in the US impedes the possibility of those who have achieved occupational mobility to move into higher status neighborhoods.

Segmented Assimilation and Mexican Immigrants

The contexts of reception have also hindered possibilities of upward mobility for Mexican immigrants. This group has experienced both passive acceptance and exclusion from the government. Mexican immigrants can go through a long, arduous process of naturalization,

but do not receive active government assistance in the process. Major inequalities and discriminatory practices within the process have hindered the efforts of Mexican immigrants to naturalize, more than any other immigrant group (Garcia 1981). The process includes extensive paperwork, heavy fees, language and civic testing in English (Aptekar 2016). Thus, those that do not speak English and cannot bear the financial burden are at a disadvantage. Many risk deportation if their requests are denied (Aptekar 2016). “While there are undocumented immigrants from every corner of the world, deportations naturally affect Mexican immigrants disproportionately. In 2005, for example, around 88 percent of the 791,568 immigrants deported from the United States were from Mexico” (Vargas and Pirog 2016:561). They also experience exclusion in the form of restriction from federally funded programs (Vargas and Pirog 2016). Legislation from the 1990s to the early 2000s denied unauthorized immigrants in the US access to most federal benefits including: Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, Medicare, Medicaid, state Child Health Insurance Programs; Supplemental Security Income; and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (Vargas and Pirog 2016). Therefore, Mexican immigrants experience exclusion in many forms including denial of entry, denial of citizenship, deportation, and denial of benefits.

Societal acceptance has also been difficult to achieve. Media coverage of events surrounding the large population of undocumented Mexican immigrants has led to a Mexican threat narrative in the American public’s mind (Aguirre et al. 2011). Aguirre et al. (2011) found that news articles reporting on US-Mexico border events reinforced the belief that Mexican immigrants were a perceived threat to US society by taking resources, such as health and education, from Americans. This has led to strong nativist sentiments and criminalized the Mexican identity in the eyes of the American public, which, in turn, has created greater demand

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for stricter immigration policy. There is also evidence of racial profiling, that is, people who looked Mexican were targets for US Border Patrol officials to question their citizenship. Thus, citizenship has been tied to racial characteristics for Mexican immigrants as well as Mexican Americans (Romero 2006; Jimenez 2008; Aguirre et al. 2011). Therefore, nativist sentiments have negatively affected the lives of Mexican immigrants and their descendants.

Intermarriage

Intermarriage, like language use, is another gauge of assimilation. Shin (2011) found that there was a positive relationship between English-language skills and intermarriage. That is, Hispanics who spoke English fluently were more likely to be married to a non-Hispanic white partner than Hispanics who spoke English poorly. Furthermore, Shin (2011) suggests that the social distance between Hispanics and non-Hispanic whites will decrease as the next generation of Hispanics acquire English fluency.

Language

Research on bilingualism among immigrant descendants reveal that their level of Spanish language acquisition is connected to identifying with their heritage culture (Nesteruk et al. 2015). Nesteruk et al. (2015) found that fluent bilinguals reported a stronger connection to their heritage culture and were more likely to report a bicultural, rather than an integrated ethnic identity. Furthermore, Emeka and Vallejo (2011) found that monolingual descendants, those who exclusively spoke English, were four times more likely to identify as non-Hispanic than Spanish-speaking descendants.

Alba et al. (2002) found that today's third-generation descendants of Mexican immigrants cease to speak their language of ethnic origin at a slower pace than their earlier twentieth century

European counterparts. This research suggests that assimilation is happening at a slower rate for Mexican descendants than other immigrant groups. Contact with ethnic enclaves and the proximity of the country of origin are also crucial for preserving the mother tongue. Furthermore, language use was most affected by intermarriage, that is, exogamy led to English as the dominant language spoken at home. However, endogamy alone was not enough to preserve the use of the mother tongue. The strongest cases of language preservation were children of parental endogamy and who lived in ethnic enclaves or regions close to the US-Mexico border, where culture from the Mexico is salient in their everyday lives.

Immigrant Replenishment

Theories of assimilation – traditional or recent – do not consider the new phenomenon of immigrant replenishment. Jimenez (2008) found that immigrant replenishment adds a new explanation for ethnic boundaries and ethnic identity formation. Specifically, the presence of a large immigrant population sharpens both intergroup and intragroup boundaries. Intergroup boundaries between the Mexican-origin population in the US and groups part of mainstream American society are sharpened by nativist sentiments. Furthermore, intragroup boundaries between Mexican immigrants and Mexican descendants are sharpened by standards of Mexican “authenticity” as set by Mexican immigrants.

The society in which Mexican immigrants and their descendants in the US find themselves today is drastically different than that of their predecessors. However, discrimination has persisted in legal and social contexts. Exclusionary legislation and xenophobic sentiments are still prominent in American society. Although these problems persist, Mexican descendants continue to assimilate into the American mainstream. However, the assimilation process of Mexican immigrants and their descendants has been complicated by immigrant replenishment.

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Increased presence of immigrants from Mexico has resulted in the salience of ethnic heritage, especially the use of the mother tongue, Spanish. However, it has also increased tension within Mexican communities in the US, as well as tension between Mexicans and other groups in the US. This paper will determine if immigration replenishment will result in greater preservation of Spanish language among Mexican descendants.

METHODS

Data for this article come from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS), which consists of the largest, longest-standing quantitative samples of the American population. I used the 2011-2015 American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS is conducted every year, but only collects a 1 percent sample of the US population; therefore, I used a five-year cumulative file to increase the sample size to 5 percent of the US population. The unit of analysis in this data set is the household and all individuals in the household. The response rate in 2015 was 95.8 percent. In 2014, it was 96.7 percent. In 2013, 89.9 percent. In 2012, 97.2 percent. Finally, in 2011, it was 97.6 percent. The ACS makes it possible to study individuals in context of their families or co-residents because the samples are organized into households. The ACS uses stratified cluster sampling to distribute annual surveys to about 3.54 million households nationwide by mail, telephone, or in-person interview. Since I use a five-year cumulative file, this translates to a sample of 15,637,457 respondents. Areas with smaller populations are oversampled to counteract overall underrepresentation. For further information on how the data were collected, see the 2011-2015 American Community Survey, available online at <http://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V6.0> (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2014).

For the purposes of this study, I created a subset of the ACS data which only included US-born respondents who are part of the Mexican second or later generations, twenty-five years

of age or older, the head of household or spouse of the head of household, and married. I limited the sample to adults who were heads of their households because the absence of parental influence allows respondents to have greater agency over the language they speak at home. Therefore, the language they choose to speak outside of external influences can be compelling evidence of ethnic identity retention or assimilation. I further restricted the analysis to married respondents to control for the effect ethnic endogamy, that is marrying within the same ethnic group. I suspect that respondents who marry Hispanics will have higher odds of speaking Spanish at home. Thus, my subset for this study is 187,212 individuals. There were no missing data in this subset.

I analyzed the effect of Mexican immigrant replenishment on the language use of US-born Mexican descendants. My independent variable, rate of immigrant replenishment, was measured by creating a variable that produced a value for every respondent based on their metropolitan area of residence. This value is the number of Mexicans in a given metropolitan area who arrived in that metropolitan area between 2005 and 2015, divided by the number of US-born Mexican descendants in the area. To produce this value, I had to first create a variable and cross-tabulate it with an existing variable in the ACS dataset. The first variable, which I created, was a dummy variable that measured whether the respondent came to the US between 2005 and 2015. I created this dummy variable by recoding the year of immigration variable in the ACS dataset. This question asks, “When did this person come to live in the US?” It is followed by a box to fill-in the year. I coded this variable to only include responses from 2005 to 2015. I further coded this variable such that it was limited to respondents who were born in Mexico to ensure that these respondents were indeed Mexican immigrants. To do this I used the birthplace variable in the ACS, which asks, “Where was this person born?” The answer

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categories were: “In the United States – Print name of state” and “Outside the United States – Print name of foreign country, or Puerto Rico, Guam, etc.” I only selected the cases in which immigrant respondents were born in Mexico because immigrants from other countries are not pertinent to this study.

The second variable, metropolitan area, was an existing variable in the ACS and did not need to be recoded. This variable came from the metropolitan area question on the ACS that has two parts. The first asks, “Did this person live in this house or apartment 1 year ago?” The answer categories include “Person is under 1 year old SKIP to question 16; Yes, this house SKIP to question 16; No outside the United States and Puerto Rico – Print name of foreign country, or U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, et., below; then SKIP to question 16; and No, different house in the United States or Puerto Rico.” The second part asks, “Where did this person live 1 year ago?” This is followed by answer fill-ins for the following: Address; Name of city, town, or post office, Name of U.S. county of municipio in Puerto Rico; Name of U.S. state or Puerto Rico; and ZIP Code. The ACS codes the responses to this question into 291 US metropolitan areas. Then, I cross-tabulated my first variable, year of immigration, by the second variable, metropolitan area. This produced the rate of immigrant replenishment for each metropolitan area. I used these results to code my independent variable, immigrant replenishment, by assigning each immigrant replenishment value to a metropolitan area. Thus, creating a new variable out of this cross-tabulation, allowed me to assign the rate of immigrant replenishment for each individual based on their metropolitan area of residence. This is important for this study because I analyze individuals based on their metropolitan area of residence, not the actual metropolitan area.

I controlled for age, income, education, and ethnic endogamy. The first control variable, age, asks, “What is Person X’s age and what is Person X’s date of birth?” This is followed by

fill-in answer categories for age in years, month, day, and year of birth. The second control variable, income, in the ACS is called poverty status. This question asks, “What was this person’s total income during the PAST 12 MONTHS?” The answer categories are: “None OR \$ ____ .00; and Loss.” Respondents can fill-in a number for their total income. This variable is coded by the ACS as a 3-digit numeric code, which expresses total income as a percentage of the poverty thresholds established by the Social Security Administration. Specifically, a value of 001 is 1 percent or less of poverty threshold and a value of 501 is 501 percent or more of poverty threshold. I created two dummy variables from this variable. First, I measured poverty by dummifying this variable, so that a value of 100 or less, which meant at or below the poverty line, was assigned a value of 1, while all other cases were assigned a value of 0. Second, I measured affluence by dummifying the same variable, so that a value of 500 or greater, which meant at or above five times the poverty line, was assigned a value of 1, while all other cases were assigned a value of 0. Third, I measured all cases in between poverty and affluent by dummifying the same variable, so that values between 200 and 400, which mean two times and four times the poverty line respectively, were assigned a value of 1, while all other cases were assigned a value of 0. Finally, I coded these three dummy variables into a single variable that measured family income with the following three categories: at or below the poverty line, at two to four times above the poverty line, and at or above five times the poverty line.

The third control variable, education, asks, “What is the highest degree or level of school this person has completed?” The answer categories include: no schooling completed, nursery school, kindergarten, grade 1 through 11, 12th grade, regular high school diploma, GED or alternative credential, some college credit, but less than year of college credit, 1 or more years of college credit and no degree, Associate’s degree, Bachelor’s degree, Master’s degree,

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Professional degree beyond a bachelor's degree, doctorate degree. I recoded this variable into a dummy variable, which was whether respondents had at least one year of college education. Finally, I controlled for ethnic endogamy. I used the Hispanic variable in the ACS dataset to identify the ethnicity of the respondent and the respondent's spouse. The question asks, "Is Person X of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?" The answer categories include: "No, not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin; Yes, Mexican, Mexican Am., Chicano; Yes, Puerto Rican; Yes, Cuban; Yes, another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin -- Print origin, for example, Argentinean, Colombian, Dominican, Nicaraguan, Salvadoran, Spaniard, and so on." I created a dummy variable for ethnic endogamy which measured whether the respondent was married to someone with a Hispanic ethnicity. Respondents' spouses who answered yes to this question received a value of 1, while those who answered no received a value of 0.

My dependent variable, Spanish language, is a nominal, dichotomous variable, in which respondents either speak Spanish or not. The language question on the ACS has two-parts. The first part asks, "Does this person speak a language other than English at home?" The respondent must check either "yes" or "no." If yes, the respondent must answer the second part, which asks, "What is this language?" I recoded this variable such that respondents who spoke Spanish received a value of 1, while those who did not received a 0.

FINDINGS

Univariate Results

Figure 1 shows the distribution of the independent variable, rate of immigrant replenishment by respondents in a given metropolitan area. It suggests that about 83 percent of respondents live in a metropolitan area with an immigration replenishment rate between 3 to 6

percent. Another 13 percent of respondents live in metropolitan areas with rates of immigrant replenishment higher than 6 percent. More specifically, according to Table 1, the mean rate of immigrant replenishment for respondents in a given metropolitan area is 5 percent. Furthermore, the standard deviation for the immigrant replenishment variable was about 2 percent, meaning that approximately two-thirds of the sample live in metropolitan areas with immigrant replenishment rates between 3 and 7 percent.

Insert Table 1 about here

Insert Figure 1 about here

Figure 2 shows the distribution of the control variable, age of the respondents. It suggests that no specific age is more than about 3 percent of the sample. More specifically, according to Table 1, the average age of respondents is 47 years. The standard deviation is about 15 years of age, meaning that approximately two-thirds of the sample are between 32 and 62 years of age. The median, or midpoint, suggests that 45 years of age is the point below and above which 50 percent of cases fall.

Insert Figure 2 about here

Figure 3 shows the distribution of the control variable, respondent's level of educational attainment. It suggests that about 40 percent of respondents have completed grade 12. Another 46 percent of respondents have attended college. About 14 percent have completed grade 11 or less, while about 2 percent did not have any schooling.

Insert Figure 3 about here

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Figure 4 shows the distribution of the control variable, respondent's family income. It suggests that about 65 percent of respondents have a family income at two to four times above the poverty line. Another 27 percent have a family income at or above five times the poverty line, while the remaining 9 percent have a family income at or below the poverty line. More specifically, according to Table 1, the mean family income of respondents is about 2, meaning that the average family income reported was between two to four times above the poverty line. The standard deviation is about 1, meaning that approximately two-thirds of the sample are between a family income at or below the poverty line, and a family income at or above five times the poverty line. The median, or midpoint, suggests that the point at below and above which 50 percent of cases fall is family income between two and four times above the poverty line.

Insert Figure 4 about here

Figure 5 shows the distribution of the control variable, respondent's spouse's ethnicity. It suggests that about 66 percent of spouses identify ethnically as Hispanic. The other 34 percent do not.

Insert Figure 5 about here

Figure 6 shows the distribution of the dependent variable, language the respondent speaks at home. It suggests that about 55 percent of respondents reported speaking Spanish at home, while the other 45 percent did not.

Insert Figure 6 about here

Bivariate Results

Table 2 shows the correlations between all variables. There is no evidence of multicollinearity because none of the correlations have a strong enough relationship. Each correlation has a statistically significant relationship. Spanish language and immigrant replenishment have a negative, weak relationship, meaning that the higher the rate of immigrant replenishment in the respondent's metropolitan area, the less likely respondents will speak Spanish at home. Spanish language and age have a positive, weak relationship, meaning that the older the respondent, the more likely they will speak Spanish at home. Spanish language and college have a negative, weak relationship, meaning that respondents who go to college are less likely to speak Spanish at home. Spanish language and family income have a negative, weak relationship, meaning that the higher the respondent's family income, the less likely they are to speak Spanish at home. Spanish language and Hispanic Spouse have a positive, moderate relationship, meaning that respondents with a Hispanic spouse are more likely to speak Spanish at home. Immigrant replenishment and age have a positive, weak relationship, meaning that the higher the rate of immigrant replenishment in the respondent's metropolitan area, the older the respondent. Immigrant replenishment and college have a positive, weak relationship, meaning that the higher the rate of immigrant replenishment in the respondent's metropolitan area, the more likely respondents have attended college. Immigrant replenishment and family income have a positive, weak relationship, meaning that the higher the rate of immigrant replenishment in the respondent's metropolitan area, the higher the respondent's family income. Immigrant replenishment and Hispanic spouse have a negative, weak relationship, meaning that the higher the rate of immigrant replenishment in the respondent's metropolitan area, the less likely respondents will have a Hispanic spouse. Age and college have a negative, weak relationship,

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meaning that the older the respondent, the less likely that they have attended college. Age and family income have a positive, weak relationship, meaning that the older the respondent, the higher their family income. Age and Hispanic spouse have a positive, weak relationship, meaning that the older the respondent, the more likely they are to have a Hispanic spouse. College and family income have a positive, weak relationship, meaning that respondents who attended college have higher family incomes. College and Hispanic spouse have a negative, weak relationship, meaning that respondents who attended college are less likely to have a Hispanic spouse. Finally, family income and Hispanic spouse have a negative, weak relationship, meaning that the higher the respondent's family income, the less likely they are to have a Hispanic spouse.

Insert Table 2 about here

Multivariate Results

Table 3 shows the logistic regression of Spanish language on all variables. All regression coefficients are statistically significant. According to the exponentiated coefficients, marriage to a Hispanic spouse is the greatest predictor of language use in the respondent's household. Respondents who are married to Hispanics are 6 times as likely to speak Spanish at home than respondents whose spouses are not Hispanic. According to the Cox and Snell pseudo r-squared statistic, the amount of variance that can be explained by rate of immigrant replenishment, age, college education, family income, and Hispanic spouse is 18 percent.

Insert Table 3 about here

Table 4 shows the logistic regression of Spanish language on all variables for respondents with non-Hispanic spouses and for those with Hispanic spouses. All regression coefficients are

statistically significant. This analysis was conducted because of the great affect the Hispanic spouse variable had on the original logistic regression (see table 3). For respondents with non-Hispanic spouses, according to the Cox and Snell pseudo r-squared statistic, the amount of the variance in Spanish language that can be explained by the rate of immigrant replenishment, age, college education, and family income is 1 percent. For respondents with Hispanic spouses, according to the Cox and Snell pseudo r-squared statistic, the amount of variance that can be explained by the rate of immigrant replenishment, age, college education, and family income is 2 percent. According to the exponentiated coefficients, immigrant replenishment is the greatest predictor of Spanish language use in homes for both subsets, however it differed for respondents with non-Hispanic spouses and respondents with Hispanic spouses. Among respondents with non-Hispanic spouses, every percentage point increase in immigrant replenishment results in a 98 percent decrease in the odds of respondents speaking Spanish at home. However, among respondents with Hispanic spouses, every percentage point increase in immigrant replenishment results in 583 times increase in the odds of respondents speaking Spanish at home.

Age, college education, and family income also had statistically significant effects for respondents with non-Hispanic spouses and respondents with Hispanic spouses. For both subsets, every year increase in age results in a 1 percent increase in the odds of respondents speaking Spanish at home. Among respondents who are married to non-Hispanic spouses, those who are college educated are 8 percent less likely to speak Spanish at home than those who are not college educated. On the other hand, among respondents who are married to Hispanic spouses, those who are college educated are 12 percent less likely to speak Spanish at home than those who are not college educated. Among respondents with non-Hispanic spouses, as family income increases from below the poverty line to two to four times above the poverty line, the

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odds of respondents speaking Spanish decreases by 12 percent. And as family income increases from two to four times above the poverty line to five times above the poverty line, the odds of respondents speaking Spanish at home also decreases by 12 percent. On the other hand, among respondents with Hispanic spouses, as family income increases from below the poverty line to two to four times above the poverty line, the odds of respondents speaking Spanish decreases by 27 percent. And as family income increases from two to four times above the poverty line to five times above the poverty line, the odds of respondents speaking Spanish at home also decreases by 27 percent.

Insert table 4 about here

DISCUSSION

The multivariate results (see table 3) are inconsistent with the bivariate results (see table 2), which suggests that the introduction of control variables has revealed an intervening relationship. Specifically, the introduction of the Hispanic spouse variable intervenes on the effect of immigrant replenishment on speaking Spanish at home. It may be that immigrant replenishment is increasing the marriage pool to include more Hispanics, resulting in more respondents with Hispanic spouses. Thus, having a Hispanic spouse ultimately leads to speaking Spanish at home (Shin 2011). Therefore, these findings reveal that the true driving force behind speaking Spanish at home may be marriage to a Hispanic spouse.

Table 4 analyzes this potential intervening relationship by splitting the sample between respondents with non-Hispanic spouses and respondents with Hispanic spouses. This allows for a comparison of the effect of immigrant replenishment on Spanish language use between the two subsets without including Hispanic spouse as a control variable. The first notable difference in

the logistic regression results, after the Hispanic spouse variable is removed, is that the Cox and Snell pseudo r-squared decreases significantly. In the first group, which only includes respondents with non-Hispanic spouses, the Cox and Snell pseudo r-squared decreases from 18 percent to 1 percent, meaning that the amount of variance in speaking Spanish language at home that can be explained by immigrant replenishment, age, college, and family income decreases by 17 percent. In the second group, which is respondents with Hispanic spouses, the Cox and Snell pseudo r-squared decrease from 18 percent to 2 percent, meaning that the amount of variance in speaking Spanish language at home that can be explained by immigrant replenishment, age, college education, and family income has decreased by 16 percent. Therefore, both subsets have significant decreases in the Cox and Snell pseudo r-squared after removing the Hispanic spouse variable. This suggests that having a Hispanic spouse is a major predictor of whether respondents speak Spanish at home.

Second, the effect of immigrant replenishment on the odds of respondents speaking Spanish at home is striking. Immigrant replenishment has an enormous effect on Spanish language among respondents with Hispanic spouses. These findings are evidence that my hypothesis is correct for respondents with Hispanic spouses. That is, the higher the rate of Mexican immigrant replenishment in a given metropolitan area within the last decade, the more likely Mexican descendants in that metropolitan area will speak Spanish at home. Specifically, every percentage point increase in immigrant replenishment results in 583 times increase in the odds of respondents speaking Spanish at home. Thus, having a Hispanic spouse increases the odds of speaking Spanish at home. These results support previous literature on maintaining ethnic ties, such as mother tongue, in endogamous marriages (Shin 2011).

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However, the effect of immigrant replenishment is much different among respondents with non-Hispanic spouses, in that it has a much smaller, negative effect on Spanish language. These findings are evidence that my hypothesis is incorrect for Mexican descendants who are married to non-Hispanic spouses. Specifically, every percentage point increase in immigrant replenishment results in a 98 percent decrease in the odds of respondents speaking Spanish at home. Thus, the higher the rate of immigrant replenishment, the lower the odds of speaking Spanish at home. These results may be explained by the sharpened intragroup boundaries created by the presence of more immigrants (Jimenez 2008).

Mexican immigrants create standards for an “authentic” Mexican ethnicity and Mexican descendants who do not live up to these standards are treated as outsiders. These “outsiders” may respond by avoiding the standards altogether, which would entail avoiding any attachment to Mexican ethnicity and avoiding the Mexican immigrants that set these standards (Jimenez 2008). The use of Spanish language is likely one of these standards. Thus, Mexican immigrant descendants who are not fluent in Spanish may avoid speaking Spanish altogether when there is pressure from a large population of Mexican immigrants imposing a fluency standard. A lack of fluency in Spanish may jeopardize their Mexican “authenticity.” The larger the population of Mexican immigrants, the greater the policing and pressure of Mexican “authenticity.” The avoidance of Mexican ethnicity may be an indication of assimilation, in that these Mexican descendants are leaving behind their ethnic identities in favor of American identities (Gans 1979) because the pressure of being an “authentic” Mexican may be too much to bear. The process of assimilation continues for these descendants once they marry someone outside of their pan-ethnic group, as intermarriage is another indicator of assimilation (Jimenez 2008; Shin 2011). It is logical that descendants who marry non-Hispanics will not speak Spanish at home, thus

ceasing to maintain ties to their ethnic origins and continuing the process of assimilation, which in this case means only speaking English. Therefore, among respondents with non-Hispanic spouses, the higher the rate of immigrant replenishment, the lower the odds of speaking Spanish at home, and the faster the speed of assimilation.

Jimenez's (2008) intragroup boundary theory may also explain the correlation between rate of immigrant replenishment and Hispanic spouse, which is both negative and weak (see table 2). This means that the higher the rate of immigrant replenishment in the respondent's metropolitan area, the less likely the respondent has a Hispanic spouse. Although it may seem logical that the presence of more Mexicans in the population would lead more respondents to marry Hispanics since they become the greatest portion of the marriage pool, sharpened intragroup boundaries may refute this logic. Mexican descendants may choose not to marry Mexican immigrants because they want to avoid the authenticity standard, which would entail avoiding Mexican immigrants, especially as marriage partners. These intragroup boundaries may mean the reverse is also true – Mexican immigrants may not want to marry Mexican descendants because they are not “authentic” enough.

The correlations between Spanish language and college, Spanish language and family income, and family income and Hispanic spouse can be attributed to assimilation into American society (Jimenez 2008). The relationship between Spanish language and college is negative and weak, meaning that the respondents who attended college are less likely to speak Spanish at home. The relationship between Spanish language and family income is also negative and weak, meaning that the higher the respondent's income, the less likely they will speak Spanish at home. The relationship between family income and Hispanic spouse is also negative and weak, meaning the higher the respondent's family income, the less likely they will have a Hispanic

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spouse. These relationships are indicative of assimilation because research has found that Mexican descendants who are upwardly mobile – meaning they have higher socioeconomic status and have attended college – tend to distance themselves from their ethnic origins (Jimenez 2008; Shinnar 2008; Emeka and Vallejo 2011). Thus, these findings suggest that respondents who have attended college and have higher family incomes distance themselves from Spanish language and partners of the same ethnicity.

Immigrant replenishment challenges traditional assimilation theory. The findings presented in this study reveal the influence of immigrant replenishment on respondents' processes of assimilation, which is operationalized as speaking Spanish at home. Logistic regression of Spanish language on all variables found that the most significant predictor of speaking Spanish at home is having a Hispanic spouse. However, splitting the subset into those with a non-Hispanic spouse and those with a Hispanic spouse revealed that higher rates of immigrant replenishment sharpen intragroup boundaries and dissuade Mexican descendants from identifying with their ethnic origins. Therefore, these Mexican descendants are more likely to assimilate into American society by marrying non-Hispanics and not speaking Spanish at home, which is in line with straight-line assimilation theory. Furthermore, these findings support previous literature that found that Mexican descendants who experience upward mobility are more likely to cease to identify with their ethnic origins. This is further evidence of straight-line assimilation, which suggests that upward intergenerational mobility is experienced as every subsequent generation becomes more and more integrated into American culture (Gans 1979).

CONCLUSION

This study analyzed the effect of the rate of Mexican immigrant replenishment, in a given metropolitan area, on speaking Spanish at home. I used a five-year cumulative data file of the

American Community Survey (ACS) from 2011 to 2015, which represents 5 percent of the US population. My subset of this data file includes 187,212 respondents who are US-born Mexican descendants, 25 years of age or older, married, and heads of households or spouses thereof. The results of my logistic regression analysis revealed an intervening relationship between rate of immigrant replenishment and having a Hispanic spouse. Splitting the data file into respondents with a non-Hispanic spouse and those with a Hispanic spouse showed that increasing immigrant replenishment has an opposite effect for each group. In the latter group, higher immigrant replenishment has an enormous increasing effect on the odds of speaking Spanish at home. This confirms my hypothesis, which states that the higher the rate of Mexican immigrant replenishment in a given metropolitan area within the last decade, the more likely Mexican descendants in that metropolitan area will speak Spanish at home. However, in the former group, respondents with non-Hispanic spouses, higher immigrant replenishment decreased the odds of speaking Spanish at home. Thus, my hypothesis for this group of respondents is incorrect.

Jimenez (2008) proposes that the presence of new immigrants may be sharpening intragroup boundaries between them and US-born Mexican descendants because of the creation and policing of standards for Mexican authenticity, which most likely includes Spanish fluency. These boundaries may result in faster assimilation for those who do not meet the standards and thus, remove themselves from the group. Interethnic marriage is a chief indicator of assimilation and ceasing to speak the language of ethnic origin adds another degree of assimilation. These findings suggest that not all Mexican descendants are experiencing a similar process of assimilation. While some Mexican descendants marry within their pan-ethnic group and continue to speak the language of ethnic origin, others are marrying out of their pan-ethnic group and

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ceasing to speak their mother tongue. Therefore, assimilation is occurring at different speeds for different groups of Mexican descendants.

Limitations

Although there was substantial variation in the dependent variable, Spanish language, the wording of the question may not have captured all respondents who have the linguistic ability, but do not speak it at home. For instance, it is logical that a Mexican descendant with a non-Hispanic spouse would not speak Spanish at home because it would create a language barrier with their spouse, who is less likely to speak Spanish. However, this does not necessarily mean that the respondent does not possess the linguistic ability. Although it may be likely that they do not have the linguistic ability, the wording of the question makes it uncertain. It would be inaccurate to indefinitely conclude that these respondents are no longer speaking their mother tongue. However, respondents who do not speak Spanish at home because they have married outside of their ethnic group suggests a weaker connection to their ethnic origins than those who are fluent and have married within their ethnic group. Thus, the former group has assimilated into mainstream society more than the latter. Furthermore, the degree of fluency is also not asked in the ACS. Thus, a respondent fluent in Spanish and a respondent only conversational in Spanish are both considered to have the same linguistic ability in Spanish, even though a lack of fluency may be an indicator of faster assimilation. Given the constraints of the question wording, however, this cannot be determined. Therefore, the Spanish language variable I use in this study is not the most accurate operationalization of assimilation. Future research should ask respondents if they have the linguistic ability to speak Spanish and their degree of fluency. This will allow for a better understanding of the speed at which respondents are assimilating into American society and what type of respondents are assimilating faster than others.

Another limitation of the study is that population size was not considered. That is, there was no control variable for population size. This becomes an issue when comparing rates of immigrant replenishment across metropolitan areas with smaller populations of Mexican descendants and those with larger populations. Smaller populations appear to have higher rates of immigrant replenishment compared to larger populations, which is inaccurate. The rate of Mexican immigrant replenishment is measured as a percentage of the population of US-born Mexican descendants in a metropolitan area. Thus, metropolitan areas with small populations of Mexican descendants have skewed measures of immigrant replenishment. Any Mexican immigrant replenishment in these metropolitan areas yield a high percentage of immigrant replenishment regardless of whether the actual number of immigrants is great. This is because it would seem like high replenishment relative to its existing small Mexican population. On the other hand, a metropolitan area with a larger population of Mexican descendants may appear to have a lower rate of immigrant replenishment compared to smaller populations, even though the number of immigrants is much greater in these areas. Although this measure of immigrant replenishment is accurate relative to population size of Mexican descendants, it is important to be able to operationalize this concept so that it can more accurately measure immigrant replenishment regardless of population size. Therefore, the results of my analysis might have been different had I controlled for population size. Although, considering the powerful effect of the control variable, Hispanic spouse, in the logistic regression, controlling for population size may not have made much of an impact. Future research should explore the effect of population size on immigrant replenishment.

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Theoretical Implications and Future Research

The results of this study both confirm and refute straight-line assimilation theory. While respondents with Hispanic spouses maintained the heritage of their ethnic origins by speaking Spanish at home, respondents with non-Hispanic spouses did not speak their mother tongue, suggesting that the latter group assimilated into American society much more than the former. The latter group confirms straight-line assimilation theory. The theory posits that assimilation is evident through intermarriage, loss of mother tongue, college education, and achieving higher socioeconomic status (Gans 1979; Jimenez 2008; Shinnar 2008; Emeka and Vallejo 2011). Therefore, Mexican descendants with non-Hispanic spouses, who are less likely to speak Spanish at home, are experiencing straight-line assimilation. However, Mexican descendants with Hispanic spouses, who are more likely to speak Spanish at home, are not experiencing straight-line assimilation, simply because they are not inter-ethnically married, and thus refute the theory. Future research should consider the implications of immigrant replenishment on different groups of Mexican descendants – those who appear to be assimilating faster and those who maintain their ethnic origins. This may shed some light on the speed of assimilation for different groups of Mexican descendants in the context of immigrant replenishment. This study focuses on inter-ethnic marriage and language as a means of assimilation, but future research may analyze other indicators of assimilation in conjunction with those presented in this study.

This study adds to the existing literature on assimilation by challenging straight-line assimilation theory with the concept of immigrant replenishment. Immigrant replenishment may sharpen intragroup boundaries between Mexican immigrants and Mexican descendants in the US, which in turn speed up the process of assimilation for Mexican descendants. However, there is also convincing evidence of Mexican descendants maintaining their heritage, which refutes

straight-line assimilation theory because they are holding on to their ethnic origins rather than integrating into American society. Future research must use improved measures of the dependent and independent variables presented in this study to better analyze the effect of Mexican immigrant replenishment on the process of assimilation for Mexican descendants.

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Table 1. Means, Medians, and Standard Deviations for Variables ($n = 187,212$)

Variable	Mean	Median	SD
Spanish Language	.55	1.00	.498
Immigration Replenishment	.05	.05	.021
Age	47.33	45.00	14.810
College	.46	.00	.498
Family Income	2.18	2.00	.570
Hispanic Spouse	.66	1.00	.474

Table 2. Correlations (r) between Spanish Language and Five Variables (listwise deletion, two-tailed test, $n = 187,212$)

Variable	Immigrant Replenishment	Age	College	Family Income	Hispanic Spouse
Spanish	-.053***	.101***	-.127***	-.130***	.417***
Immigrant Replenishment		.049***	.029***	.024***	-.153***
Age			-.164***	.108***	.044***
College				.274***	-.183***
Family Income					-.188***

*** $p < .001$

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Table 3. Logistic Regression of Spanish Language on All Variables ($n = 187,212$)

Variable	<i>b</i>	Exp(B)
Immigrant Replenishment	1.676***	5.343
Age	.014***	1.015
College	-.119***	.888
Family Income	-.247***	.781
Hispanic Spouse	1.822***	6.187
Constant	-1.166***	.312

Pseudo $R^2 = .175$; $p < .001$

*** $p < .001$

Table 4. Logistic Regression of Spanish Language on All Variables

Variable	Non-Hispanic Spouse Exp(B)	Hispanic Spouse Exp(B)
Immigrant Replenishment	.025***	582.799***
Age	1.012***	1.016***
College	.923***	.878***
Family Income	.882***	.733***
Pseudo R^2	.009***	.020***
<i>n</i>	63,993	123,219

*** $p < .001$

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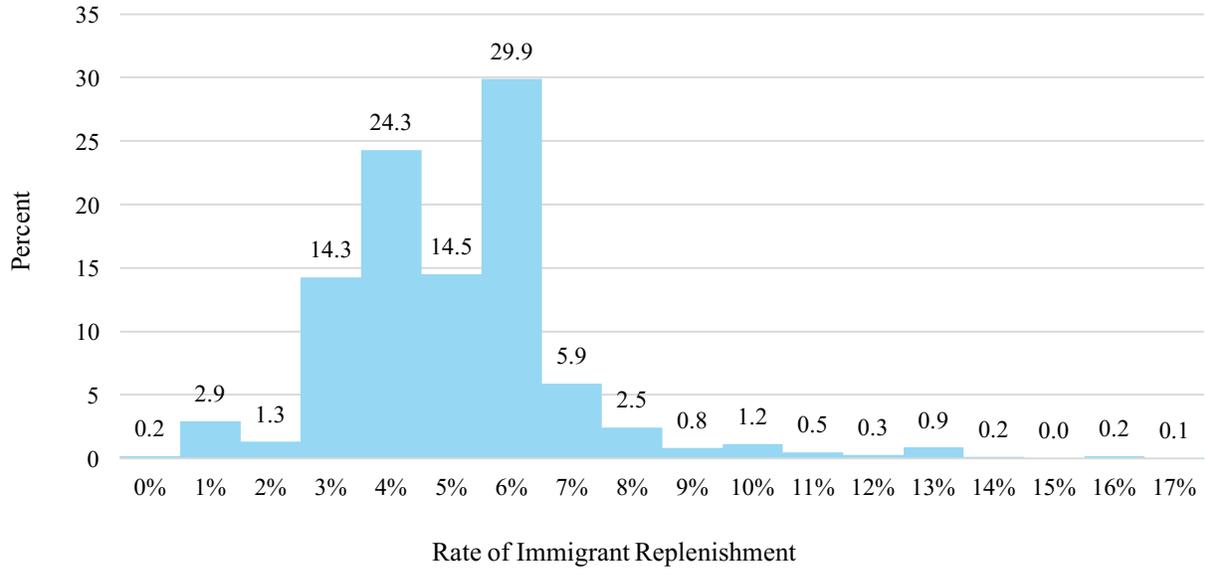


Figure 1. Histogram of Immigrant Replenishment Rate in Metropolitan Areas

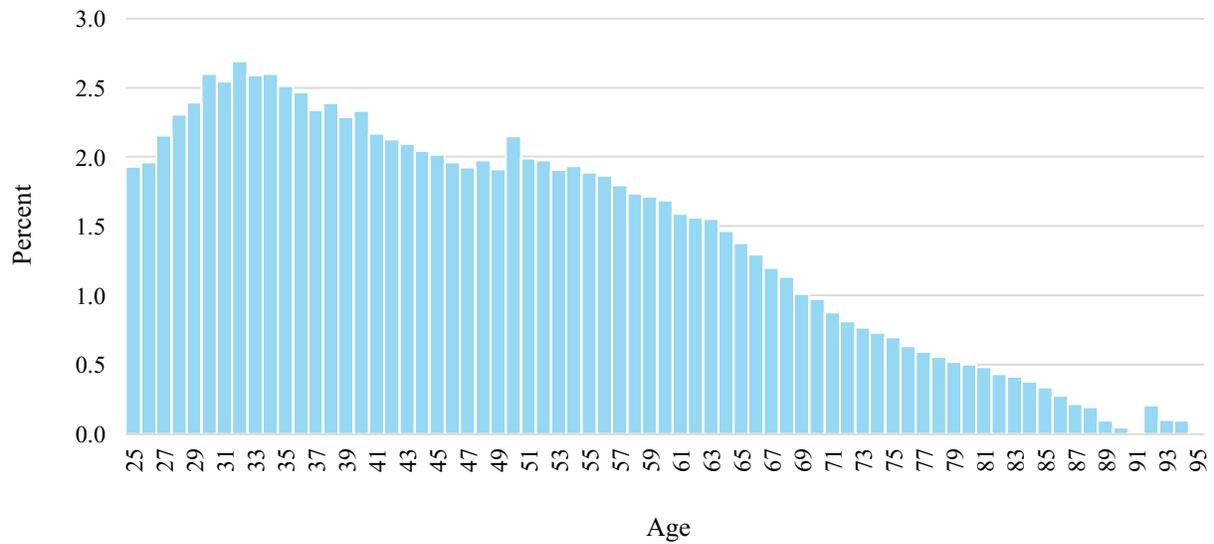


Figure 2. Histogram of Respondent's Age

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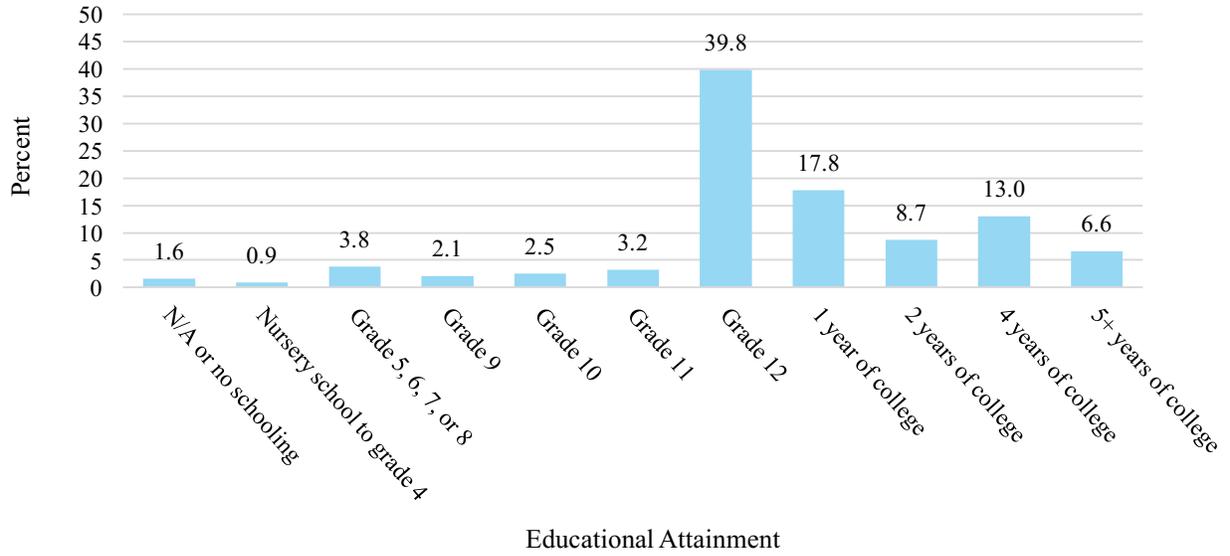


Figure 3. Bar Chart of Respondent's Educational Attainment

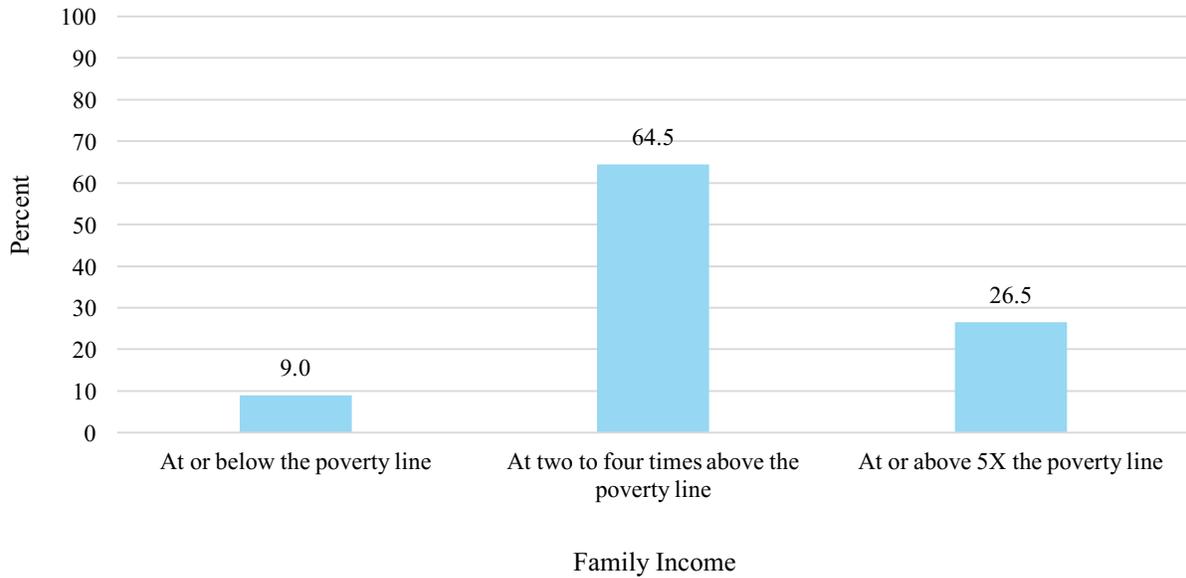


Figure 4. Bar Chart of Respondent's Family Income

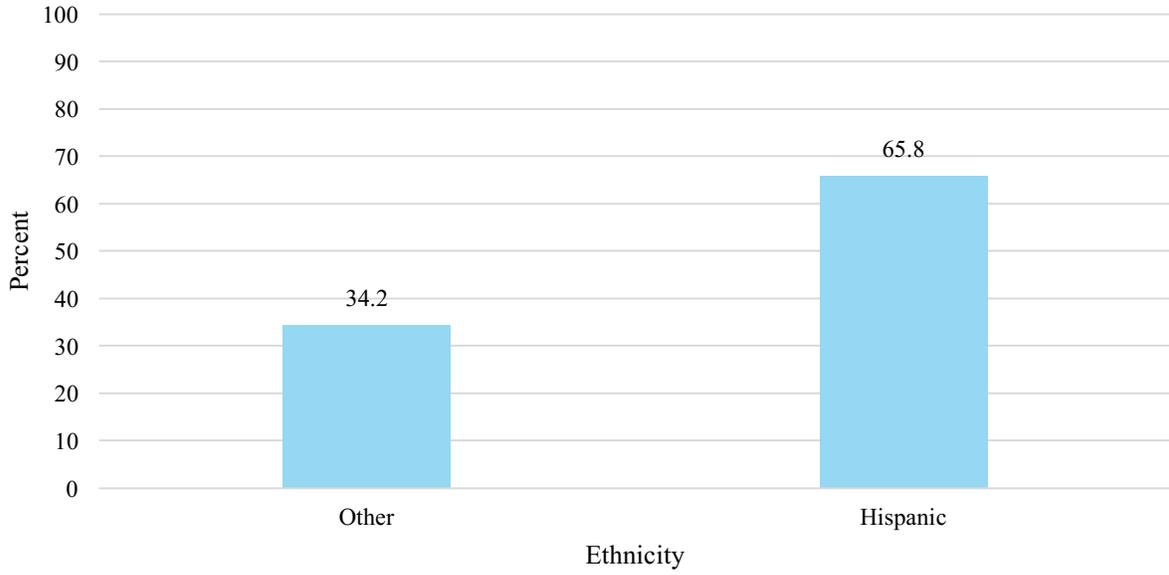


Figure 5. Bar Chart of Respondent's Spouse's Ethnicity

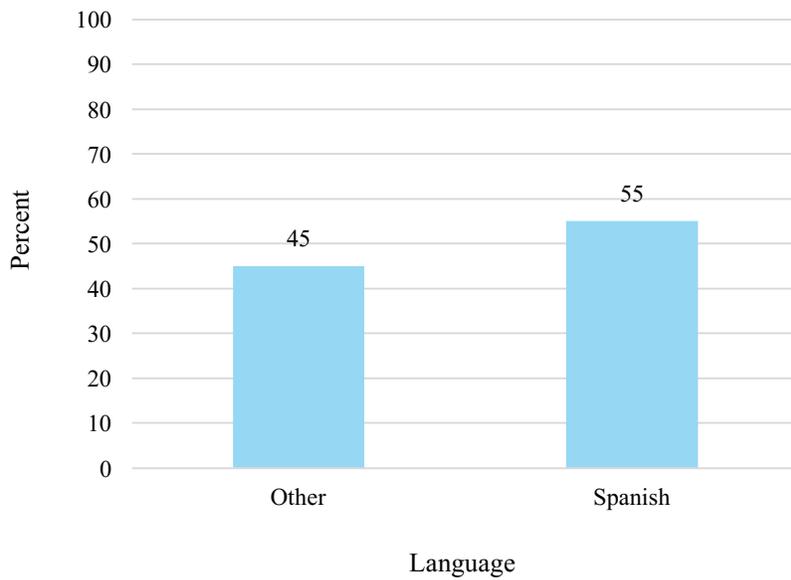


Figure 6. Bar Chart of Respondent's Language Spoken at Home