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Sociodemographic determinants of language transitions among the children of French and Spanish-Caribbean immigrants in the US

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Abstract

In this study, language transitions among the children of Caribbean immigrants in the US are examined from two main perspectives. First, speeds of language transitions among children in French and Spanish-Caribbean immigrant families are compared. Second, the mediating roles of sociodemographic factors and sibling characteristics in language transitions are also examined. The results reveal that with increasing assimilation, children in French-Caribbean families experience a faster transition to English monolingualism than their counterparts with Spanish-Caribbean parents. Transitions to English monolingualism are also negatively associated with the number of first generation siblings within households. However, increases in the number of second and first generation English-monolingual siblings, significantly shift children's language use towards complete Anglicization. Instructively, this impact offsets the influence ethnically-endogamous parents have on the retention of mother tongues within immigrant families.

Keywords

Children; immigrants; English language transition; assimilation

Introduction

Caribbean immigration makes a significant contribution to the transformation of the US foreign-born population (Pellegrino 2001; Thomas-Hope 2002). In fact, according to Gelatt and Dixon (2006), one in ten foreign-born persons in the US in 2000 was an immigrant from the Caribbean. The contribution of Caribbean migration to the diversity of the US Hispanic population is also now well-recognized (e.g. Guzman and Diaz-McConnell 2002; Rumbaut 1995). Additionally, an increasing number of studies have examined the ways in which the social and economic outcomes of Caribbean immigrants are affected by assimilation processes (e.g. Grasmuck and Grosfoguel 1997; Model and Fisher 2001). Related to the increase in Caribbean immigration research is an emerging body of work on children in Caribbean immigrant families (e.g. Butterfield 2005; Kasinitz et al. 2001; Waters 2001), that illuminates our understanding of their assimilation patterns. In terms of language use, for

example, previous research shows that levels of English proficiency are lower among children of Haitian immigrants than among their counterparts with parents from other Caribbean regions (Portes and Schauffler 1994). Others suggest that English language use among Spanish-Caribbean immigrants is generally among the lowest in the US (Rumbaut 1995). A number of scholars have addressed the implications of these differences for the integration of Caribbean children into the US society (e.g. Thomas 1995; Lopez 2002; Doucet and Suarez-Orozco 2006). As a result, the role of language in the assimilation of Caribbean immigrants in the US is now well-represented in immigration research.

Although previous research provides crucial insights on the language assimilation of Caribbean immigrants, three outstanding issues are yet to be addressed. First, comparisons of the relative speed of linguistic transitions among Spanish and French Caribbean immigrants are still largely unavailable in the literature. Secondly, sufficient systematic attention has not been given to the socio-demographic factors that may mediate disparities in children's linguistic transitions. For example, while previous research shows unique socioeconomic and racial variation in the assimilation of children in Caribbean families (e.g. Waters 1994), the extent to which linguistic transitions are racially or socioeconomically circumscribed generally remains unknown. Thirdly, studies on the linguistic ability of Caribbean immigrants' children have not investigated the possible role of sibling influences in shaping the dynamics of language use within their families. As a result, little is known about the extent to which sibling influences vary in terms of their impacts on language transitions among Caribbean immigrants from French and Spanish-speaking countries.

In general, research on these issues falls within the broader context of decades-old nativist concerns about the need for English-only policies in the US. Such policies, according to their proponents, will essentially facilitate immigrant incorporation into the US society and address national security concerns (e.g. Plotke 1999; Huntington 2004). Accumulated evidence on the validity of these fears continues to show that they are without basis (e.g. Veltman 1990; Rumbaut et al. 2006). Instead, studies on the linguistic assimilation of immigrants have yielded well-developed theoretical frameworks explicating how the concurrent processes of mother tongue loss and shift towards English monolingualism increase with assimilation (e.g. Fishman 1972). More recent research, however, shows that the speed with which these transitions occur varies across ethnic groups. According to Alba et. al. (2002), for example, English language transitions are slower among Hispanic immigrants than among Asians. Thus, it may be unreasonable to expect language shifts to occur synchronously among Caribbean immigrants with different ethnic origins.

This study, therefore, attempts to achieve four specific objectives. First, it examines disparities in children's linguistic transition from speaking non-English languages to speaking only English. This process focuses on children from the two major non-English speaking Caribbean groups in the US; French and Spanish-Caribbean immigrants. Secondly, the study examines the impacts of race and socioeconomic status on linguistic transitions among these children. The study's third objective is to highlight the role of family contexts in children's language transitions. In particular, it evaluates the importance of sibling generational-cohort size, defined as the number of first or second generation children in immigrant households, and the linguistic attributes of children in each generation in

transitions to speaking only-English. Finally, attention is given to the extent to which factors such as parental attributes, household structure, and co-ethnic communities affect the linguistic transitions differently among children in French and Spanish-Caribbean immigrant families.

Theoretical Issues

Fishman's language assimilation model (e.g. Fishman 1972) provides a key theoretical grounding for understanding linguistic transitions among Caribbean immigrants. The use of mother tongue languages, according to Fishman, will be most prevalent among first generation immigrants. English language use will become more prevalent in the second than first generations. In the process of negotiating between public and household domains, however, many second generation immigrants develop proficiency in the respective languages spoken in these domains: English and their mother-tongues. In subsequent generations, the language shift is completed as the descendants of immigrants become English monolinguals.

Notwithstanding its seminal explication of early European immigrant experiences, the model's elaboration of the role of assimilation in Anglicization processes remains relevant in contemporary research. Lopez's (1999) work, for example, underscores the increasing importance of English Language use as immigrants assimilate. Alba (2004) likewise finds a positive association between English monolingualism and increasing generational status in about twenty Hispanic and Asian immigrant groups. Portes and Schauffler (1994) also show that among foreign-born children the preservation of parental languages declines negatively with increasing duration of US residence. Studies on Latino youths likewise show that Spanish language use declines with increasing generational status (Arriagada 2005; Lutz 2006). In addition, a recent study by Rumbaut et al (2006) argues that Mexican Hispanics and White Europeans in California have similar patterns of declining mother tongue use with increasing assimilation.

The preponderance of evidence of general shifts towards English monolingualism as immigrants assimilate obscures the fact that significant variations in the pace of the process can be found across immigrant groups. For example, Alba et al's study (2002) argues that language transitions are slower among Hispanics compared to Asians and Europeans. Yet, even among Hispanic immigrants these transitions are especially slower among Dominicans than among other Hispanic immigrants (Alba 2004).

A number of explanations have been given to account for disparities in linguistic assimilation among immigrants. Chiswick and Miller (2001), for example, argue that linguistic distance, a measure of structural differences between languages, largely accounts for differences in English language use among immigrants. According to their hypothesis, language assimilation will be faster for immigrants from language-backgrounds less distant from English than among those with more distant backgrounds. Thus, compared to other immigrants, immigrants with less distant backgrounds will find it easier to learn English because of smaller structural differences between English and their own dominant languages. In general, however, evidence to support this hypothesis is inconclusive (e.g. in

Carliner 2000). What seems clear is that ethnic differences in language shifts are consistent with recent observations of segmented language assimilation patterns among immigrants. In other words, consistent with segmented assimilation theory (Portes and Zhou 1993; Zhou 1997), differences in modes of incorporation, class, human capital, and other contextual characteristics are likely to explain ethnic differences language assimilation.

Generally, therefore, segmented assimilation theory provides a useful conceptual entrée into the study of two key issues associated with language use among the children of immigrants. First, the theory suggests that there will be differential patterns of language assimilation among children with minority and non-minority racial characteristics. Previous research on the association between ethnic minority status and language assimilation, however, reveals somewhat mixed findings. Bailey (2000), for example, finds that spoken Spanish is used among Black Dominican youths because of their desire to resist the hegemony of the US 'one-drop' rule and avoid being classified as 'Black' or 'African American'. In Lutz's (2006) study, however, Black Latinos, more so Black males, are shown to be less proficient in Spanish than English compared to their White-Latino counterparts.

A second significance of segmented assimilation theory is that it allows for race and class to interact to produce even more differentiated outcomes among the children of immigrants. For example, Waters' research among Caribbean immigrants in New York finds that second generation children with upwardly mobile parents are more likely to identify with their parental ethnic-origins while those of lower class immigrants are more likely to identify as Americans (Waters 2001). Rumbaut (1994) also finds key differences in racial self-identification among Black and non-Black children from the Caribbean. Thus, he reports that second-generation children of Afro-Caribbean immigrants are more likely to adopt an American (Black) identity than other second-generation children in the Miami area, and further suggests that the disparity was driven by the children of lower class Afro-Caribbean Blacks.

Racial differences in identity formation processes are crucial to the understanding of disparities in language shifts for two related reasons. First, a positive association is known to exist between the use of ethnic identities and the retention of non-English languages (Phinney et al 2001). Secondly, a similar association has been observed between the use of American racial identities and English-language proficiency (Rumbaut 1994). In addition, others (e.g. Fernandez-Kelly and Schauffler 1994) suggest that lower class immigrants will be more likely to emphasize the importance of ethnic attributes to counteract the structural pressures of downward assimilation. In general, therefore, disparities in class and identity formation processes have significant implications for patterns of language shifts. Yet studies on the impacts of class on language shifts have produced mixed findings. For example, increasing family socioeconomic status has been found to be positively associated with fluency in mother tongue languages (Portes and Hao, 1998). In contrast, Lutz (2006) finds a negative, but non-significant, association between parental schooling and children's Spanish-speaking ability.

At the household level, linguistic transitions are known to be affected by several factors ranging from parental characteristics, family structure, and sibling characteristics. In terms

of parental marital status, Stevens (1992) argues that non-English languages are more likely to be retained in families with married couples who speak the same minority languages than among other married couples. Similarly, Espenshade and Fu (1997), maintain that English proficiency levels are lower in such ethnically endogamous families but higher among English-speaking immigrant couples and among couples from different non-English language backgrounds. In terms of family structure, available evidence indicates that the use of non-English languages is lower in single-parent than in two-parent families (Stevens and Ishizawa 2007). Other studies (e.g. Espenshade and Fu 1997) also reveal a negative association between family size and English language use. More recent studies, however, draw attention to the significance of sibling influences on language use in immigrant families. Stevens and Ishizawa (2007), for example, show that older siblings are more likely to use non-English languages than younger siblings. In addition, their results indicate that generational status, i.e. being foreign rather than US-born, and the number of children living in families have positive associations with the use of a non-English language at home. Based on these two findings other patterns of sibling influences within families can be inferred from interactions between number of siblings living in immigrant households and sibling generational status. For example, since foreign-born facilitate the use of non-English languages, having more of first-generation siblings is likely to delay children's language transitions. On the contrary, a larger number of second-generation siblings may accelerate transitions from the use of mother tongue languages to speaking only English.

Hypotheses

Two hypotheses are thus examined in this study. First, consistent with the presumed effects of linguistic distance, the study hypothesizes that transitions to English monolingualism will occur faster among the children of immigrants from French than Spanish Caribbean countries. In other words, transitions to speaking only-English will be faster among the former because French is less distant from English than Spanish (Chiswick and Miller 2004). Our second hypothesis is that first and second generation siblings will have disparate impacts on language transitions. An increase in the number of first generational siblings is expected to have a negative association with language transitions. In contrast, having more second-generation siblings is expected to have the opposite effect. In households with mixed sibling generational-cohorts, however, language transitions are expected to be facilitated by an increase in the relative size of second to first generational siblings.

Data and Methods

The data used in this study come from a 5% sample of the 2000 US census available in the Integrated Public Use Microdata Sample (IPUMS) database. The final sample is restricted to children between ages 5 and 17. Given the study's interest in the influence of parental-level factors on language transitions, the final sample is also restricted to children whose parents are the heads or spouses of household headsⁱ. The main outcome of interest is a measure of English-monolingual ability derived from US census data on the English proficiency of

ⁱSince the characteristics of household heads and their spouses are used as parental characteristics in this study, including children without a direct biological relationship with these parents (e.g. nieces, nephews, etc.) may bias the estimates of parental-level impacts.

respondents. Using this information, a dummy variable is constructed that is equal to 1 if children speak only English and 0 if they don't. This binary measure of English monolingual ability is used as the dependent variable in logistic regression models with robust standard errors accounting for the clustering of children within families.

Observations of children's transition to speaking only English as they assimilate are therefore based on changes in the estimated likelihood of speaking only English across immigrant generations. In this process, information on children's country of birth is used to distinguish between first and second generation children. The former are identified as foreign-born children in immigrant families and second generation children as the US born children in these families. Separate analyses are then done for first and second generation children to examine the determinants of language transitions within both groups. For first generation, particular attention is given to the impacts of increased exposure to the US on differentials in language shifts. As previous studies show, a major determinant of language assimilation among the foreign-born is their age at immigration (Stevens 1999). To examine these impacts, the study adopts a strategy similar to that used by Rumbaut (2004), that interacts information on the age at migration with that of first generation status to produce three sub-categories of first-generation children: 1.75 generation children, defined as children who arrived between ages 0 and 5; 1.5 generation children as first generation children who arrived between ages 6 and 12; and 1.25 generation children as foreign-born children who arrived in the US as teenagers.

Unique household identification data provided in the US census are used to link child-level information, e.g. children's age, sex, and generational status, with data on parental level information (e.g. parental schooling and endogamous parents) and household level attributes (e.g. the number of first and second generation children within families). Consistent with Espenshade and Hu (1997), parental country of birth is also used to distinguish between immigrant families from the three major Caribbean language-regions, based on the official languages spoken in those countriesⁱⁱ. The children of Spanish-speaking immigrants, for example, have parents from countries such as Cuba and Dominican Republic, while those of French-Caribbean immigrants are children whose parents are from Haiti. Measures of children's generational status in combination with those of parental language origins thus make it possible to compare differences in inter-generational language shifts between the children French and Spanish-speaking Caribbean immigrants.

Ethnically endogamous parents are identified as two foreign-born parents from the same language background. In addition, the association between race and segmented language transition patterns is examined using four race/ethnic dummy variables - Black, White, Hispanics, and 'Other'. The study's measure of class is, however, based on the highest schooling-levels of household heads. Based on these measures, three class proxy variables are used in the analyses: below completed high school education, high school graduate, and post-secondary education.

ⁱⁱThe language region of the household head is used if the household head and his/her spouse within two-parent households are immigrants from different language regions.

Previous studies also show that the geographic concentration of immigrant co-ethnics is positively associated with the use of non-English languages (Linton 2004; Chiswick et al. 2002). The smallest geographic unit available in nationally representative data from the US census is the Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA). The empirical analysis, therefore, accounts for the spatial concentration of immigrant co-ethnics using estimates of the percentage of Caribbean immigrants from the two language backgrounds who live within PUMAs.

Findings

Summary profiles of the children of French and Spanish-speaking Caribbean immigrants are presented in Table 1. Although children in all three groups share similarities in their generational status and school enrollment distributions, they nonetheless differ in their racial and ethnic characteristics. In particular, the children of Spanish-speaking immigrants are the least likely to be identified as Black. Instead, more than half of them are identified as Whites, and an additional third as Hispanics. The lower prevalence of a Hispanic identity among children in Spanish-Caribbean families is somewhat unexpected. However, in her study of Latino youths, Lutz (2006) suggests that preferences for a US racial identity (i.e. Black or White) among Hispanics may reflect children's detachment from ethnicity and their assimilation into US racial norms.

The schooling attributes of household-heads shown in Table 1 suggest that there are significant variations in class among Caribbean immigrant families. Compared to their counterparts in Spanish-Caribbean families, children with French-Caribbean parents are less likely to have parents with post-secondary qualifications. About two-thirds of these children had household heads that lacked such credentials. In terms of family structure, absolute differences in the likelihood of living in single-parent than two-parent families are generally small. Nevertheless, in two-parent families, important disparities exist in the composition of parental dyads. French-Caribbean families, for example, are more likely to have ethnically endogamous parents relative to Spanish-Caribbean families. Children in French-Caribbean immigrant families may therefore be more likely to have opportunities for speaking non-English languages with their parents than their counterparts with Spanish-speaking parents. Yet Table 1 shows that they have a higher prevalence of English-monolingualism than the children of Spanish-Caribbean immigrants. Instructively, this disparity is consistent within generational status while the inter-generational increase in the prevalence of monolingualism in French-Caribbean families also exceeds that among their counterparts with Spanish-speaking parents. At the same time, Table 1 shows that Spanish-Caribbean families are more likely to live among co-ethnics than French-Caribbean families. This suggests that Spanish-origin children may have stronger community incentives for retaining the use of their mother-tongues than their French-speaking counterparts.

Regression estimates in Table 2 are based on a pooled-sample of French and Spanish-Caribbean children. In general, these models investigate the factors that mediate differences in the shift towards English monolingual ability with increasing assimilation. In Model 1, the results show that the children of French-Caribbean immigrants have a higher likelihood of speaking only English than their Spanish-origin counterparts within each generation even

after child-level factors are controlled. Tests of the intra-generational differences in the estimates for these two-groups revealed that the differences are significant in both the first and second generations at the $p < 0.001$ level. Differences in the speed of language transitions are operationalized as the ethnic-specific difference in the *inter-generational* likelihood of speaking only English, among the two groups. Accordingly, the results in Model 1 also reveal that the transition to speaking only English occurs slightly faster among children with French-Caribbean parents than among their counterparts with Spanish-Caribbean parents. In other words, between the first and second generation, the greater increase in the likelihood of speaking only English is greater among the children of French than Spanish-Caribbean immigrants is robust to the influence of factors such as age and sex. Model 1 also indicates that Hispanic children are comparatively less likely to speak only English than Black or White children. Furthermore, Black children appear to have a slower transition to speaking only English than children who are White.

Models 2 and 3 examine the extent to which intergenerational differences in language transitions are respectively mediated by the impacts of parental schooling and familial characteristics. According to these models, the faster relative linguistic transition among the children of French than Spanish-Caribbean immigrants is robust to the respective influences associated with these two factors. Model 2 also confirms that children with parents with less schooling are significantly more likely to use non-English languages than their counterparts with more educated parents. Thus, it suggests that class is negatively associated with transitions to complete Anglicization. Controlling for all child and household-level factors in Model 4, further accentuates the disparity in the intergenerational increase in English monolingualism between children in the two groups. This suggests that the magnitude of the differences among children in both groups is constricted by factors such as the lower parental schooling levels and higher likelihood of having ethnically-endogamous parents in French-Caribbean families.

Models 3 and 4 present three other notable findings on the possible impacts of familial and community contexts. First, they show that child-level generational cohorts can have substantial influences on language transitions in immigrant families. As expected, there is a negative association between speaking only English and the number of first generation children in immigrant families. Thus, the ability of foreign-born children to retain the use of non-English languages within immigrant families appears to delay language transitions by sustaining the use of mother-tongues in child-level conversations. Secondly, for second generation siblings, the coefficients show a positive, though non-significant, association between their absolute numbers within families and language transitions. Thirdly, living with more second than first generation children does not affect language transitions. Relative differences in the size of sibling-generational cohorts, therefore, have no significant impact on language transitions. In Model 4, the results also show the expected negative impact on Anglicization associated with living in co-ethnic communities.

Absent from the preceding results is an examination of how racial disparities vary within French and Spanish-origin Caribbean families. This issue is addressed in Tables 3 and 4, in the broader context of the analysis of socio-demographic and familial determinants in each Caribbean immigrant group. Among second generation children (Table 3), the results show

significant racial differences in linguistic transitions that are conditional on language origins. The estimated coefficients in Models 1 to 4 suggest that Whites are still more likely than non-Whites to speak only English within Spanish and French-Caribbean families. These differences are, however, not statistically significant. Yet, consistent with other studies (e.g. Lutz 2006), Spanish-origin children who are ethnically identified (i.e. Hispanics) are more likely to retain their mother tongues than their Black or White counterparts. As such, this result is consistent with the notion that the use of American racial categories rather than the ethnic Hispanic category may reflect a greater level of assimilation, and thus a preference for English-language use.

Table 3 also points to disparities in the impacts of parental schooling on language transitions in French and Spanish-Caribbean immigrant families. Among French-Caribbean immigrants, for example, parental schooling appears to matter only if parents did not graduate from high school. In contrast, the children of Spanish-speaking immigrants who are high school graduates are significantly more likely to retain mother-tongue languages than their counterparts whose parents have post-secondary credentials. The impacts associated with other contextual factors also vary across both groups. For example, although earlier results (Table 2, Model 4), revealed a negative association between the percentage of co-ethnics living within PUMAs and the transition to speaking only English, Table 3 suggests that this impact is slightly stronger among children in Spanish than French-Caribbean families. Likewise, living with ethnically endogamous parents appears to have a stronger negative association with complete Anglicization in Spanish than French-speaking Caribbean families.

In terms of sibling influences, the absolute size of first or second child generational cohorts within families is less important than the linguistic attributes of the children in these cohorts. In particular, the results show that transitions to English monolingualism are enhanced by living with other monolingual English-speaking children. This impact, however, varies across sibling generation. As such, in both French and Spanish Caribbean families, an increasing number English-monolingual children has a greater estimated impact on language transitions if these children are second than first generation childrenⁱⁱⁱ. This finding also suggests that having more assimilated siblings (i.e. those who are US-born) has a greater positive impact on language transitions than less assimilated (i.e. first generation) siblings. Instructively, however, the positive impact associated with English-monolingual siblings more than offsets other key constraints to language transition found in previous studies. For example, Table 3 suggests that regardless of sibling generational status, having English-monolingual siblings offsets the negative impacts associated with living among co-ethnics or having ethnically endogamous parents. Regardless of the presence of ethnically endogamous parents, therefore, the net impact of monolingual siblings' domination of child-level conversations is likely to result in a stronger shift from the use mother tongue languages among second generation children in immigrant families.

ⁱⁱⁱSince the results in Table 3 are for second generation children, the measure of the total number of second generation English-monolingual children living within each household excludes the index child. Thus, in a hypothetical household with three children, all of whom are second generation and English-monolinguals, the total number of second generation English-monolingual children living with each child is two, not three. The same strategy is also adopted in estimating the total number of first-generation English-proficient children in Table 4.

Results from the analysis of language transitions among first generation children are presented in Table 4. In general, the findings indicate that age at arrival has no significant impact on the language transitions of children in Spanish-Caribbean families after other factors are controlled. On the contrary, the expected negative association between age at arrival and language assimilation is found among the children of French-Caribbean immigrants. Children who arrived between age 0 to 5, (i.e., 1.75 generation children), are comparatively less likely to retain the use of non-English languages than other first generation children. Model 1, therefore, confirms that complete language shifts can also occur within the first-generation and not only between immigrant generations. In French-Caribbean families, Black children are significantly more likely to retain the use of non-English languages than their non-Black counterparts. However, this finding is not statistically significant after other factors are controlled in Model 2. As with their second generation counterparts, first generation children in French and Spanish-Caribbean families with ethnically endogamous parents are also less likely than those without such parents to experience the shift to speaking only English. In addition, they are more likely to shift from using other languages to using only English as the number English monolingual sibling increases. Unlike second generation children (Table 3), however, the impact of such siblings in Table 4 is greater if these siblings are in the first than second generation.

Summary and Conclusions

Although Caribbean nationals make a significant contribution to the US foreign-born population, only a few studies have examined the dynamics of their language assimilation processes. What we know about their language patterns is based on the findings of a collection of insightful studies that describe the linguistic attributes of Caribbean immigrants in selected US States. Using national-level data, however, this study extends research on Caribbean incorporation processes by contrasting the dynamics of language transitions among the children of Caribbean immigrants from two non-English speaking backgrounds. In addition, it identifies key determinants of their language shifts, giving special attention to the mediating role of socio-demographic and household-level influences.

Children in French and Spanish-Caribbean families in the US are not unlike other immigrants in their steady move towards complete Anglicization. As such, even when differences in language backgrounds are considered, there is still a robust positive association between children's generational status and transitions to speaking only English. In terms of the speed of these transitions, the study suggests that these transitions are determined by the linguistic distance between English and the dominant languages of their countries of origin. Accordingly, the faster transition found in French than Spanish-origin families is consistent with the shorter French than Spanish linguistic distance from English. Apart from this influence, language transitions are also constrained by children's parental characteristics and household-level contexts. As these findings suggest, the size of the French-Spanish disparity in language shifts is constricted by factors such as low levels of parental schooling and a higher prevalence of ethnically endogamous marriages in French-Caribbean families.

Race and ethnicity also play important roles in mediating language transitions in Caribbean immigrant families. These roles appear to work through processes associated with the choice between an ethnic identity rather than a US racial identity. As such, even though children of Spanish-Caribbean families have similar parental language-origins, those identified as Hispanic are less likely to speak only English, presumably retaining the use of Spanish longer, than their Black or White counterparts. At the same time, among second-generation children, there is suggestive evidence that children identified as Whites have faster language transitions relative to other children.

Within Caribbean immigrant families, language transitions are driven by factors more associated with the ethnic characteristics (e.g. ethnically-endogamous parents) than the demographic characteristics of household-members (e.g. sibling size). Accordingly, no consistent relationship is found between the absolute number of second generation children and language transitions in immigrant families. Instead, this study suggests that having English-proficient siblings facilitates Anglicization processes as these sibling members become more capable than parents of moving the medium of child-level communication away from mother tongues. Thus, the facilitating influence of having English-proficient siblings more than offsets the constraint to English-language use associated with having ethnically endogamous parents. Increased exposure to the use of English use by other children is perhaps the key mechanism that accelerates language transitions among the children of immigrants. The extent to which these influences vary in household and non-household contexts is thus an important question that can be addressed in future studies.

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Table 1

Summary characteristics of children in French and Spanish Caribbean immigrant families between ages 5 and 17

	French-Caribbean		Spanish-Caribbean	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
First generation (%)	22.3		20.9	
Enrolled in School (%)	97.6	15.2	97.4	16
<i>Child Race/Ethnicity (%)</i>				
Black	96.7	17.9	6.3	0.24
White	1.9	13.6	56.8	49.5
Hispanic	0.01	3.2	34.9	47.7
Other	1.3	11.5	2.0	13.9
<i>Parental Characteristics</i>				
Education of Household heads (%)				
Below secondary	38.7	48.7	33.9	47.3
Complete secondary	22.4	41.7	21.5	41
Post-secondary	38.9	48.4	44.6	49.7
<i>Family Characteristics</i>				
Single-parent families	36.7	48.2	32.8	46.7
Ethnically-endogamous parents	54.6	49.0	37.0	48.0
1st gen. children (Mean) ^{iv}	0.61	1.15	0.44	0.84
Percent English monolingual	8.9	28.5	4.3	20.2
2nd gen. children (Mean)	1.84	1.27	1.68	1.14
Percent English monolingual	33.8	47.3	19.2	39.4
% co-ethnics in PUMA (Mean)	3.27	3.89	7.06	8.41
N	6,637		19,273	

^{iv}For first and second generation total number of children these estimates are based on children within the household who are also between ages 5 and 17.

Table 2

Logistic regression results on the determinants of speaking only English among children in Caribbean immigrant families

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<i>Parental origins</i>				
French-Caribbean				
First-generation (Reference)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Second-generation	1.81***	1.70***	1.06***	1.06***
Spanish-speaking Caribbean				
First-generation	-0.67***	-0.77***	-1.09***	-0.44*
Second-generation	1.05***	0.89***	-0.36*	0.05
<i>Child characteristics</i>				
Age	-0.02**			-0.01
Sex (Male = 1)	0.17***			0.18***
Enrolled in school	-0.28*			-0.55***
Child race/ethnicity				
Other (reference)	(0.00)			(0.00)
Black	-0.42*			-0.19
White	-0.02			-0.10
Hispanic	-1.32***			-1.13***
<i>Parental schooling</i>				
Post-secondary (reference)		(0.00)		(0.00)
High school graduate		-0.63***		-0.45***
Less than complete sec.		-1.27***		-0.87***
<i>Family characteristics</i>				
Single-parent families (yes = 1)			-1.74***	-1.24***
Endogamous parents (yes = 1)			-1.93***	-1.54***
Total 1st gen. children in household			-0.30**	-0.23*
Total 2nd gen. children in household			0.16	0.15
Ratio of 2nd to 1st gen. children			-0.10	-0.05
Percent of co-ethnics in PUMA				-0.08***
Constant	-1.74***	-1.87***	-0.24***	0.67***
Log likelihood ('000)	-11.4	-11.3	-10.6	-9.79
N	25,910	25,910	25,910	25,910

*
p<0.05,

**
p<0.01,

p<0.001

Table 3

The determinants of speaking English-only among second-generation children from various Caribbean immigrant backgrounds

	French-Caribbean		Spanish-Caribbean	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Child race/ethnicity				
Other (reference)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Black	-0.78*	0.24	-0.02	0.00
White	0.48	0.61	0.19	0.17
Hispanic	-	-	-1.19***	-0.75***
Age	-0.03**	-0.04**	-0.01*	-0.03***
Sex (Male = 1)	0.18**	0.30**	0.16***	0.26**
Enrolled in school	0.00	-0.37	-0.42**	-0.76***
Parental Schooling				
Post-secondary (reference)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
High school graduate		-0.18		-0.35***
Less than complete sec.		-0.66**		-0.52***
<i>Family characteristics</i>				
Single-parent families (yes = 1)		-0.97***		-0.71***
Endogamous parents		-1.03***		-1.20**
Total 1st gen. children		-0.57***		-0.93***
Total 2nd gen. children		-1.43*		0.11
Ratio of 2nd to 1st gen children		0.07		-1.53***
Total 1 st gen. English monolinguals		1.92***		2.78***
Total 2 nd gen English monolinguals		2.36***		3.07***
Percent of co-ethnics in PUMA		-0.05***		-0.07***
Constant	0.22	2.31***	-0.81***	1.81***
Log likelihood ('000)	-3.2	-1.6	-7.12	-3.12
N	5,156	5,156	15,239	15,239

*
p<0.05,

**
p<0.01,

p<0.001

Table 4

The determinants of speaking English-only among first-generation children from various Caribbean immigrant backgrounds

	French-Caribbean		Spanish-Caribbean	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Child race/ethnicity				
Other (reference)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Black	-1.70*	-0.32	0.03	-0.16
White	0.30	1.40	-0.50	-0.57
Hispanic	-	-	-0.66	-0.83
Age at arrival				
After age 12 (Reference)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Ages 6 to 12	0.75	0.37	-0.09	-0.05
Ages 0 to 5	1.43**	1.31*	0.18	-0.05
Age	0.04	0.05	-0.03	-0.07*
Sex (Male = 1)	0.01	0.27	0.40*	0.37
Enrolled in school	0.56	0.75	-0.33	-0.60
Parental Schooling				
Above high school(reference)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
High school grad		0.45		0.15
Less than complete sec.		0.05		0.18
<i>Family characteristics</i>				
Single-parent families (yes =1)		-1.67**		-0.73**
Endogamous parents		-2.07***		-1.19***
Total 1 st gen. children		-1.03***		-0.29
Total 2 nd gen. children		-3.82***		-0.88***
Ratio of 2nd to 1st gen children		2.24*		-1.13
Total 1 st gen. English monolinguals		2.92***		2.86***
Total 2 nd gen English monolinguals		2.77***		2.61***
Percent of co-ethnics in PUMA		0.00		-0.02
Constant	-3.07*	-1.62	2.37**	0.31
Log likelihood ('000)	-0.37	-0.22	-0.64	-0.45
N	1,481	1,481	4,034	4,034

*
p<0.05,

**
p<0.01,

p<0.001