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What happened to familial acculturation?

David A. Cort

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Abstract

While theoretical work focusing on immigrant language acculturation suggests that both parental and child's understanding of English are needed to measure acculturation, analysts have instead focused on child bilingualism. I develop a measure of familial acculturation and conceptually distinguish it from child bilingualism. I then determine whether several child and parental variables influence these measures differently, which would provide evidence supporting the conceptual distinction. Results show that child bilingualism is indeed independent of familial acculturation. Parental skills and resources significantly affect familial acculturation but not child bilingualism, whereas gender and Latino status affect child bilingualism but not familial acculturation. Additionally, modes of incorporation do not determine either child bilingualism or familial acculturation, suggesting that integrative forces external to the family may have little power to shape the internal workings that generate child or familial language acculturation. Together, these findings imply that researchers should avoid conflating child bilingualism with familial acculturation.

Keywords: Assimilation; acculturation; bilingualism; segmented assimilation; language acquisition; modes of incorporation.

Introduction

After many decades of nearly stagnant immigration, the US is once again a destination for immigrants. This immigration stream is distinctive because entrants are more diverse with respect to their racial/ethnic backgrounds (Perlmann and Waldinger 1998; Waldinger 2001) and their socioeconomic status (Alba and Nee 1997, 2003). As a result, a growing body of work, beginning with Gordon's (1964) canonical synthesis, seeks to determine the role of language acculturation in shaping the intermarriage and socioeconomic incorporation of

first, second, and third generation immigrants (Stevens 1992; Portes and Zhou 1993; Portes and Rumbaut 1996; Espenshade and Fu 1997; Oropesa and Landale 1997). In this literature, variables that measure language acculturation are often viewed as intervening mechanisms in the relationship between the background characteristics of immigrants and outcomes such as education, income and occupational status, or measures of socioeconomic assimilation.

Recently, those studying language acculturation have focused on the rates at which first and second generation immigrants acquire English skills or maintain the use of the mother tongue (Stevens 1992; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Linton 2004; Rumbaut, Massey and Bean 2006; Linton and Jimenez, forthcoming). Their attention has been on the role of background factors (such as national origin, socioeconomic status, race and gender) in determining the bilingualism or English monolingualism of *individual* immigrants. I argue that this body of work omits an alternative possibility.

In *Immigrant America*, 2nd edition, Portes and Rumbaut (1996) suggest that different types of language acculturation result from combinations of first and second generation understanding of English or American culture and the level of parental-child immersion within co-ethnic communities. Therefore, acculturation is something that occurs among immigrant *families*, not just among individual immigrants. However, recent work on language acculturation does little to advance this conceptual argument. While recent work (Portes and Rumbaut 2007) maintains a needed focus on child bilingualism, I argue that the literature (Portes and Rumbaut 2001, 2007) seems to have moved away from operationalizing language acculturation as a familial construct.

Re-focusing attention on familial acculturation is important for three reasons. First, scholarship in developmental psychology (Offer 1969; Galambos and Almeida 1992) suggests that the family is one of the main social institutions where many of the important lessons concerning how to adapt to society at large are learned. Immigrant families are not exempt from this process. Indeed, a growing literature provides evidence that immigrant families work together to develop strategies that help them make it in their new society, and learning the new language is one of these strategies (Tseng and Fuligni 2000; Fuligni 2001; Reese 2002).

Second, by only focusing on the bilingualism of children, analysts miss an opportunity to rigorously measure the concept as it was originally conceptualized. This prevents them from ascertaining whether what we already know about bilingualism would be similar to or different from what we can learn from a different operationalization of the concept.¹ For example, Portes and Rumbaut (2001) report that second generation female and Latino children are significantly more likely to be bilingual than their male counterparts.

This finding suggests that there is an “acculturative advantage” for females and Latinos that may help them to achieve more favourable socioeconomic outcomes than males. An important addition to the literature would be to ascertain if such an acculturative advantage surfaces when examining familial acculturation.

Third, focusing on familial acculturation allows for an introduction of variables that measure parental socioeconomic attainment and modes of incorporation, factors that exist in the conceptual model developed by Portes and Rumbaut (2001) but have never been incorporated into an analytical model. For example, when studying child bilingualism, past work has correctly relied on child-level covariates such as gender, race, family background and family structure to explain the process of child bilingualism. However, focusing on familial acculturation allows for this process to be explained by child background factors as well as characteristics of the child’s parents. Such an exercise would provide a fuller understanding of the child and parental factors that explain an understudied social process.

To fill these voids, I advance an argument for conceptualizing and operationalizing acculturation as a familial process. I argue that while past scholarship has maintained attention on the language acculturation of first or second generation immigrants, the process of acculturation can also be viewed as a familial one. In the pages that follow, I provide a brief summary of assimilation theory. I then discuss, in conceptual terms, how past discussions of acculturation can be refined by a focus on familial language acculturation. Finally, I provide a blueprint for measuring familial acculturation and conduct analyses of its determinants that include theoretically important covariates. In all, I aim to establish that familial acculturation is a concept that is distinct from child bilingualism in its origin and its influences.

Background and theory

The concept of assimilation has its roots in the work of Milton Gordon (1964). Gordon’s model is important because it provides an analytical and conceptual separation between acculturation and assimilation. On the one hand, acculturation is the minority group’s adoption of the “cultural patterns” of the host society. Thus, it is the first step in the adaptation process where immigrants obtain the cultural “tools” that enable them to better adapt to their new host society. On the other hand, structural assimilation is the integration of immigrants into the host society and the end result of the assimilation process, with intermarriage being the primary marker of this type of assimilation.

While supporters of conventional assimilation describe immigrants’ potential for adaptation in largely optimistic terms, supporters of

segmented assimilation theory are slightly more pessimistic. Proponents argue that the socioeconomic outcomes of some immigrant children will not be as favourable as once suggested. Indeed, some may experience downward assimilation into the underclass. The disparate trends in socioeconomic assimilation for immigrant children occur because of peculiarities in the economic and social contexts of reception that greet new immigrants when they come to the United States (see Zhou 1997 for a detailed discussion of these social and economic contexts). Because of these reception contexts, segmented assimilation theorists (Portes and Rumbaut 1996; Zhou 1997) argue that several factors determine the direction of socioeconomic assimilation for today's second generation immigrants.

The model suggests that parental or first generation skills and resources, second generation characteristics and family structure, and the social reception that the first and second generation receives from their host environment (or modes of incorporation) all affect different patterns of language acculturation of immigrant families. In turn, different types of acculturation, along with the factors just mentioned, affect the type and direction of socioeconomic assimilation for the second generation. Portes and Zhou (1993) and Portes and Rumbaut (1996) describe the interweaving of all of these relationships as the entire process of assimilation. Importantly, although individual and structural factors do determine whether second generation immigrants acculturate, it is acculturation that in turn determines the future well-being of immigrant children. These points are noteworthy because they establish that acculturation is an important *intervening variable* in the process of assimilation.

In an important elaboration of this argument, Portes and Rumbaut (1996), in their seminal volume *Immigrant America*, 2nd edition, create a typology, discussed below, which suggests ways of measuring language acculturation. However, while Portes and Rumbaut (1996) provided a blueprint for thinking about acculturation as occurring between immigrant parents and children, the literature has not followed their lead by providing operational indicators of this concept. Therefore, I offer a conceptual framework for thinking about intergenerational acculturation and suggest a concrete method for measuring it.

Familial acculturation

Language consonance and dissonance

In the assimilation literature, culture is an important component of the adaptation process. However, immigration theorists who study acculturation do not agree on a definition of culture. In an effort to

circumvent this disagreement, Zhou (1997) suggests that individual and structural factors are intertwined with 'immigrant culture' and group characteristics to determine the eventual fates of immigrant children.² To adapt to a new lifestyle and to be accepted by the members of the receiving society, immigrant families must make use of norms, values and English, as tools that will help them adapt to American society. These tools are either brought with them at immigration or picked up along the way in their new environments. Families use the cultural and language tools that best fit with the norms and values of the host society (Matute-Bianchi 1986).

Often, immigrant parents determine for their small children which tools to utilize, although older children do this for themselves and even for their parents. Moreover, in an effort to pass on certain family values and traditions, parents decide what host culture values and norms are beneficial to keep and what values are better left unused. Many encourage their children to learn English quickly so that they can do well in school and help their parents negotiate their new environments effectively (Fillmore 1991). For example, immigrant children are often used as translators for their parents, facilitating their participation in legal, educational and medical domains of life (Orellana, Dorner and Pulido 2003; Orellana et al. 2003). Such negotiation between parents and children is really a type of family dynamic that occurs in all families (Collins 1989). However, because immigrant families face added pressures to learn host culture norms and values, three parts of this dynamic are more important to them.

First, because there is a significant sense of child autonomy, individuality and self-fulfilment in the United States, the ways in which parents used to interact with their children in the sending country may be different from interaction styles in the receiving country. Moreover, the expectations in parent-child interactions that were present at the time of the parents' childhood are no longer in force. Therefore, parent-child interaction styles are likely to have changed over time and place.

Second, parents may learn more slowly than their children. When new immigrants come to a new country, children may often have the ability to pick up cultural norms faster than their parents. Thus, parents may have to rely on their children much more than they would have done if they were in the home country (Orellana, Dorner and Pulido 2003; Orellana et al. 2003). Thus, in the words of Portes and Rumbaut (1996, pp. 239-40), 'children become, in a very real sense, their parents' parents.

Third, there may be constant negotiations between parents and children concerning which sending country traditions and values should be left unused and which should be used to aid in the assimilation process. Parents and children actively negotiate the

strategies that will best help children succeed, especially immigrant families in tight-knit communities. These strategies often involve selectively using the values of the host society that help children get ahead (Gibson 1988). This type of parental-child strategizing occurs in a new environment where parents may not have as much control over their children as they did in the sending society.

For immigrant families, these three characteristics may lead to different rates of acculturation between parents and children. Some families may pick up acculturative tools at the same pace, while others may acquire them at different paces.³ Portes and Rumbaut (1996) bring an important innovation to the literature by conceptualizing the differences in the rate of language acculturation between immigrant parents and children in terms of consonance and dissonance. On the one hand, they argue that *generational consonance* occurs when parents and children have the same general level of understanding of English. On the other hand, *generational dissonance* occurs when parents and children do not have the same general level of English competence. Either parents are more linguistically acculturated (an admittedly rare occurrence) or children are more linguistically acculturated. Table 1, adapted from *Immigrant America*, 2nd edition, elucidates this generational aspect of acculturation.⁴

While the conceptualization in Table 1 is instrumental in enhancing our understanding of how different types of acculturation occur, I believe two elaborations to this conceptual framework provide support for the idea that acculturation can be viewed as a familial construct. First is the possibility that generational consonance consists of two opposing types or outcomes. On the one hand, parents and children can both have a high rate of language competence. I term this *consonant acceptance*. On the other hand, parents and children can both have a low rate of language competence. This I call *consonant rejection*. I think of consonant acceptance and consonant rejection as opposite types of generational consonance. In essence, then, generational consonance is really another way of discussing the *similarity* in the rate of acculturation between immigrant parents and children, while generational dissonance symbolizes the *dissimilarity* in the rate of acculturation. Viewed in this way, acculturation is something that occurs *between* parents and children.⁵

Second, as noted in Table 1, operationalizing familial acculturation dissonance requires knowledge of the level of English competence of children as well as the level of English competence of their parents. That is, *both* pieces of information are necessary to turn the abstract components of concepts of familial acculturation into concrete variables. I view this as an important extension of the conceptualization of language acculturation presented by Portes and Rumbaut

Table 1. *Types of acculturation across generations*

Child learning of US culture/language	Parental learning of US culture/language	Child insertion into ethnic community	Parental insertion into ethnic community	Acculturation types	Predicted consequences
Low (–)	Low (–)	High (+)	High (+)	Consonant resistance	Isolation in ethnic community
High (+)	High (+)	Low (–)	Low (–)	Consonant acculturation	Quest for integration
High (+)	Low (–)	Low (–)	High (+)	Dissonant acculturation I	Abandon ethnic community
High (+)	Low (–)	Low (–)	Low (–)	Dissonant acculturation II	Loss of parental control
High (+)	High (+)	High (+)	High (+)	Selective acculturation	Preserve language/resources

Source: Adapted from Portes and Rumbaut (1996) *Immigrant America*, 2nd edn, Berkeley: University of California Press.

(1996). I present a tabular depiction of this conceptual reformulation of consonance and dissonance in Table 2.

The preceding discussion is instrumental in clarifying one possible way of thinking about acculturation in immigrant families. My argument relies heavily on the work of Portes and Rumbaut (1996), who developed theoretical apparatus for my elaboration. While a long line of scholarship on bilingualism and acculturation (Stevens 1992; Espenshade and Fu 1997; Oropesa and Landale 1997; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Linton 2004; Rumbaut, Massey and Bean 2006; Linton and Jimenez, forthcoming) follows their work, none of it uses their ideas to develop measures of familial consonance and dissonance as these authors suggest. Therefore, having provided a way of conceptualizing familial acculturation, I think a reasonable next step would be to ascertain what determines familial acculturation and how those determinants compare or contrast with child bilingualism. I believe that the literature could benefit from an exercise that suggests a different way of measuring familial acculturation, shows which factors are its strongest determinants, and then compares and contrasts those findings with the determinants of bilingualism.

Research questions

In their book *Legacies*, Portes and Rumbaut (2001) focus on the determinants of child bilingualism, arguing that language acculturation is an intervening variable in the relationship between parental skills and resources, child family structure and background factors, modes of incorporation, and the future socioeconomic attainment of second generation immigrants. As a first step in providing empirical support for this model, they focus on the determinants of child bilingualism. I elaborate on their ideas by focusing attention on the determinants of language consonance and dissonance. I consider these variables to be measures of acculturation that more closely mirror their past work. Because I conceptualize language acculturation to have multiple dimensions, I ascertain whether covariates behave in theoretically expected ways across variables that represent these concepts.

I also elaborate on Portes and Rumbaut's statistical model by including measures of parental skills and resources and modes of incorporation. This is an elaboration because while these factors are cited as important in the literature, little work has attempted to ascertain how parental variables influence familial acculturation in a statistical sense. More importantly, while past work (see Alba and Nee 2003) provides extensive discussion of modes of incorporation, little of it includes rigorous measures of the concept.

Table 2. *Types of acculturation across generations, a reformulation*

Child learning of US culture/language	Parental learning of US culture/language	Acculturation types	Predicted consequences
Similarity in language acquisition – consonant acculturation			
High (+)	High (+)	Consonant acceptance	Familial quest for integration
Low (–)	Low (–)	Consonant rejection	Isolation within ethnic community
Dissimilarity in language acquisition – dissonant acculturation			
High (+)	Low (–)	Language dissonance	Integration via child English knowledge
Low (–)	High (+)	Language dissonance	Unknown

To accomplish these two elaborations, I ask the following research question:

(1) How do child background factors and family structure, parental skills and resources, and parental modes of incorporation influence multiple measures of familial acculturation?

To answer this question, I will model measures of familial acculturation as functions of three sets of covariates: parental skills and resources, second generation family structure and background factors, and modes of incorporation.⁶

In an effort to compare and contrast my findings with those that would be obtained by using child bilingualism as a dependent variable, I ask:

(2) Are the effects of covariates on familial acculturation similar to or different from the effects on child bilingualism?

Data and variables

The data come from Waves I (1992) and II (1995) of the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS). The CILS is a longitudinal survey designed to study the adaptation processes of the immigrant second generation (see Portes and Rumbaut 2001 for an extensive discussion of this data source) and is arguably the best source of data available to study issues of child bilingualism and familial acculturation. In Wave I of the CILS, only children were interviewed. In Wave II, one parent or guardian of the child, in addition to the child, was queried about their language ability, making it possible to create measures of generational acculturation. Because parents had to be interviewed in their homes and in their own language, the cost of conducting parental interviews for all children in the sample was prohibitive. Thus, only about 50 per cent of the child sample contains a corresponding parental interview, creating a non-trivial amount of missing information for the parental data. In addition, because the limited funding for the parental interviews was only received at the time of the follow-up child questionnaire, the parental data were only collected in Wave II.

The lack of parental interviews posed a serious hurdle for the present analyses because the dependent variables rely on the presence of complete child *and* parental information for their construction. To circumvent this problem, I decided to use only the information for children whose parents were given a parental interview.⁷ This essentially eliminates just under half of the sample of children. The alternative

would have involved the multiple imputation of parental information, which was missing because those parents were not given surveys.

The original CILS sample contains 5,272 child respondents, 4,281 of whom were re-interviewed three years later. Of these 4,281 child respondents, 294 children had English as their mother tongue because they were born in the English-speaking Caribbean. I removed them from the sample because it made little sense to talk about the language acculturation of a population whose mother tongue was English. In addition, I deleted 103 respondents who could not be neatly classified into homogeneous nationality groups large enough to form their own separate categories, leaving a potential of 3,884 and parents. From this number, I removed 1,760 children whose parents did not receive a parental interview, leaving an analytical sample of 2,124 child records.

Dependent variables

Consonant acceptance

Knowledge of the English language is the foundation variable I use to measure language acculturation. In both waves of the CILS, children were asked about their ability to speak, read, write and understand English. Unfortunately, parents were only asked these questions in Wave II. Because of the missing parental information in Wave I, I use Wave II data to create all familial acculturation dependent variables. Each of the English competence questions is measured on a 4-point Likert scale where 1 represents speaking, reading, writing or understanding English 'not at all' and 4 represents speaking, reading, writing or understanding English 'very well'.

I sum all four English competence variables (i.e. ability to speak, read, write and understand English) to create an index (range 4–16) of English competence. I do this separately for parents and children, resulting in two separate indexes measuring English language competence. I group each of the indexes into four-category variables, with 1 representing *very low comprehension*, 2 representing *moderately low comprehension*, 3 representing *moderately high comprehension*, and 4 representing *very high comprehension*. I then cross-tabulate grouped parental and child English competence, determining how many parents and children are at high and low levels of English competence (these tables are available upon request). While 634 parents and children are at high levels, too few are at very low levels to sustain a separate category. I consider children and parents to express *consonant acceptance* if both have *very high* English competence, yielding a dummy variable where 1 represents parents and children who are *very high* and 0 represents otherwise.

Language dissonance

I create an index of absolute language dissonance between parents and children. This index is the absolute value of the difference between the child and parental competence variables. Conceptually, zeros on this variable indicate that parents and children are at parity with respect to English competence. Conversely, values greater than zero on this variable represent *absolute differences* in English competence between parents and children. Possible scores on this index range from zero to twelve.

Child bilingualism

To answer the second research question, I include a measure of child bilingualism. This variable was originally constructed by Portes and Rumbaut and is taken directly from the CILS data. In Wave II, it was originally a four-category nominal variable where 1 represents *fluent bilinguals*, 2 represents *English dominant*, 3 represents *foreign language dominant*, and 4 represents *limited bilingual*. I recode this nominal variable into a dummy variable where 1 represents fluent bilinguals and 0 represents all other groups.⁸

Independent variables

As previously stated, I use three groups of independent variables: parental skills and resources, second generation family structure and background factors, and modes of incorporation. In past work (Stevens 1992; Linton 2004; Rumbaut, Massey and Bean 2006), child background factors and socioeconomic status have been used as control variables in statistical models of language acculturation. My aim however is to build a statistical model that closely mirrors the conceptual framework developed by Portes and Rumbaut (2001) because their model guides the tone of the conversation in the literature. To that end, I add controls for parental skills and resources and modes of incorporation to those included in past scholarship. Control variables come from both waves of the survey. In the technical appendix, I provide a description of how these variables are constructed and coded. Descriptive statistics for independent and dependent variables are included in Table 3.

Results*Multivariate analyses*

In Table 4, I present parameter estimates for the models of familial acculturation and child bilingualism, with all models containing the same covariates. The first two sets of results establish that measures of

Table 3. Descriptive statistics

Variables	Minimum	Maximum	Means	Std dev.
<i>Dependent variables**</i>				
Consonant acceptance of English	0	1	.30	–
Language dissonance	0	12	3.93	3.19
Bilingualism	0	1	.25	–
<i>Background factors & family structure</i>				
Laos/Hmong	0	1	.081	–
Cubans	0	1	.16	–
Vietnam	0	1	.11	–
Mexico	0	1	.16	–
Nicaraguan	0	1	.08	–
Other Latinos/as	0	1	.11	–
Sub-Saharan Africa	0	1	.04	–
Asia ¹	0	1	.04	–
Philippines	0	1	.17	–
Other Southeast Asia ²	0	1	.04	–
Non-whites	0	1	.88	–
Males	0	1	.51	–
Intact family	0	1	.73	–
Number of siblings	0	8	1.96	1.53
Citizen of US	0	1	.56	–
Born in US	0	1	.40	–
10 or more years in US	0	1	.29	–
5–9 years in US	0	1	.23	–
Less than 5 years in US	0	1	.07	–
<i>Parental skills & resources</i>				
Education**	0	20	12.45	3.44
1 st pre-migration prestige quintile**	0	1	.10	–
2 nd pre-migration prestige quintile**	0	1	.12	–
3 rd pre-migration prestige quintile**	0	1	.08	–
4 th pre-migration prestige quintile**	0	1	.09	–
5 th pre-migration prestige quintile**	0	1	.09	–
Missing prestige information**	0	1	.50	–
Years of US experience**	1	51	18.33	8.17
Child migrant**	0	1	.06	–
At least 1 parent native-born	0	1	.09	–
<i>Modes of incorporation**</i>				
Economic assistance at US arrival	0	1	.30	–
Co-ethnic supervisor or coworker at US arrival	0	1	.25	–
Number of family & friends at US arrival	0	170	43.99	49.25

Note: All variables measured at Time 1 from child questionnaire, except where noted.

**Measured at Time 2, parental questionnaire.

¹Includes children from mainland China, Taiwan, and Japan.

²Includes children from Burma, Cambodia, and Malaysia.

Table 4. Effect parameters for logistic and OLS models predicting language acculturation

Variables	Consonant acceptance		Language dissonance		Bilingualism	
	Coeff.	RSE	Coeff.	RSE	Coeff.	RSE
<i>Background factors & family structure</i>						
Laos/Hmong ¹	-.27	.41	-.38	.31	-1.94**	.49
Vietnam	-.90*	.44	-.71**	.23	-1.07**	.32
Mexico	-.30	.30	.66**	.15	1.84**	.20
Nicaraguan	.08	.29	.51*	.25	1.25**	.22
Other Latinos/as	.22	.19	.22	.21	1.36**	.20
Sub-Saharan Africa	.84**	.28	.09	.25	-.05	.32
Asia ²	-.62*	.31	.26	.23	-.30	.36
Philippines	1.08**	.22	-1.28**	.15	-.64**	.25
Other Southeast Asia ³	.009	.61	.38	.39	-2.31**	.93
Race (1=nonwhite)	-.01	.16	.12	.22	.09	.20
Sex (1=males)	-.14	.09	-.07	.08	-.37**	.12
Intact family	-.21	.12	.18	.14	.08	.12
Number of siblings	-.12**	.04	.03	.03	-.05	.05
US citizen	.45**	.18	-.49**	.17	-.26**	.12
US born ⁴	-.08	.32	1.62**	.22	.67	.43
>10 yrs in US	-.09	.35	1.83**	.19	.52	.39
5-9 yrs in US	-.13	.30	1.57**	.20	.76**	.33
<i>Parental skills & resources</i>						
2nd prestige quintile	.30	.33	.33	.04	.51	.38
3rd prestige quintile	.48*	.23	.23	.21	.83	.40
4th prestige quintile	-.08	.23	.47*	.24	.48	.33
5th prestige quintile	-.06	.26	.46	.25	-.10	.39
Missing prestige	.28	.29	.27	.23	.31	.30

Table 4 (Continued)

Variables	Consonant acceptance		Language dissonance		Bilingualism	
	Coeff.	RSE	Coeff.	RSE	Coeff.	RSE
Education	.38**	.03	-.41**	.03	.05	.03
Experience	.06**	.01	-.07**	.01	-.005	.01
Child migrant	.98**	.25	-1.27**	.27	.36	.22
1 native-born parent	.49**	.19	-.42*	.23	-.57**	.20
<i>Modes of incorporation</i>						
Economic assistance	-.42	.24	.42*	.23	.14	.19
Co-ethnic supervisor or coworker	-.07	.16	.17	.16	-.12	.13
No. of family/friends	.002	.002	-.004**	.001	-.003	.001
Intercept	-7.16**	.76	9.09**	.53	-1.10	.68
Link function		Logit		OLS		Logit
R-square		-		.400		-
Nationality status effect ⁵		133.42**		26.21**		217.29**
Latino/a effect ⁶		2.13		11.95**		106.03**

*p < .05.

**p < .01.

*Notes*¹Nationality status coefficients are effect coded. Contrasts are with unweighted grand mean for sample. Cubans omitted.²Includes children from mainland China, Taiwan, and Japan.³Includes children from Burma, Cambodia, and Malaysia.⁴Reference is 'in US less than 5 years'.⁵Wald test for significance of nationality status indicators; distributed as chi-square with one-tailed test of significance.⁶Wald test for significance of indicators of Mexican, Nicaraguan and Other Latin heritage.

familial acculturation are independent of child bilingualism. First, covariates measuring parental skills and resources are significant determinants of familial acculturation, but not child bilingualism. By and large, immigrant children whose parents are educated, who have more years of experience in the US, who are child migrants, and who have at least one native-born parent in the home are more likely to learn English at the same rate as their parents and experience less language dissonance. For example, net of all other characteristics, a one-year increase in parental education increases the odds of consonant acceptance of language by 46 per cent ($\exp^{.38} - 1$) and decreases the amount of dissonance experienced by immigrant children by two-fifths ($-.41$) of an index unit. In addition, having a parent who was a child migrant increases the odds of consonant acceptance by 166 per cent and decreases overall language dissonance by 1.27 index units. With the exception of having a native-born parent in the home, none of these parental skills and resources is a significant determinant of child bilingualism.

Second, in past work, Portes and Rumbaut (2001) report that females and Latinos are more likely to be bilingual than non-Latinos. I am able to replicate this result and indeed detect strong gender and Latino origin effects. For example, males' odds of being bilingual are 31 per cent lower than females' odds. However, familial acculturation analyses show no gender effects. This finding is worth stressing because the literature shows that female immigrant children are much more connected to their families, required to do more to help out at home, and are more likely to be more strictly supervised than males (Espiritu 2001). Thus, females should be more likely to understand English at the same rate as their parents and should experience less language dissonance, given these closer familial connections. However, no such gender difference surfaces. In addition, while analyses here and in past work (Portes and Rumbaut 2001, 2007) show significant Latino origin differences in the likelihood of being bilingual, when the focus turns to familial acculturation, most Latino origin differences diminish. The one exception is that Mexicans experience more language dissonance than average immigrants. In all, the weight of the evidence does not point to a significant familial acculturative advantage for females or Latinos.

Together, these first two sets of results present the literature with a first glimpse of the determinants of familial acculturation, along with a sense of how these determinants compare to those of child bilingualism. Findings reveal that if the analytical focus were to be on familial acculturation, the story told about the determinants of familial acculturation would be different from the story told about child bilingualism. Put differently, results suggest that focusing attention on

familial acculturation would likely produce an update to what we know about the factors that influence language acculturation.

The third set of findings pertains to modes of incorporation. In past work, Portes and Rumbaut (2007) have argued that these modes should enhance opportunities for acculturation because co-ethnic communities potentially provide crucial support needed to ease acculturation and assimilation difficulties. On the other hand, Alba and Nee (2003) argue, among other things, that the host society has been increasingly likely to provide equal treatment to its new entrants. Consequentially, no special benefits of residing in co-ethnic communities should accrue to immigrant families. Results in Table 4 provide some support for the latter argument. Variables measuring modes of incorporation at the time of arrival in the US have weak effects on familial acculturation or child bilingualism. When significant effects are present, the results are contradictory. For example, on the one hand, the findings show a negative and very small relationship between the number of co-ethnic friends parents have and the level of language dissonance experienced by children. On the other hand, the amount of language dissonance experienced is greater if children's parents had economic assistance from the government at immigration than if they did not. Thus, the weight of the evidence points to very weak effects of modes of incorporation, suggesting that socioeconomic incorporation is more important for linguistic incorporation than is community incorporation.

Discussion

This paper is motivated by a lack of attention in the literature to theory-driven construction of familial acculturation variables. Past work has focused almost exclusively on child bilingualism, even though such a conceptualization is advocated by Portes and Rumbaut (1996). Therefore, the measures that I construct here are not theoretically 'new', but are indeed methodologically distinctive. My method of conceptualizing familial acculturation closely adheres to the important theoretical groundwork supported in *Immigrant America*, 2nd edition.

Even though this may be the case, curious observers would be correct to wonder what the value-added would be of focusing on familial acculturation, since the literature has long focused on bilingualism or English monolingualism and has produced meaningful results. I argue that much can be gained from using an older paradigm and verifying its ideas with newly available data. At a minimum, we can find out if the older paradigm actually works. At best, we can determine whether what we know about language acculturation is updated by a different kind of operationalization. I believe both of these possibilities find support from the exercises presented here.

Above, I shine an analytical lens on the acculturation of families, demonstrating that this concept is distinct from child bilingualism in the manner in which it is conceptualized and operationalized. To bolster this claim, I present evidence which first suggests that measures of familial acculturation are uncorrelated with child bilingualism. Evidence also shows that familial acculturation is not only distinct from bilingualism with respect to conceptualization and operationalization, but is also distinct with respect to its determinants. No work to my knowledge has compared the predictors of child bilingualism and familial acculturation. Thus I change the original question posed by Portes and Rumbaut (2001) from 'what makes a bilingual' to 'what factors determine acculturation in families and how do those determinants compare to child bilingualism?'

Past analyses (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Linton 2004; Portes and Rumbaut 2007) point to the importance of Latino origin, gender, and having a US-born parent in the home in determining child bilingualism. While my findings partially support this literature, there are also important differences. If the analytical focus is on familial acculturation, Latino origin and gender are not as important as parental skills and resources. Put differently, the skills and resources that immigrant parents possess are important factors when considering the pace at which families acquire English skills, while background factors are important for child bilingualism.

Aside from theoretical benefits, these results also suggest practical benefits. Much of the current debate in the media focuses on how best to help immigrants fit into American society. Indeed, many policy experts and political pundits continue to debate the merits of making English compulsory in more domains of everyday life. Results reported here imply that parental human capital is one of the most important means by which immigrant families acquire English skills. They suggest that if one of the goals of immigrant acculturation is to help families learn English together, then investing in programmes that increase the education of immigrant parents may be one of the most reliable and consistent ways of accomplishing that goal. Moreover, they also support the idea that if parents can acquire more education, then they would learn English alongside their children and not have to rely on them to learn English and help them participate in legal, educational and medical domains of life (Orellana, Dorner and Pulido 2003; Orellana et al. 2003).

Careful observers will note that while I simultaneously analyse the effects of various covariates on child bilingualism and familial acculturation and call them both language acculturation, they are really distinct social processes. On the one hand, child bilingualism represents the simultaneous maintenance of the mother tongue and acquisition of a new language. On the other hand, familial

acculturation represents the degree to which parents and children acquire English skills at the same or different rates. It stands to reason that one would expect different variable effects. While this criticism is in place, I argue that even though familial acculturation is a concept that has received considerable attention and development in past scholarship, recent work (Portes and Rumbaut 2001, 2007) has abandoned it. Analysing these two concepts side by side allows observers to ascertain whether any additional information can be obtained by re-focusing attention on familial acculturation. Thus, I do not advocate abandoning analyses of bilingualism. I simply advocate adding familial acculturation back into the fold of language acculturation variables and concepts.

Finally, analysts interested in the issues discussed here should begin thinking about how familial acculturation affects the socioeconomic well-being of immigrant children. At the heart of segmented assimilation theory is the expectation that interactions between immigrant social context and familial acculturation produce different types of assimilation outcomes. Determining if this is indeed the case may help shed light on whether the language acculturation that immigrant families experience affects the future socioeconomic destinies of their children.

Technical appendix

Model specifications

Because two dependent variables are binary and the other continuous, I use Ordinary Least Square (OLS) and logistic regression to model the effects of the independent variables on those dependent variables. Moreover, each child in the sample is clustered within a particular school, so I adjust the standard errors to account for this clustering.

For binary dependent variables, I use the following model for π_{ij} and explanatory variables X_{ij} , Y_{ij} and Z_{ij} . The model is written as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}
 Y &= \pi_{ij} \\
 \pi &\sim \text{Binomial}(n_{ij}, \mu) \\
 \pi_{ij} &= \text{logistic}(\alpha + \beta_1 X_{ij} + \beta_2 Y_{ij} + \beta_3 Z_{ij} + u_{oj}) \quad (1.1)
 \end{aligned}$$

The equation states that the log odds of the dependent variable are modelled as a function of child background factors and family structure (X_{ij}), parental skills and resources (Y_{ij}), and parental modes of incorporation (Z_{ij}). The subscripts indicate that child i is clustered within school j .

For a continuous response model (language dissonance) Y with explanatory variables X_{ij} , Y_{ij} , and Z_{ij} , I write:

$$Y = Y_{ij}$$

$$Y_{ij} = \alpha + \beta_1 X_{ij} + \beta_2 Y_{ij} + \beta_3 Z_{ij} + e_{ij} \quad (1.2)$$

Independent variable construction

Child background factors and family structure

All child background factors and family structure variables are measured in 1992. Nationality status of immigrant children is measured by a set of effect-coded dichotomous variables that indicate the country of origin of the child's mother. The reference is the 'average' immigrant, with Cubans serving as the omitted category simply because they are the largest group. I include the gender and race of the child, with nonwhites serving as the reference.

I include two controls for family structure. The first measures whether children have two parents in the household, while the second is the number of siblings living in the child's household. I include controls for children's citizenship status and length of tenure in the United States. Length of tenure is originally an ordinal variable. I create dummy variables for each category of tenure, omitting children who have been in the county for the least time.

Parental skills and resources

With the exception of pre-migration parental occupational status, all of the parental skills and resources variables come from the parental survey (1995). Pre-migration occupational status is measured using Treiman prestige scores. Many parents were not working prior to migrating or did not report an occupation, creating missing data. I transform the prestige scores into quintiles and include the missing information as a dummy variable. I measure parental experience in the US using three variables. In the parental survey, parents were asked their ages and the year they migrated to the United States. Using this information along with the date of the interview, I create a variable measuring the number of years parents have been in the US. I also include an indicator variable measuring whether the parent or guardian was a child (under the age of 13) at the time of migration. Finally, I include an indicator measuring whether the child has at least one native-born parent in the home.

Modes of incorporation

I include three measures of modes of incorporation. All of the questions queried parents about the situations they encountered

at the time of immigration, minimizing the endogeneity of modes of incorporation and acculturation. First, parents were asked about the number of co-ethnic friends and relatives they had at the time of migration. I create an index of the number of friends and family by adding together the two indicators. Second, I include a variable measuring whether parents had access to economic assistance from some type of government agency when they arrived in the United States. Third, I include an indicator measuring whether the supervisor or coworkers of the parents' first job were of the same national background.

Notes

1. Familial acculturation and child bilingualism are distinct processes. I will define the former as the rate at which parents and children pick up English skills at the same or different paces, while the latter is defined as the extent to which children hold on to the mother tongue and pick up English skills. My aim however is not to show that a focus on child bilingualism is incorrect, but to demonstrate the results that could be obtained if the literature were to simultaneously focus attention on familial acculturation.
2. Theorists outside of immigration also have various definitions of culture. However, they all appear to agree that culture involves some combination of values, norms, traditions and ideas.
3. There may be other reasons (such as the socializing effects of schools and peer pressure from friends) why differential rates of acculturation among families can occur. I just offer three examples.
4. I omit from the Portes/Rumbaut typology the role of parental/child insertion into co-ethnic communities as well as a focus on selective acculturation. I make these decisions because selective acculturation requires more stringent conceptualization of exactly what the 'level of insertion into co-ethnic communities' actually means.
5. This argument does not rule out the possibility that intragenerational (i.e. occurring between older and younger siblings) acculturation is possible.
6. Analysts contributing to the segmented assimilation literature focus a great deal of attention on the effects of group membership or nationality status on language outcomes. While this is a worthwhile endeavour, it is not the focus of analyses here. I leave extensive discussion of group effects for another time.
7. To rule out the possibility that results obtained are driven not by changes in the measurement of the dependent variables but by changes in the sample, I conducted preliminary multivariate analyses (not shown here, but available upon request) to ascertain whether the general pattern of results presented by past work would be obtained even when using my limited sample. I first replicated the results in Portes and Rumbaut (2001) by using their full sample to regress child bilingualism on the limited set of independent variables they use. I then fitted the same model using the limited sample used in this article. Analyses suggest that, in general, the overall pattern of the results from the limited sample mirrors those that would be obtained using all of the data. I am therefore reasonably confident that the sample I use is similar enough to the original authors' sample to make firm conclusions about the dependent variables.
8. Preliminary correlation analyses suggest that the two measures of familial acculturation are distinct from child bilingualism. None of the correlations between child bilingualism and familial acculturation exceed .10, providing the first bit of evidence that familial acculturation and child bilingualism are separate and distinct concepts.

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