

Language Acquisition of the Children of Immigrants and the Role of Non-Profit Organizations

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I. Introduction

Immigration continues to be an important topic in the United States. One of the main concerns is the impact immigrants have on the job market. Those who oppose immigration argue that immigrants take jobs away from U.S. citizens. Whereas the counter argument is that U.S. citizens are unwilling to take the jobs held by immigrants, both because the jobs are low-skill and also low paying. Why do immigrants tend to hold low-skill and low paying jobs? The answer is not necessarily because they have few skills to offer in the job market. Instead, the issue can be traced back, in part, to language acquisition and integration into the host society. If one does not have an adequate level of English, this limits one's opportunities of finding a better paying job that requires more skill. Godin (2008) argues that if new immigrants experience unequal access to the labor market, then we can assume the labor market is ruled by discrimination, which implies the host country resists immigration. The inequalities in the labor market reveal the prejudice the host society holds for immigrants. One way to overcome the discrimination and resistance to immigration may be to solve the problems in the labor market. If the issues of language acquisition and integration are addressed, then discrimination may be reduced and consequently resistance to immigration may also be lessened.

Language skills affect the degree of immigrant integration. As mentioned above, better language skills can contribute to more successful integration into the job market. Language skills affect immigrants' integration into their communities. If they settle in an English-speaking neighborhood, but cannot speak English, then how can they become a part of that community? If they settle in an enclave, surrounded by fellow immigrants, then how can they become a part of the host society? The better an immigrant is able to use English, the better he/she can integrate into the host society. However, their community also influences acquisition of the host language.

Research has shown that if immigrants who speak a common language other than English are clustered together in an area, it suppresses the need to use English, which adversely affects their English-speaking ability (Hwang & Xi, 2008). The enclave environment gives no incentive to learn English because, by definition, the enclave requires no English when the immigrants can speak their native language.

Immigrants' integration into the community and language proficiency also benefit their children. Parents need language skills to communicate with their children's teachers, especially to ensure their children succeed in school. Limited language proficiency and immigration status can limit parents' engagement in schools (Olivos & Mendoza, 2010). At the same time, schools are a central avenue for children to integrate into U.S. society (Olivos & Mendoza, 2010). If immigrant children succeed in school and acquire English language proficiency, more jobs will be open to them. Education and English are both human capital, which can lead to higher productivity in the market, accompanied by higher income. Assuming parents want their children to have better opportunities than they themselves have, parents have the incentive to invest in language acquisition because communication with the schools will aid the success of their children.

In addition to aiding immigrant integration, language skills are a form of human capital that is increasingly important as globalization spreads. Heller (2003), in an article about the commodification of language and identity, discusses how the globalization process creates economic opportunities where bilingual linguistic resources have value. Globalization implies cooperation between nations on the international market. Heller (2003) argues that understanding language is becoming a marketable commodity, not just an identity marker. Language as human capital applies to all people, not only immigrants. However, immigrants could have a

competitive advantage if they acquire English language skills. They already have their native language, and acquiring the second language increases their human capital. They also have the advantage of learning their second language through immersion, i.e. in the United States.

This paper will focus on how immigrant children acquire language. As their language skills improve, they will do better in school, which creates more opportunities in their future. According to the logic of the human capital theory, they can have a competitive advantage by being bilingual. However, bilingualism is a benefit they gain from being children of immigrants only if they receive the proper attention and resources to facilitate and foster the development of the second language, which in this case is English. Most of the literature reviewed on this topic develops models of language acquisition for adults. This paper will adapt those models to apply them to children, in order to examine how effectively immigrant children acquire English.

II. Problem Statement

This paper will examine the role language acquisition plays in determining how successfully immigrants integrate into the society of the United States. I assume that immigrants migrate to pursue a better life, whether that means becoming economically better off, living in a safer society, pursuing better opportunity for their children, or any combination of these. To achieve these goals, immigrants presumably need to integrate into the host society to some degree. Specifically, children need to succeed in school to reap the benefits of immigration, such as the better opportunities that accompany higher education. In order to succeed in school, the children need to acquire English language skills.

I will present a model of how the children of immigrants acquire the host language (English) and then discuss whether or not this occurs effectively in public schools. If schools are

not providing the resources for fluency of the language, then this failure can be fixed by non-profit organizations that target immigrant groups and assist the learning of English. The organizations typically focus on adults who are entering the labor market, but in this case they can aid children who are struggling in school. Also, if children are not receiving enough support from their schools, this brings up the issue of the education system's and/or community's failure to support immigrants in schools or the issue of under-supported non-profits. For children to gain the benefits of immigration, non-profit organizations may provide resources to help assist the acquisition of English to immigrants' children.

The next section (III) of this paper will review the relevant literature. The following section (IV) will first develop a model for why people choose to immigrate, taking into account the costs and benefits of migration. Then I will adapt a model of language acquisition built for adults, and apply it to children of immigrants. The fifth section (V) gives current data on how well children are performing in schools, specifically with standard reading test scores. The next section (VI) discusses the implications of the data in order to address the issue of whether schools in the United States fall short of providing the efficient level of language according to the model. I will then discuss how non-profit organizations supplement the language education lacking in schools for immigrant children. The final section (VII) will present the conclusions of this study.

III. Review of Literature

The factors that contribute to the decision to migrate affect how integration can be assessed. For instance, if parents choose to migrate in order to provide better opportunities for their child, then language acquisition and integration are necessary for that goal to be achieved.

One important factor that contributes to the decision to migrate, as presented with the previous example, is the family unit. Immigrants usually move together as a family or they move with family members in mind, whether they are in the origin country or the host country (Chiswick, Lee, & Miller, 2005a). For this reason, examining the role of the family will give insight into how the decision to migrate is made and how the family members affect language acquisition.

Chiswick, Lee, and Miller (2005a) examine how language acquisition is determined not only by an individual's characteristics, but also by the spouse and children's characteristics. Their central assertion is that the family context is important to understanding immigrants' proficiency of the dominant language (Chiswick, et al. 2005a). Specifically, they find that the English speaking skills of spouses are highly correlated among immigrants in Australia and suggest that spouses learn from each other. In this study, Chiswick, et al. (2005a) conclude that children have no effect on the Principal Applicants,¹ which are primarily males, while children negatively affect Migrating Unit Spouses, which are primarily females.

In another study, Chiswick, Lee, and Miller (2005b) delve further into how children affect the others family members' levels of language proficiency. Their paper discusses "the determination of destination language proficiency among members of immigrant families – fathers, mothers, and children" (p. 262). This study takes into account both the husband-wife relationship, as well as the parent-child relationship. Years of education of both the individual and the spouse have a positive effect on English language proficiency. There is a difference between the influence of the father's educational attainment and the mother's educational attainment on the language proficiency of the eldest child. The model finds that, "in this sample,

¹ The Principal Applicant (PA) refers to the "immigrant upon whom the approval to immigrate was based," and "the spouses who were part of the application to migrate made by the these PAs [are] referred to in this study as Migrating Unit Spouses" (Chiswick, et al., 2005a, p. 632).

the wife's human capital is of greater importance than that of the husband in the production of language capital among children" (Chiswick, et al. 2005b, p. 255). They suggest two different effects the children might have on their parents. First, because the children act as translators, they may reduce the language proficiency level of their parents. Second, because the children gain language skills in school, they may increase the language proficiency of their parents by acting as role models (Chiswick, et al. 2005b). In either case, the family dynamics affect the language proficiency levels of its members.

The ability to speak English enables the immigrants to participate in society productively, whereas those without language skills cause some U.S. citizens to oppose immigration (Espenshade & Fu, 1997). Immigrants without sufficient English skill will have greater difficulty adjusting to life in the United States. Language barriers contribute not only to economic problems that immigrants experience such as lower earnings, but also to social² and health³ problems (Espenshade & Fu, 1997). On the other hand, immigrants with sufficient English ability can participate in the labor force, which both contributes to the country's GDP and supports their families.

Much of the research on language proficiency among immigrants builds from the human capital theory. Language skills are human capital because they require time and out-of-pocket expenses (i.e. resources) to acquire, they are productive, and they are embodied in the person (Chiswick, 2008). The human capital theory explains why immigrants would invest in acquiring language skills. With higher skills, the immigrant can reap greater benefits in the host society. This is usually embodied in a better job and higher wages. This theory works well for adults who

² Research has shown that immigrants' poor English skills have limited children's learning (see Tienda and Niedert, 1984).

³ For example, public health systems are less effective when the health care provider and the client cannot communicate (see Quesada, 1997).

are entering the labor market immediately, but it is less applicable to children. Shortly after migration, children are not thinking in terms of entering the labor market, but rather settling into their new situation. By going to school, they are not consciously deciding to “invest” in their language skill. On the other hand, attending school will likely aid their language development and build their human capital.

Baker and Benjamin (1997) provide insight to how the family unit invests in human capital upon arrival in the destination country. What they call the “family investment strategy” explains labor-market decisions of the family (Baker & Benjamin, 1997, p. 705). Essentially, the authors argue that upon arrival, the female (wife/mother) will take a job that will finance the family’s consumption while the male (husband/father) invests in human capital. This results in the female’s job having relatively higher wages initially, but little opportunity to earn higher wages, while the husband’s job may begin with relatively lower wages, but eventually his wages will have higher returns (Baker & Benjamin, 1997).

Chiswick (2008) supports the notion that human capital will generate benefits such as higher earnings, along with greater community and political involvement. The family investment model (Baker & Benjamin, 1997) relates to the previous discussion by Chiswick, et al. (2005a, 2005b) about the family members’ effects on each others’ language proficiency. Together these ideas imply that if the male invests in human capital and acquires language skills, his spouse and family will all benefit both because of his increased earnings and because of the effect on their language proficiencies. Hwang and Xi (2008) contribute to the discussion by showing that language proficiency can improve with higher educational attainment and more years lived in the host country. They also argue that school-age children present in the household can affect the language fluency of the adults (Hwang & Xi, 2008). The literature, as a whole, assert that the

level of education and duration of stay directly affect the proficiency level of the immigrant. Both of these factors are found in the human capital theory, because education may be costly and longer durations of stay allow more time to invest in acquiring human capital.

Heller (2003) asserts that, as our world becomes increasingly globalized, understanding language is becoming a marketable commodity. In other words, she supports the notion that language proficiency is a form of human capital that can be bought and sold in the labor market. Zhao (2008) provides further evidence of the importance of language skills today. Globalization requires people to interact with others from different cultures who speak different languages. Because of this, it is essential to have knowledge and understanding of other cultures and foreign language proficiency (Zhao, 2008). In this area, immigrants, and especially their children, have a potential advantage. They have their own native culture and language and, assuming integration occurs, they gain extensive knowledge of the host society and proficiency in the host language. With this increased human capital, these immigrants and their children can seek greater economic/occupation opportunities.

Marie McAndrew (2009) compares and contrasts the methods for teaching immigrant children in schools used in five major societies that receive immigrants: Britain, the United States, two Canadian provinces, and Belgium. There are four basic models for teaching the host language: Immersion, team-teaching, closed classes, and bilingual education. The author is unable to find which model is best, but she concludes, "Flexibility and diversity of formula seem a much better option than the one-size-fits-all model" when deciding policy for instruction (McAndrew, 2009, p. 1547). She also argues that, in order to have success with any given model, the whole school collectively is responsible for the linguistic integration of immigrant children,

and this fact needs to be recognized by all (McAndrew, 2009). This implies that the special services, whatever they may be, need to be closely linked with the regular classrooms.

The first and second models are immersion and team-teaching. The first model, and most popular, is immersion, where the immigrant student is placed in a regular classroom with a few hours each week of linguistic support outside the classroom (McAndrew, 2009). This model tends to be the favorite especially when the children are young. The second model is team-teaching, where a regular classroom has both the regular teacher and an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher working together.

The third model involves “closed” classes. In this case, the immigrant student is integrated into classes such as art and physical education, but take the more demanding subjects in a classroom where the heritage language is used to instruct (McAndrew, 2009). This method is implemented on a short-term basis, but can last up to a year. The “closed” classes enable the student to learn the material while they also study the host language, rather than sinking in a classroom that uses only the host language to instruct complex subjects. McAndrew (2009) discusses this model in the context of Ontario, Canada, where it is sometimes offered at the high school level.

The fourth model, transitory bilingual education, was used in the United States from the late 1960s until the late 1990s (McAndrew, 2009). Immigrant children initially have their classes taught in their heritage language, while the use of English gradually increases until it is the sole language used in the classroom (McAndrew, 2009). With this model, the heritage language is still taught as a subject, to continue the immigrants’ education of their native language.

There are arguments both for and against bilingual education in the United States. Bilingual programs are “more efficient than, or at least as efficient as, other approaches to

learning English” (McAndrew, 2009, p. 1542). Yet, bilingual education has received opposition since the late 1990s because of its costliness and perceived inefficiencies. Consequently, many states limited or outlawed the heritage language’s role (McAndrew, 2009). Lastly, McAndrew asserts that, *ceteris paribus*, immigrants benefit from the presence of the heritage language while learning the host language.

If bilingual education actually is more costly, then the rational choice would be to offer less of it in schools. With higher costs, the net benefit of language acquisition is reduced. On the other hand, if it is an efficient method of language instruction, then the schools are definitely not supplying enough support for the children. This implies there is a gap to be filled to help children acquire language more efficiently. Non-profit organizations can fill this role, as I will discuss in section VI.

Valdés (1998) follows two immigrant children through their experiences at school over a two-year period. The girls were ages 12 and 13 when they migrated and when the study began. They attended a school that uses an immersion-type approach. This means English language teaching specialists (ESL teachers) teach classrooms of immigrant children, yet the students encounter very little English spoken by native speaking peers (Valdés, 1998). One student learns very little English over the course of her time in school, while the other learns only because of her dedication to learning the language. Valdés (1998) attributes the general lack of success in the ESL classrooms to the lack of reading instruction, the separation of ESL students from native English speakers, and the lack of English practice.

IV. Economic Theory

I made the assumption that one reason people might choose to migrate involves the future opportunities for their children.⁴ In this section I will develop a model for the decision of an individual to migrate. I assume that the decision under consideration is either to migrate as a family unit or not to migrate at all. The model includes the benefits and costs associated with migration. It will be for an individual with a family, where the individual's utility is dependent on the net benefits of migration and on the utility generated by his or her children. The children generate utility by succeeding in the new society. Success is measured by their ability to adapt and integrate, achievement in school, and the benefits of migration. These factors of success are dependant on language acquisition.

The reasons to migrate are the potential benefits that could be gained from migrating. These include social and economic factors that can be divided into two categories: Non-monetary and monetary. Non-monetary incentives to migrate would consist of the following: (1) a safer environment, away from war and/or violence, (2) political freedom and (3) religious freedom, both of which might mean escaping persecution, (4) to be near family who have already migrated, and (5) better educational opportunity, both for the individual and for his or her children. The monetary incentives for the individual to migrate are: (1) to pursue a better job and/or better wages, and (2) better living conditions via a more developed country and economy. These factors all benefit the individual, but the family members (i.e. children) will all receive these same benefits as well. For example, if the individual gains political freedom by migrating, his or her children will also gain political freedom in the new country.

⁴ Other reasons may be to reunite with other family members or to improve one's own living conditions.

These potential benefits can be expressed in the following equation, where D is the destination country in question. I use the present value (PV) of the benefits (B), because many of the benefits, such as better educational opportunity and higher income, will accrue into the future.

$$PV(B) = f(\text{Safety}_D, \text{Political Freedom}_D, \text{Religious Freedom}_D, \text{Relatives}_D, \text{Educational Opportunity}_D, \text{Income}_D, \text{Development}_D)$$

There are also costs that need to be evaluated when deciding whether or not to migrate. Non-monetary costs include: (1) leaving friends and family behind, (2) leaving social networks and the stock of acquired social capital, (3) facing difficulty in settling in the new country, potentially because of minority status, and (4) building new social capital and establishing social networks. Monetary costs consist of: (1) the foregone earnings of leaving current jobs in the native country, (2) costs of transportation from the native country to the new country, (3) costs of settling, such as acquiring new housing, everyday necessities, etc., (4) costs of finding a new job, or finding the funding to support the family while looking for a new job, and (5) investing in the acquisition of the host language.

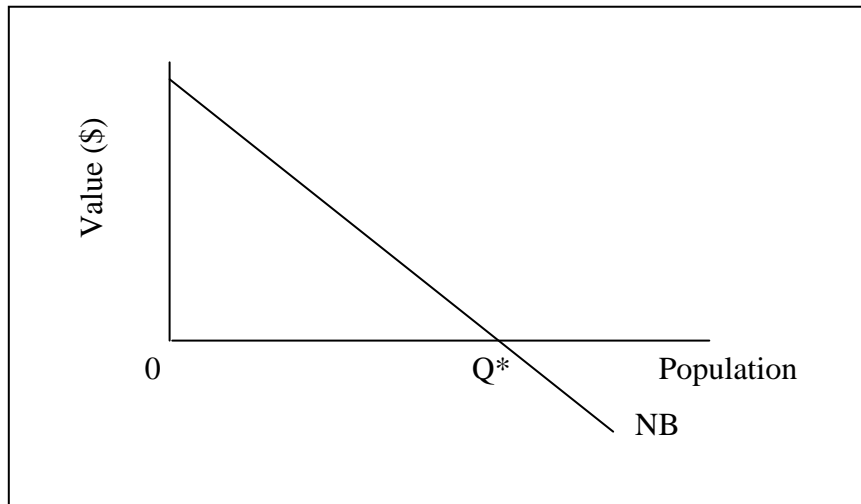
These costs for the individual can be expressed in the following equation, where D again represents the destination country in question and O represents the country of origin. Both for consistency and due to the reasons above, I use the present value (PV) of the costs (C) of migration.

$$PV(C) = g(\text{Relatives}_O, \text{Social Capital}_O, \text{Status}_D, \text{Social Capital}_D, \text{Income}_O, \text{Transportation}_D, \text{Settling}_D, \text{Job Search}_D, \text{Language Acquisition}_D)$$

One will only choose to migrate as long as the benefits of doing so outweigh the costs. Figure 1 shows the net benefits (NB) of migration, where $PV(NB) = [PV(B) - PV(C)]$. All those

whose net benefit is greater than or equal to zero will choose to migrate. In Figure 1, the population from 0 to Q^* will choose to migrate.

Figure 1: Net Benefits to Migration



The second factor that contributes to the decision to migrate is the utility the individual receives from his or her children's successful integration into the new society. As discussed in the literature, integration into the community and success in school depends on language acquisition. Higher incomes depend on finding better jobs than were available in the native country. I have already established that immigrants will have more success in the labor market in the United States if they have a proficient level of English. In order for the children of the immigrants to receive the benefits of migration (i.e. better educational opportunity), the children need to be proficient in English. Therefore, a child's success ($SUCCESS^C$) is a function of language acquisition:

$$SUCCESS^C = h(\text{Language Acquisition})$$

The children's success generates utility for the parent (individual) deciding to migrate. The individual's utility function is represented below:

$$U_I = U(\text{SUCCESS}^C)$$

In summary, the individual decides to migrate when net benefits of migration are positive, and there is utility generated by the children. My next model applies directly to the children of immigrants.

I develop a model for children's language acquisition by adapting models of language acquisition that were developed for adults. Chiswick, Miller, and Lee (2005a) establish a basic model for fluency of the dominant (destination) language (LANG):

$$\text{LANG} = f(\text{economic incentives, exposure, efficiency})$$

This equation includes the economic incentives to acquire the destination language (such as wages), exposure to the destination language, and efficiency in acquisition, which refers to "the extent of improvement in destination-language skills per unit of exposure" (Chiswick & Miller, 2001, p. 393). I will also use this base to build my model. There are many versions of this model that use these three broad categories to find variables for empirical research and analysis (Chiswick & Miller, 2001; Chiswick, et al., 2005a; Chiswick, et al., 2005b). My model will use elements of these variations as well as new variables to make it applicable to children's acquisition of language (LANG_C).

Research done by Chiswick and Miller (2001), Chiswick, et al. (2005b), and McAndrew (2009) identify the most important factors that affect language acquisition. My model uses those factors and applies them to children. The following variables affect the level to which children gain fluency of the host language (English): (1) age at migration, (2) mother's level of fluency in English, (3) father's level of fluency in English, (4) mother's success integrating into society, (5) father's success integrating into society, (6) type of classroom experience, and (7) flexibility of policies that are implemented.

$$\text{LANG}_C = f(\text{Age at Migration, Mother's Fluency, Father's Fluency, Mother's Success, Father's Success, Classroom Setting, Policy})$$

I am not using this model for empirical research at this point. Instead my model is a theoretical model that would require further research later, but not in this thesis project.

I assume that the younger the child is at migration, the more easily the child will learn English. The levels of the parents' fluencies can have either a positive or negative effect on the children's language. If the parents have low fluency, the child may have better English because the child acts as a translator. Or if the parents have low fluency, the child may not have as much fluency because the native language is primarily used in the home.

The mother and father's success variables measure the degree to which the parents have integrated into society. This would be in terms of whether or not they found jobs, whether or not the job's wages are better than in the country of origin, and whether or not the parents are building new social capital.

The classroom setting factor represents the different models of language instruction used. The methods include immersion, team teaching, closed classrooms, and bilingual classrooms. The classroom variables are based upon the studies done by McAndrew (2009) and by Valdés (1998). As I discuss in the literature review, these authors assert that the type of classroom setting affects the child's language acquisition. McAndrew (2009) analyzes different methods of integrating the children of immigrants into the education system. Valdés (1998) identifies the challenges the two girls she studied encountered as a result of being in an ESL classroom.⁵ The importance of the classroom setting also relates to the next and last variable.

⁵ These challenges included being separated for the majority of the day from peers who are native English-speakers. Other challenges related to having a teacher use English only while there are students who have "zero" English (Valdés, 1998, p. 8).

The policy variable will reflect the flexibility of placing students in classrooms. McAndrew (2009) discusses the importance of the flexibility and diversity of models. Age, socioeconomic condition, and prior schooling are the most important factors that should play a role in determining the type of classroom in which the child is placed (McAndrew, 2009). Valdés (1998) reports there is a “normal path” that the students follow at the school in which she did her case study (p. 8). The notion of the “normal path” means that regardless of how much a student improves, there is not much hope of getting off the path and out of the ESL program. If there is more flexibility in the placement policy, the child will have his or her needs better met. Taking the previously mentioned factors into account will help ensure the child is placed in the most appropriate environment to learn.

V. Current Reading Proficiency Levels of Children in Public Schools

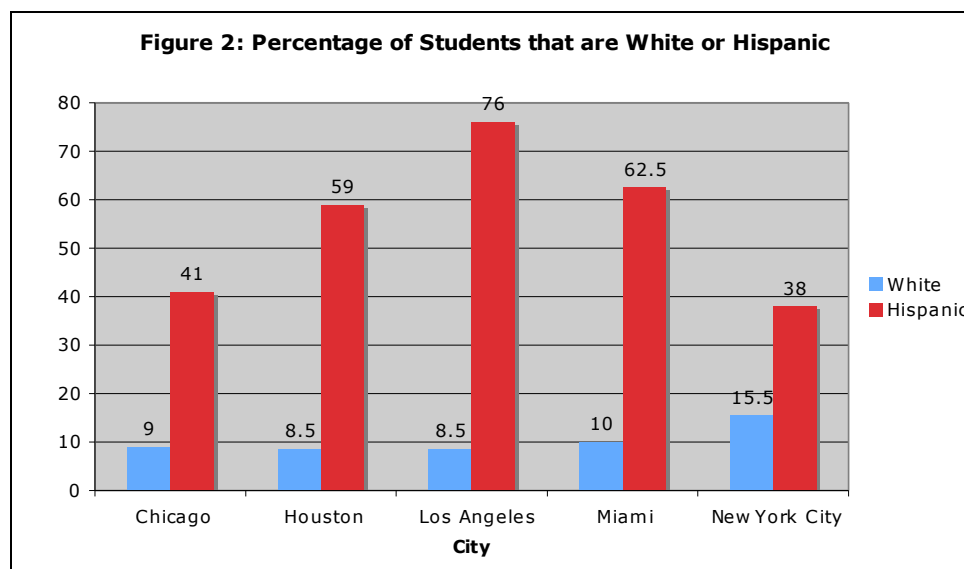
I now present scores of reading tests from 2009. The data are from The Nation’s Report Card website. The National Assessment of Educational Process (NAEP) conducts the reading tests (“Reading,” 2010). I examined the reading scores as a proxy for language ability. Below I compare white students’ scores and Hispanic students’ scores in five of the cities with the largest foreign-born population. Singer (2009) identifies these cities: 1) New York City, NY; 2) Los Angeles, CA; 3) Miami, FL; 4) Chicago, IL; 5) San Francisco, CA; 6) Houston, TX. I use the cities ranked 1 through 4, and 6. The data were not available for the fifth city on the list, San Francisco, CA.

There are data that separate scores by race/ethnicity, creating three and sometimes four categories: White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian/Pacific Islander. I use the scores for white students because I assume that there are not many recent immigrants in this category, in these

cities. Similarly, I use the scores for Hispanic students because, considering current immigration trends in the United States, there are likely more recent immigrants.

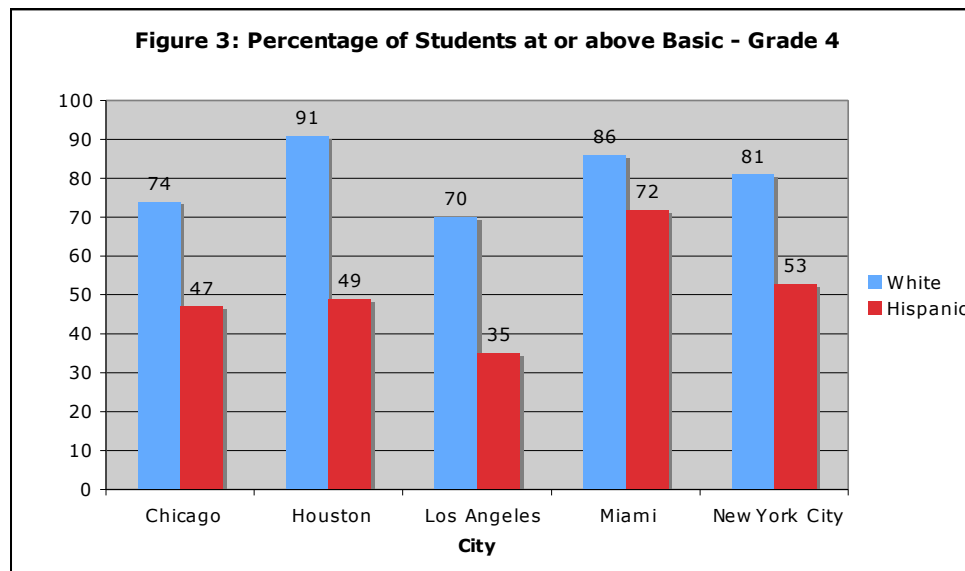
Below are the data for students in 4th and 8th grades. I chose not to use data for students in 12th grade because there are three reasons why the data may be skewed. The first is that the older students may include immigrants who have been in the country longer, and consequently will have higher levels of English proficiency and higher reading scores. On the other hand, the older group may include recent immigrants and there is evidence that the older the child is at migration, the more difficulty he or she will have learning the language. This causes the reading scores to be much lower for 12th graders. The third reason is that immigrants who may have been in the country for a number of years, but have not gained language proficiency may have dropped out of school. Those students leaving the schools would artificially raise the reading scores. The combination of these effects makes the 12th grade data less useful for this study.

Figure 2 shows the percentage that each race/ethnicity comprises of the whole population of students in the city. In both grades and in all cities, 15.5% or less of the students in the city are white, while Hispanic students make up from 38% to 76% of the total students.

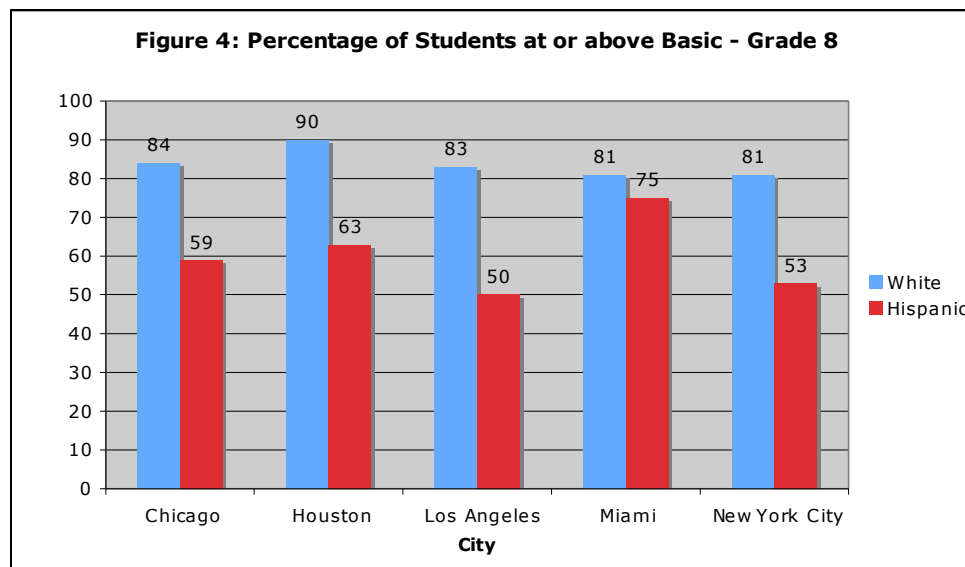


Source: Data from The Nation's Report Card <nationsreportcard.gov/reading_2009>

Figures 3 and 4 show the percentages of white students and Hispanic students at or above the basic level of reading. There are four levels of placement. They are below basic, at or above basic, at or above proficient, and at advanced. Figure 3 shows the data for 4th grade students and Figure 4 shows the data for 8th grade students.



Source: Data from The Nation's Report Card <nationsreportcard.gov/reading_2009>

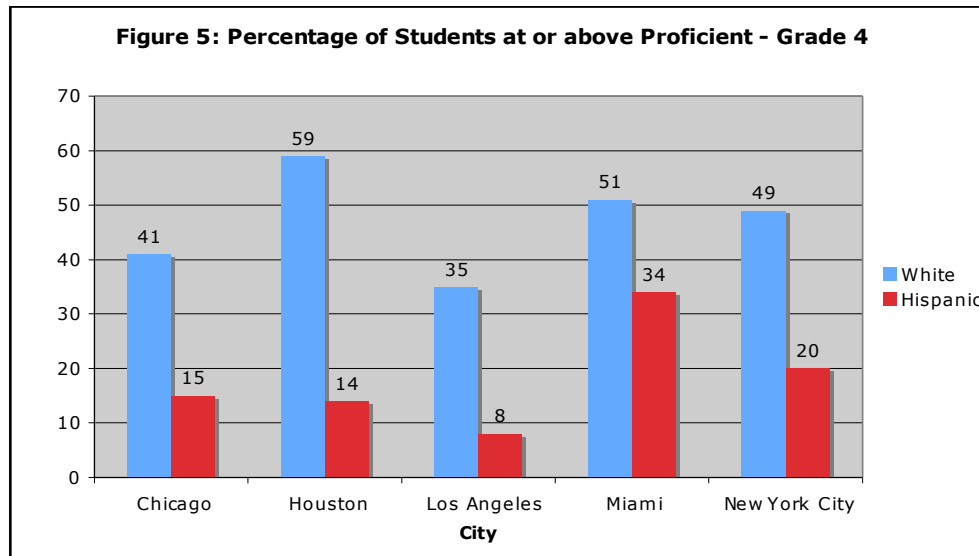


Source: Data from The Nation's Report Card <nationsreportcard.gov/reading_2009>

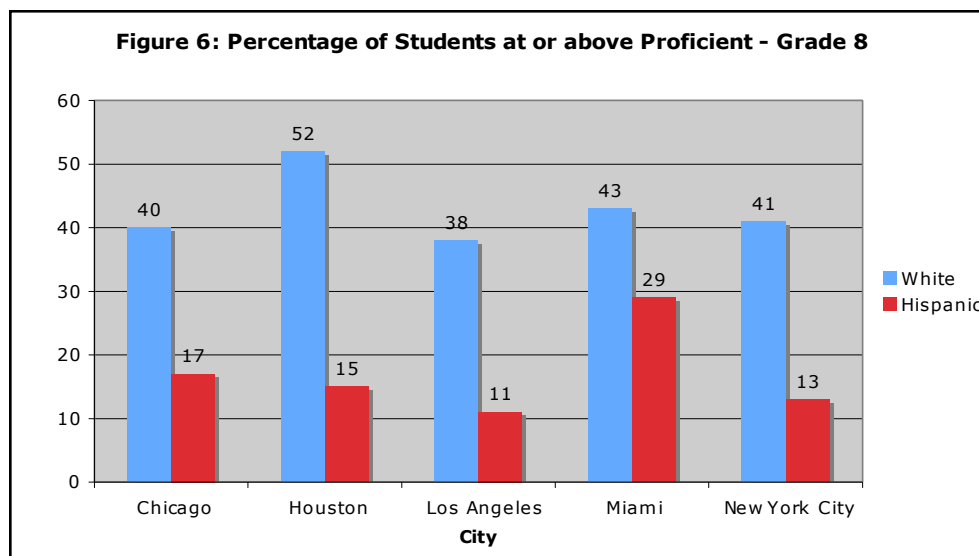
There is a 25% to 40% difference between the percentage of white students and Hispanic students at or above the basic level of reading in four of the five cities. Looking at it another

way, generally 20% of white students do not meet the basic benchmark, while the percentage of Hispanic students who do not meet the basic benchmark for reading range from 40% to 65%.

Figures 5 and 6 show the percentages of white students and Hispanic students at or above the proficient level of reading. Figure 5 shows the data for 4th grade students and Figure 6 shows the data for 8th grade students.



Source: Data from The Nation's Report Card <nationsreportcard.gov/reading_2009>



Source: Data from The Nation's Report Card <nationsreportcard.gov/reading_2009>

The large gaps between the percentage of white students and Hispanic students who are either basic or proficient readers indicate that Hispanics in these large immigrant-receiving cities are not acquiring enough language.

The Nation's Report Card also has national data for English Language Learners (ELL) as a group. In 2009, 71% of English Language Learners in 4th grade were below the basic reading level.⁶ Also in 2009, 74% of 8th grade English Language Learners scored below basic reading. The difficult aspect of interpreting this data concerns how long these English Language Learners have been in the country and how long they have been learning English. The Nation's Report Card defines ELL students as those who are "in the process of acquiring English language skills and knowledge" ("Glossary," 2010). It is unclear what qualifications one must meet in order to no longer be categorized as an English Language Learner. For these reasons, I use the data for the different races/ethnicities in addition to the ELL data to examine language proficiency among school children in the United States.

VI. Discussion

In this section I will address my original question of whether or not schools fall short in providing the efficient level of language. In the previous section, it is clear there is a deficiency in the amount of language that children of immigrants receive in public schools. If the government via the public school systems will not provide the adequate resources for children of immigrants to achieve a proficient level of language ability, non-profit organizations can step in and supplement the language acquisition process. Simply, non-profit organizations can offer

⁶ Research in the field of speech language pathology shows children who are learning a second language but have not yet developed a solid foundation in the first language may experience learning difficulties (see Cárdenas-Hagan, Carlson, & Pollard-Durodola, 2007).

before- or after-school programs that consist of language classes.⁷ Ideally these would provide the children of immigrants with time to practice the language they are learning. According to Valdés (1998), one major issue in the school where she did her case study is that the ESL students lacked exposure to native English speakers. The non-profit could create opportunities for the children to interact with members of the English-speaking community.

Research has shown that immigrant-based, community-based organizations play an integral role in the integration process of immigrants into the new society (de Leon, et al., 2009). The organizations serve immigrants in a number of ways; an organization usually has a holistic set of services. Among these services are helping the immigrant learn how to function in the new society and creating a community where there are others who understand the language and culture of the immigrant (de Leon, et al., 2009). These services are necessary because they help the immigrant initially settle in, by assisting in finding housing and employment.

Non-profits serve immigrants in a variety of ways. For example, there are advocacy groups, religious groups and charities, and organizations that promote the arts and cultural-heritage of immigrants (Coll & Patton, 2009). Non-profits also provide many legal services for immigrants. Some organizations help refugees immigrate and resettle, some provide food, clothing and shelter, and some offer legal assistance to those struggling with civil rights cases (“Information,” 2010).

In addition to these types of immigrant-serving non-profits, there is need for more that focus their efforts on the children of immigrants. In fact, others agree that there is potential for non-profits to provide the avenue to success for children of immigrants. Coll and Patton (2009)

⁷ I argue these classes would be for learning the dominant language of society, but another service the non-profit could offer is classes for learning the native language. With a strong foundation in their native language, the children will likely be better able to learn the second language (see Cárdenas-Hagan, et al., 2007).

assert, “The success stories of immigrant youths have vast implications for how non-profits can better capitalize on communities to foster success among American youth” (p. 1). Coll and Patton (2009) present a trend – or paradox – currently developing among immigrants. The immigrant paradox is when immigrant youth have positive outcomes in many areas of development despite the fact they are more likely to be members of low-socioeconomic status families with parents who have low levels of English proficiency and education (Coll & Patton, 2009). They add, however, that these positive outcomes decline with each generation. The positive effects only last one generation.

The positive trends in the immigrant paradox conflict with data I present in the previous section. If there is the potential for the children of immigrants to benefit from participating in community-based non-profit organizations, then I argue they can help fix the problem evident from the reading scores. I assert that reading scores will improve as language proficiency improves.

Coll and Patton (2009) propose parent-child classes for learning the second language. This would be an excellent tool to improve both the parent and the child’s language proficiency. As I discuss in the literature review, there are studies that have found a positive effect family member’s have on one another’s language proficiency. In addition to parent-child language classes, children of immigrants can improve their language proficiency by helping one another learn the new language. Those who have been in the new country longer will have more experience using the language and can help younger, new arrivals as they begin to learn and adapt to the new language.

Based on the information de Leon, et al. (2009) and Coll and Patton (2009) provide, non-profits can help improve the success rate of the children of immigrants by doing more than

providing language assistance. Non-profit organizations can also have programs that facilitate growth of the children's knowledge and connection to their heritage and native culture. This would prevent disruption of the family's relationships. Problems arise when the children's adaptation to the new culture causes them to disconnect from their parents and native culture (Coll & Patton, 2009).

Another avenue non-profit organizations can take to help the children of immigrants is to cooperate directly with the local schools. Non-profit organizations that give language classes to the children of immigrants may better benefit the children by teaching similar material and reinforcing what they learn in school. The non-profit, by cooperating with schools and coordinating curriculum, has the potential to increase the quantity and quality of language education children receive. In other words, the non-profit can improve the "input" resources for the child. This will then result in the children achieving more in school, which will be reflected in better reading test scores. Higher achievement in school leads to better opportunity beyond school. Greater opportunity for the children is the goal that their parents strive to reach. The schools and the non-profit organizations together can make that a reality. Essentially, the "output" product – the success of each child – will also increase in both quantity and quality. Collaboration between the non-profit organizations and the local schools can strengthen the foundation of the children's language skill.

I argue that children of immigrants need to acquire more language to succeed and benefit from migration. However, if they eventually do gain more language via non-profit organization, and also achieve greater success, this may affect immigration trends in the United States. More potential immigrants may see that children of immigrants are becoming better off and more successful than before, and consequently more potential immigrants will choose to immigrate. In

other words, the utility the children would generate for the parents would be greater, which would then cause more to migrate. This would necessarily affect the United States' immigration policy.

Currently, immigration is controversial because of the low-skill, low-pay jobs that immigrants obtain, coupled with the costs incurred in the education and health care systems. Increased levels of immigration may not be received well by all citizens. However, if the children of immigrants are acquiring more language and succeeding in school more, they are also integrating better into society. In this case, is more immigration bad? Those who already argue immigrants take jobs from U.S. citizens might say yes because now they are taking "better" jobs from U.S. citizens. I contend, however, that if the children of immigrants obtain higher paying jobs, they will be paying more taxes, which will contribute to the funding of the education and health care services. This question of effects on immigration trends and policies will need to be addressed, but not in this paper.

Non-profit organizations have the potential to improve the lives of the children in immigrant families. Public schools are not providing enough resources for the children to acquire a proficient level of language due to the cost. The reading scores from 2009 in the five cities I examine indicate that, on average, only half of Hispanic children achieve a basic level of reading. According to the literature and the model I develop, language acquisition is necessary for successful integration. Successful integration ensures the children are able to gain the benefits their parents want their children to have; these benefits are the reason the parent (individual) initially decided to migrate.

VII. Conclusion

This paper first developed a model for why an individual with a family decides to migrate. The decision depends on the net benefits that will be gained from migration and on the utility that the children will create. I identified monetary and non-monetary benefits and costs of migration. Only those with positive net benefits will decide to migrate. Secondly, those who believe their children will generate utility will choose to migrate. Children will generate utility by succeeding in school and gaining the benefits of migration that require integration into society. Successful integration will only occur when the children acquire a proficient level of language in the new society. This paper then developed a model on how children of immigrants acquire language.

The model for language acquisition I developed was first built upon a basic model developed by Chiswick, et al. (2005a). There are a number of studies that model language acquisition for adults, but I developed a model specifically for children. I used the factors that have proven most important in the previously developed models and adapted them in order to be applicable to children.

After I analyzed data on the reading scores of children in the United States in 2009, I concluded that there is a deficit of language being acquired in schools. A solution to this problem is to utilize non-profit, community-based organizations to supplement children's acquisition of language. It is important for the children to acquire a proficient level of language because they need language to reap the benefits their parents intended to gain upon migration.

More research needs to be done on how children of immigrants acquire language. My model is a theoretical model that needs to be tested with empirical data. Also, this model is somewhat incomplete in showing all the factors that contribute to the language acquisition of

children. One area that I did not address is the difference between the acquisition of the first language and the acquisition of the second. Children's proficiency level in the first language affects their acquisition of a second language. Educators, speech language pathologists, and economists can work together to build more precise models for language acquisition. A more precise model will help government agencies to create better policies for public schools.

Until that time comes, non-profit organizations can increase the available resources for children (and parents) to acquire language. There is a clear deficiency in the level of reading among Hispanic students in public schools, especially relative to the reading level of white students. Community-based non-profit organizations can improve the success of children of immigrants by providing programs for them to learn language, creating opportunities to practice using the language, and facilitating the development of heritage culture appreciation.

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