The Impact of Adolescent Neighborhood and School Context on Asian and Latino Young Adults' Native Language Use with Family

Introduction

While opponents of immigration often claim that the new immigrants are failing to learn English and thus to assimilate, a growing body of research suggests otherwise. In fact, Anglicization, or loss of mother tongue, is occurring at a rapid rate across all groups of new immigrants (Alba et al. 2002; Lopez 1999; Portes and Hao 1998; Veltman 1983) and continues to follow the three generation pattern observed among earlier waves of European immigrants (Fishman 1965). However, there is evidence that this shift is occurring more rapidly for Asian immigrants than for Latinos (Alba et al. 2002; Lopez 1999), due in part to the greater size and concentration of Latinos in the U.S. and the different immigrant experiences of each group.

Lack of English proficiency may have negative implications for success in U.S. institutions (e.g., schools, the economic sector), yet biliteracy is a potential asset at both the individual and societal level (Kennedy and Park 1994; Sassen 1991; Zhou and Bankston 1994); thus, rapid shifts to English at the expense of the mother tongue has become a phenomenon of concern (Portes and Hao 1998). Young adulthood often affords individuals more choices about language use, and identity struggles within ecological contexts such as neighborhoods and schools during adolescence may play an important role in decisions regarding native language usage in young adulthood, a role that may vary across ethnic groups.

Research examining patterns of language shift among immigrants has long focused on the demographic characteristics of ecological contexts, particularly the size and concentration of linguistic minority groups within neighborhoods (Alba et al. 2002; Lieberson and Curry 1971; Lutz 2006; Stevens 1992) among adult immigrants. Yet while adolescence and the transition to

adulthood have been identified as critical developmental stages in the process of language shift (Phinney 1990), little work has focused on the role that school composition plays in adolescents' language use and maintenance. Acknowledging the parallel roles of neighborhood and school contexts in adolescents' transition to young adulthood and the differences in immigrant experiences, this study investigates the impact of both neighborhood and school composition on Latino and Asian young adults' native language use with family.

Data and Methods

This study uses data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) to examine how individual, neighborhood, and school factors impact the use of the native language with family members among Asians and Latinos as they transition into adulthood. Add Health is a nationally representative, school-based study of 7th to 12th grade students who were first interviewed during the 1994-1995 school year and were subsequently followed up once in 1995-1996 and then five years later in 2001, when the majority of respondents had graduated from high school (Harris et al. 2003). Add Health provides information on background characteristics, including ethnicity, generational status and language use in the home, as well as contextual data at the census block, tract, and county level. In addition, Add Health, because of its large within school samples, allows analysts to measure a variety of school compositional measures, including the proportion of co-ethnics and proportion of immigrants. We use multi-level modeling techniques in HLM6 to disentangle the effects of individual, neighborhood, and school characteristics on the native language use of Asians and Latinos as they transition to adulthood.

Results

Bivariate results show low rates of intergenerational language maintenance among Asians and Latino young adults, confirming findings from prior research. In Figure 1 we see the percentage of young adults who report speaking a non-English language with family or close relatives, by ethnicity and generational status. As expected, native language maintenance is higher among Latinos, especially Mexicans, than all groups of Asians, but only within the first and second generations. In addition, there is variation among the Asian groups within the first and second generation, with Chinese immigrants much more likely than other Asian immigrants to speak their native language with family. By the third plus generation, the rate of native language use is low for all groups, Asian and Latino, although we see the highest rates for the Chinese and Mexican groups. By the third plus generation only 15% of Chinese and 9% of Mexican young adults speak their native language with family, with rates for non-Mexican Latinos and non-Chinese Asian group much lower. However, caution should be used when interpreting these differences among the third plus generation because of our inability to distinguish between third and higher generations. Taken together, these findings show a significant generational decline in native language use for both Asians and Latinos.

Multivariate Multi-Level Models

We use multi-level modeling techniques to examine the impact of neighborhood and school co-ethnic and immigrant composition on native language use in young adulthood. In addition, we test for possible interactions between ethnicity and neighborhood and school composition as well as a cross-level interaction between neighborhood composition and school composition. The first model in Table 1 shows results from a two-level logistic regression model predicting native language use in adulthood, with four dichotomous variables representing ethnicity as predictors with Mexican as the reference group. We see that, before controlling for

other factors, Filipinos are less likely than Mexicans, Chinese are more likely than Mexicans, and non-Mexican Latinos are less likely than Mexicans to speak a language other than English with family in young adulthood. However, after adding generational status, one of the primary predictors of language use, in Model 2, we see the positive effect of Chinese disappears and the negative effect of non-Chinese, non-Filipino Asian goes away, suggesting that Mexican young adults are more likely than other Asian and Latino ethnic groups to speak their native language with family in young adulthood. The effect for non-Mexican Latinos goes away after controlling for English language use and proficiency in young adulthood. In Model 4 we add additional background characteristics as well as the logit of the proportion of co-ethnics in the respondent's neighborhood. This variable is not statistically significant (it's marginal), suggesting little impact of co-ethnic neighborhood concentration in adolescence on language use in young adulthood. Given descriptives showing variation in this relationship by ethnic group, we add interaction terms in Model 5 to test whether or not the relationship between co-ethnic neighborhood concentration in adolescence and language use in young adulthood varies by ethnic group. While the main effect is still only marginally significant, we see that the relationship between co-ethnic neighborhood concentration in adolescence and native language use in young adulthood is stronger for Chinese and weaker for Filipinos.

To determine whether or not the immigrant neighborhood concentration in adolescence impacts native language use in young adulthood, we add our immigrant neighborhood concentration composite variable in Model 6, and we see that it is not significantly related to native language use in young adulthood. Additional analyses not shown here found no interactions between ethnicity and immigrant neighborhood concentration. To examine the impact of school composition, above and beyond neighborhood composition, Model 8 includes

variables representing percent Latino in the school, percent Asian in the school, and a composite variable representing immigrant concentration within the school. While neither ethnic composition variables (percent Latino or percent Asian) is significant nor are interactions between ethnic composition and ethnicity (not shown here) significant, the composite variable representing immigrant school is positive and statistically significant. Finally, in Model 8, we add a cross-level interaction between immigrant concentration in the respondent's adolescent neighborhood and immigrant concentration in the respondent's adolescent school and find a statistically significant, negative effect. Thus, it appears that the effect of the concentration of immigrants within a respondent's school is weaker when the respondent is already embedded within a high immigrant context, in this case, their neighborhood.

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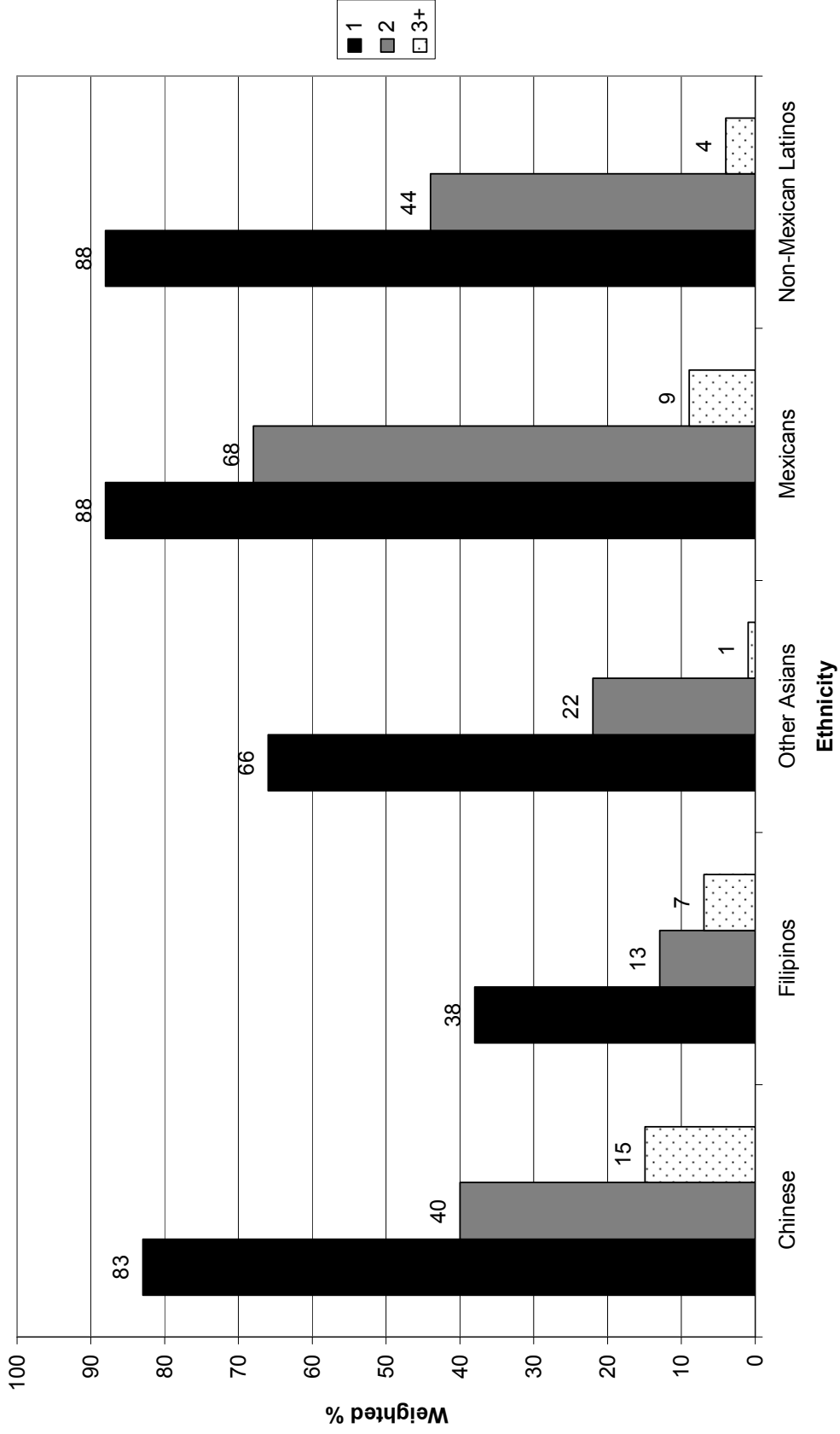**Weighted % of Young Adults Using Native Language w/ Family, by Ethnicity and Generational Status**

Table 1. Two-Level HLM Predicting Native Language Use with Family in Young Adulthood

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6		Model 7		Model 8	
	Coef.	s.e.	Coef.	s.e.	Coef.	s.e.	Coef.	s.e.	Coef.	s.e.	Coef.	s.e.	Coef.	s.e.	Coef.	s.e.
Filipino	-0.69	0.24 **	-2.62	0.24 ***	-1.85	0.23 ***	-1.58	0.25 ***	-1.66	0.30 ***	-1.64	0.29 ***	-2.13	0.46 ***	-1.70	0.30 ***
Chinese	0.65	0.31 *	-0.58	0.44	-0.25	0.41	-0.14	0.38	-0.24	0.40	-0.11	0.41	1.26	0.62 *	-0.27	0.41
Other Asian	-0.22	0.32	-1.61	0.28 ***	-1.24	0.29 ***	-1.11	0.30 ***	-1.22	0.34 **	-1.10	0.33 ***	-1.72	0.51 ***	-1.33	0.37 ***
Non-Mexican Latino	-0.82	0.21 ***	-0.84	0.30 **	-0.53	0.37	-0.40	0.33	-0.48	0.35	-0.45	0.34	-0.44	0.44	-0.58	0.36
First Generation			5.08	0.41 ***	3.49	0.32 ***	3.41	0.31 ***	3.48	0.31 ***	3.47	0.31 ***	3.48	0.31 ***	3.34	0.29 ***
1.5			3.86	0.37 ***	2.68	0.31 ***	2.51	0.33 ***	2.69	0.32 ***	2.65	0.32 ***	2.65	0.32 ***	2.65	0.32 ***
Second Generation			3.55	0.39 ***	2.64	0.29 ***	2.56	0.31 ***	2.66	0.31 ***	2.62	0.32 ***	2.63	0.33 ***	2.58	0.31 ***
2.5			1.94	0.29 ***	1.66	0.27 ***	1.53	0.25 ***	1.56	0.21 ***	1.56	0.21 ***	1.59	0.22 ***	1.54	0.21 ***
Noneng					1.87	0.19 ***	1.84	0.20 ***	1.90	0.20 ***	1.87	0.21 ***	1.86	0.23 ***	1.89	0.21 ***
PVT Wave I					-0.02	0.01 **	-0.02	0.01 *	-0.02	0.01 *	-0.02	0.01 **	-0.02	0.01 **	-0.02	0.01 **
Female							0.04	0.14	-0.04	0.15	-0.06	0.15	-0.06	0.15	-0.04	0.15
Parents' Education							-0.08	0.06	-0.08	0.06	-0.07	0.06	-0.07	0.06	-0.08	0.06
Intact									0.25	0.26	0.25	0.26	0.25	0.26	0.27	0.27
Moved									2.08	0.57 ***	2.09	0.57 ***	2.09	0.58 ***	2.19	0.61
Live w/ Family									-0.32	0.19	-0.33	0.20	-0.32	0.20	-0.36	0.20
College									0.03	0.25	0.06	0.25	0.05	0.26	0.06	0.26
South									-0.27	0.41	-0.36	0.40	-0.46	0.41	-0.38	0.41
West									-0.43	0.39	-0.56	0.39	-0.60	0.42	-0.89	0.39 *
Co-Ethnic in Nhood											0.11	0.06 ~	0.16	0.09 ~	-0.08	0.07
x Non-Mexican													0.00	0.12		
x Chinese													0.41	0.17 *		
x Filipino													-0.41	0.18 *		
x Other Asian													-0.24	0.18		
School Parent Ed															0.00	0.22
Public															0.41	0.58
Urban															-0.28	0.31
Imgt school															0.55	0.17 **
Logit Latino															-0.02	0.22
Logit Asian															0.12	0.10
Immigrant Nhood															0.47	0.21 *
x Imgt school															-0.14	0.06 *
Intercept	-1.07	0.18 ***	-0.84	0.17 ***	-0.80	0.17 ***	-0.80	0.17 ***	-0.84	0.15 ***	-0.66	0.16 ***	-0.67	0.17 ***	-1.03	0.193 ***