Introduction

The United States has a formidable presence in the Spanish-speaking world. Of the 50.5 million Hispanics that live in the United States, 35.4 million of them speak Spanish. That figure ranks it as the fifth-largest Spanish-speaking country in the world; if estimates of up to 10 million undocumented and uncounted immigrants are factored in, then that ranking jumps up to second in the world, behind only Mexico. In either case, the United States has more Spanish speakers than Venezuela, Peru, Chile, Bolivia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Uruguay, and any Caribbean or Central American country, and it counts more Puerto Ricans (4.6 million) than Puerto Rico itself (3.7 million). As another point of comparison with a neighboring country, the total population of Canada is, at 33 million, less than the Spanish-speaking population of the United States.

The United States, especially the Southwest, has undergone dramatic growth in Hispanic and Spanish-speaking communities during the last generation. This growth has been both numerical and geographical. We have not only seen more Spanish speakers and increased densities of these speakers in those areas with established Spanish-speaking communities, but as this chapter will detail, we have also seen a geographical expansion from these regions into areas that do not have the same historical connection to the Spanish language.

As we consider this growth and these communities in the context of Spanish for Heritage Speakers, it is worth considering where the language is being maintained and where higher incidences of shift occur. As new language communities are introduced, it is worthwhile to examine how language is, or is not, being maintained and used in longer-standing language communities and determine whether parallels can be drawn.

Where is Spanish spoken in the United States?

The undisputable majority of Latinos in the United States live in the Southwestern region of the country. Of the 50.5 million total, 24.5 million—almost half—live in the two states of California and Texas. If we include in the total count the Southwestern states of Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, and New Mexico, that figure increases to nearly 28 million, or 56% of all Latinos in the United States, even though these six states only account for 25% of the total
population of the country. The states that make up the Eastern Time Zone, by comparison, represent 46% of the total U.S. population, but less than 30% of Hispanics live in this area.

Mexicans comprise, by a large margin, the largest group of Latinos in the United States, representing 31.8 million (63%) of that population. In the six aforementioned Southwestern states, Mexicans represent an even larger portion, accounting for 83% of Hispanics in that region. These numbers have, in part, justified a disproportionate number of studies on Spanish in the Southwest and its relative historical synonymy with Mexicans in the United States (cf. Amastae and Elías-Olivares 1982; Beltramo et al. 1975; Silva-Corvalán 1994; Villa and Rivera-Mills 2010).

Puerto Ricans make up the next largest Hispanic group, with a total U.S. mainland population of 4.6 million. The majority live in the Northeastern United States: 1.5 million Puerto Ricans live in New York or New Jersey, with another 366,000 in Pennsylvania (concentrated around Philadelphia), and 266,000 in Massachusetts. Outside of the Northeast, the largest Puerto Rican state is Florida, with 847,550 (with nearly half of that number residing in Orlando, and more recent estimates placing that figure north of 1 million), with half of the state’s Puerto Rican population arriving, and continuing to arrive in significant numbers, since 2000. New York, on the other hand, while still the largest, has remained virtually flat in its total Puerto Rican population since 1980. Illinois (with the vast majority in Chicago) counted 183,000 Puerto Ricans. The top three states (New York, Florida, New Jersey) account for over 50% of the Puerto Rican population.

Beyond Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, other Latino groups also stand out. The Cuban population (1.7 million) is the most concentrated of Latino groups. Fully 68% (1.2 million) of Cubans in the United States live in Florida. After that, the largest groups correlate with the most populated states, namely California (88,607), New Jersey (83,362), New York (70,803), and Texas (46,541). The Dominican population, the fastest growing in the United States, numbers 1.4 million and is concentrated heavily in the Northeast. The top five states are the same as the top five states for Puerto Ricans, with New York and New Jersey accounting for 62% of all Dominicans in the United States. Central American groups (collectively totaling 4 million) can be found in large population centers throughout the United States. While California has the largest Central American populations in the country, significant Central American populations can be found in Florida, New York, and Texas as well. Salvadorans (1.65 million in the United States) make up the largest Hispanic group in Maryland and Washington, DC.

Spanish-speaking populations in the Northeast and in Florida are heavily concentrated in urban areas and are fairly well-defined in geographic terms. The Spanish-speaking Southwest, on the other hand, is much larger and less concisely defined. To define the Spanish-speaking Southwest, a minimal definition would be to categorize it as those four states that share a border with Mexico, namely Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas. These four states have the highest Hispanic densities and the longest running relationships with the Spanish language, including both recent immigrants and families that have lived in the area for centuries. The push-pull migration in the area promotes constant contact with Mexico. Of the population of Texas, 29.2% claims Spanish as a home language. In California and New Mexico, the percentage is 28.5%; in Arizona the figure surpasses 20% (Figure 4.1).

In discussions on the Spanish-speaking Southwest, however, it is important to include the state of Colorado, which shares a linguistic history with the state of New Mexico. The southern third of the state was founded by New Mexicans in the middle of the 19th century, and the regional toponyms reflect this history. The Latino density in Colorado also justifies its inclusion in the Southwest, as more than one in five inhabitants of the state are Latinos, and 11.9% of
the population speaks Spanish. The inclusion of Colorado in studies of Southwestern Spanish reflects its significance as a member of this linguistic community (Bills et al. 1995; Hudson et al. 1995, among several).

A state that has recently merited attention as part of the Spanish-speaking West is Nevada. In 1980, the Hispanic population (dominant in any language) represented only 6.7% of the total population of the state. In 1990, that number had increased to 10.4% and by 2000 had soared to 19.7% of the state. The Hispanic population continues to grow and, as of 2010, 26.5% of the population is Latino, with 19.6% claiming Spanish as a home language (Figure 4.2). Jenkins (2009a, 2009b, 2010) was among the first to include Nevada in studies on Spanish in the region.

Beyond these six states, other states warrant discussion as part of this linguistic region as well. The remaining states in the extreme West, namely Idaho, Oregon, Utah, and Washington, deserve consideration for a couple of reasons. First is the growth of the Hispanic populations in the region since the late 1990s, reaching a notable density. In the 2010 Census, the Hispanic population of Oregon totaled 11.7%, while the other three states each measured 11.2%. Hispanophone concentrations for each of these states are nearing 10% and, if the current trajectories hold, will each pass that benchmark before the next Census. In addition to the growth, there is no fundamental demographic difference between Latinos in the Northwest and those in more Southern states other than the higher densities and proximity to the border; the origins of Hispanics in the Northwest, especially those that account for recent growth, are essentially the

Figure 4.1  Hispanic or Latino population as a percent of total population by county, 1010

Source: United States Census Bureau [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons
same as those in the Southwest. Mexicans make up the majority of the Latino population in every state west of the Mississippi, other than Hawaii. Even to the east of the Mississippi, many states share this same characteristic. It bears mentioning that Illinois, with the majority of the Latino population concentrated in the Chicago Metropolitan Area, counts more Mexicans than any other state outside of California, Texas, and Arizona.

As the Mexican population grows in virtually every corner of the country, sociolinguistic phenomena in these areas are ripe for exploration, well beyond the Southwest, or even the West. Hispanics of Mexican descent form the majority group in 40 of the 50 United States (Table 4.1). New Mexico, an indisputably Southwestern state, claims a Mexican population of 590,890. By comparison, Florida counts more Mexicans with 629,718. States like Georgia (519,502) and North Carolina (485,960) also merit attention. In fact, of the ten states with the largest Mexican populations, three are east of the Mississippi, and a fourth, Washington, is decidedly not Southwestern.

Growth has not been exclusive to any one group or any one region of the country. In fact, the Latino population grew 43% between 2000 and 2010, from 35.3 to 50.5 million. The Mexican population rose by 54.1%, from 20.6 to 31.8 million residents, representing 78% of the Latino population growth. Mexicans have grown at rates much faster than other Latino groups in areas traditionally dominated by other Latino groups like New York, New Jersey, and Florida. In New York, for example, Mexicans grew at a rate of 75% between 2000 and 2010, as compared to 2% by Puerto Ricans. In New Jersey, Mexican growth outstripped...
Puerto Rican growth by a rate of 112% to 18%. In Florida, the Cuban growth rate in that time period was 46%, while Mexicans grew at a rate of 73%, and Puerto Ricans were similar with 76% growth in the state. Overall, Puerto Ricans increased in the United States by 36% and Cubans by 44%. Dominicans grew at a rate of 84.9%, and now form the majority Latino group in Rhode Island (Figure 4.3).

Table 4.1 Largest Mexican populations, by state, 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Mexican population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>11,423,146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>7,951,193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>1,657,668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>1,602,403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>757,181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>629,718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>601,768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>590,890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>540,978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>519,502</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.3 Percent change in Hispanic or Latino population by county, 2000–2010

Source: United States Census Bureau [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons
Even more notable is the geographic distribution of the growth. Most of the growth has not occurred in traditional Hispanic regions, such as New Mexico and West Texas, but rather in many areas that do not share a long Hispanic history. In fact, Figure 4.1, which shows Latino density, is virtually a negative image of Figure 4.3, which details distribution of growth. The states that have experienced the most dramatic change are found outside the Southwest, and in many cases belong to the Southeastern region of the country. Nine states more than doubled their Latino population in the decennial census period between 2000 and 2010 (see Table 4.2), and all of them, with the exception of Maryland, claim a Mexican majority among Hispanics.

Even with the marked growth outside of the Southwest, the region as a whole still shows significant increases, especially when looking at raw count. The two states with the largest numerical increases are California (3,047,163) and Texas (2,791,255), followed by Florida (1,541,091), Arizona (599,532), and New York (549,339). In this case, we see a strong correlation between total growth and the total population of the state, which is not surprising; numerous studies have noted the strong relationship between numbers of Latinos and total population (cf. Bills et al. 1995; Hudson et al. 1995; Jenkins 2009a, etc.).

One statistical occurrence worth noting is when a state’s Hispanic density reaches 10%. Demographic researchers often highlight this figure as it serves as a clear benchmark in noting population and linguistic growth in an area (Ennis et al. 2011; Hobbs and Stoops 2002; Rivera-Mills 2010). In 1980, only Colorado and the four Mexican border states counted Hispanic densities above 10%. By 2000, five more states achieved this designation—Florida, Illinois, Nevada, New Jersey, and New York (Hobbs and Stoops 2002). In the 2010 Census, 17 states counted at least a 10% Latino population. In addition to the ten previously mentioned, Idaho, Kansas, Oregon, Utah, and Washington were added in the West, and Connecticut and Rhode Island rounded out the Eastern contingent.

It is clear that the Hispanic population is following a strong growth trajectory in the United States. It is the largest minority group in the country, and evidence points to its continual growth. Mexicans form the largest subset, and future studies of the Spanish language within this group must take into account total growth and geographical expansion when striving to contextualize Spanish in the United States.

### Table 4.2 States with Hispanic population change >100%, 2000–2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>% change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>95,076</td>
<td>235,682</td>
<td>147.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>75,830</td>
<td>185,602</td>
<td>144.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>123,838</td>
<td>290,059</td>
<td>134.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>59,939</td>
<td>132,836</td>
<td>121.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>86,866</td>
<td>186,050</td>
<td>114.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>378,963</td>
<td>800,120</td>
<td>111.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>227,916</td>
<td>470,632</td>
<td>106.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>39,569</td>
<td>81,481</td>
<td>105.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td>10,903</td>
<td>22,119</td>
<td>102.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Language maintenance and shift

Various social factors contribute to whether or not a language is maintained in a community. What follows is a brief exploration of those factors, followed by a discussion on measuring language maintenance and shift, and finally a discussion of Spanish language use in different areas.
Spanish use, maintenance, shift in US

of the United States, first at the city and county level, then considering large, multi-state zones where the Spanish language is undergoing different levels of growth, maintenance, or loss.

As immigrant populations move to new linguistic communities, the invariable result is a shift away from the immigrant language to the dominant language in the community. The most common manifestation of language shift occurs over three generations, in which the first generation is dominant in its native language while learning the second language (English in the United States) in non-native fashion; the second generation approximates balanced bilingualism as it maintains the language of the parents in home-related domains, while acquiring English, at the very latest, upon entering school. This second generation in the United States typically receives a formal education in English and will dominate formal registers within that language. The norm for the third generation is most often complete shift to English, with very little (or no) competency in the first language of their grandparents. This pattern is not unique to Spanish, English, or to the United States, but rather is a universal trend among language immigrant populations throughout the world and throughout history (Potowski 2010; Veltman 1983).

Many scholars (Grosjean 1982; Silva-Corvalán 2004; Veltman 1983; Zentella 1997, among many others) cite the absence or presence of recent and continued immigration as the most significant factor in Spanish language maintenance in the United States. Even in the face of such immigration within a community, a wide array of social factors favors assimilation and shift toward English. The structure of the community also contributes to the status of the Spanish language within that community. Concomitant to the notion of continued immigration is the size of the speech community, as communities with smaller counts tend to disfavor maintenance. The composition and geographical distribution of the speech community as a proportion of a larger community are equally as significant. Finally, the function and use of the language within the community also impacts maintenance or shift. The domain of the language (where it is used), its register and topic (how it is used), and the prescribed interlocutor (with whom it is used) go a long way toward predicting retention or loss.

The social motivations toward language shift are numerous. Bills (2005) points to strong and frequent assimilatory pressures in the United States, in all areas of life: “Se siente fuertemente la preponderancia del inglés en el sistema educativo, en los avances económicos, y en todas las esferas de ‘ser americano’” (p. 66). Socioeconomic factors like education, employment, and income opportunities come to the fore in discussions on linguistic assimilation (Hudson et al. 1995). Porcel (2011) points to demographic status (e.g. group size, fertility, immigration), socioeconomic status (e.g. social stratification, economic success, instrumental value of Spanish), cultural status (e.g. linguistic enclaves, Hispanic media), and legal status (e.g. language policy and linguistic rights) as those social factors that determine maintenance or shift of a language. Grosjean (1982) lists no fewer than 18 social aspects, ranging from group demographics (e.g. geographical position and concentration) to family dynamics (e.g. social mobility, intermarriage, isolation) to individual social situations (e.g. employment, religion, activism) that contribute to the phenomenon.

Beyond social factors, language attitudes have a sizeable impact on language maintenance and shift. These attitudes are manifested in different ways among different groups. In-group and out-group attitudes toward the minority language, toward the majority language, toward cultural pluralism, toward bilingualism, toward linguistic “purity,” and simply toward the “other” group all come into play (Grosjean 1982, p. 107). Self-identification and cultural identity also arise as a reflection of language attitudes (see Showstack’s chapter, this volume). Not unrelated to language attitudes are xenophobia and racism, both external and internal to Spanish speakers, as attitudes toward (other) Hispanic groups are manifested in sociolinguistic evaluations and social reactions. These reactions often contribute to language policy, language
Devin Jenkins

movements, and other practices that create a further impact on language use in the United States (cf. Crawford 2000; Valdés 1995).

All of the above factors contribute to a shift away from Spanish in favor of English. As communities undergo these changes, measurements can be taken to observe the phenomena of maintenance and shift at the community level. Hudson et al. (1995) proposed four means of measurement for large populations. Perhaps the simplest measurement is count, which is simply a raw count of total Spanish speakers in an area, as determined by Census figures. Count is most accurately predicted by large populations. On the one hand, the count measure helps to identify large groups of Spanish speakers in the United States, but on the other, it is nearly just as predictive of large cities in general.

The counterpart to count is density, which measures the Spanish-speaking percentage of a county’s total population. As one indicates a raw number and the other indicates a concentration of speakers, count and density provide two sides of an equation. Therefore, while small border communities have Spanish-speaking densities upwards of 90%, they do not represent large numbers of Spanish speakers overall. We can gain a sense of just how much the language is used and maintained in high-density areas, but density as a measure does not distinguish between Clark County, Idaho, with a density of 43% (and 780 total residents) and Los Angeles County, with a density of just 39%—and a total population of nearly 10 million. The two variables taken in tandem provide a more complete view of Spanish-speaking communities than either taken separately.

A metric that, by its very definition, helps to identify language maintenance in an area is language loyalty (cf. Fishman et al. 1966). Loyalty is defined as a ratio of the number of individuals who claim Spanish as a home language (i.e. count), divided by the number of individuals claiming Hispanic or Latino ethnicity. Loyalty shows those areas in which the language is being maintained among Hispanics. It is important to note that this term does not imply any conscious decision to maintain (or not) the language among individuals or groups, neither does it suggest any converse concept of ‘disloyalty,’ but rather reflects outcomes of the many societal factors that contribute to language loss or maintenance (cf. Porcel 2011).

The final method of measurement of language use and maintenance is what Hudson et al. (1995) referred to as retention. This metric purports to measure the intergenerational transmission from one generation to the next, and is measured through Census data by dividing language loyalty among 5- to 17-year-olds by loyalty among those 18 and older. While age does not always equate to generation, at the county-wide level, the age difference is enough to be significant.

Communities with high counts of Spanish speakers fall into two main categories. First, as was previously mentioned, count correlates strongly with total population. The largest Spanish-speaking cities are, quite simply, the largest cities. The top five U.S. cities in Spanish-language count are, in order, New York, Los Angeles, Houston, San Antonio, and Chicago—which are the first, second, fourth, seventh, and third largest cities in the country, respectively. Of the top ten cities for Spanish language count, nine are in the top ten in total population—El Paso, ranked #19 in total population, is the lone exception, with the ninth-largest count. Communities with high counts that are not large cities are those medium-sized cities and counties that sit close to the Mexican border. The border proximity explains the higher ranking of El Paso. In border communities, high density creates a higher count, thus a relatively small city like McAllen, Texas shows a considerably higher count (586,409) than Brooklyn, New York (396,897), even though Brooklyn is 3.25 times more populated.

As Spanish-speaking density has a very strong correlation with Hispanic density in a county, Figure 4.1 gives a good visual representation of areas of density in the United States. Areas with
the highest densities, are unsurprisingly, the Southwest, South Florida, and the Northeast, with significant densities also around Chicago. Perhaps most notable are the higher densities in the West, not confined exclusively to the Southwest. Also notable is the shading in and around North Carolina, where growth is among the highest in the country.

Density holds a strong relationship with distance to the Mexican border. Of the 19 counties with the highest densities in the United States, all of them are along the border, with 17 of them in Texas and 1 each in Arizona and California. Starr County, Texas has the highest density at 95.3%. Miami-Dade, Florida, is 20th, with a density of 63.9%, and is the only county east of the Mississippi in the top 60. Miami’s bilingual community and stature in the Spanish-speaking world have been well documented (Carter and Lynch 2015; Lynch 2000; Otheguy et al. 2000).

Language loyalty is a key factor when it comes to heritage speakers. Identifying where Spanish is being maintained, and where it is not, helps to show where heritage speakers are. Bills et al. (1995) showed, based on 1980 Census data, that “proximity to the border favors retention of Spanish . . . while greater distance favors shift to English” (1995, p. 25). Much of that maintenance stemmed from the fact that higher densities lend themselves to stronger support of the language within the community.

In addition to opportunity for use of the language [nearer the border], there is likely to be a more favorable attitude toward Spanish deriving from community and institutional support . . . Strength in numbers may well promote a more positive evaluation of both the ethnic group and the language.

However, based on data from the 2010 Census, Jenkins (2012) found that those correlations were disappearing. A weak correlation (.29, down from .61 in 1980) still exists between distance of a city from the border and language loyalty, but at the county level (as opposed to just the city), a correlation is non-existent. This stronger language loyalty is likely a product of increased immigration and in-migration over the past 30 years, thus producing a higher percentage of first-generation speakers in areas away from the border.

At an even more macroscopic level than counties and communities, dividing the Spanish-speaking areas of the country into different zones yields fundamental demographic and sociohistorical distinctions between Spanish-speaking populations. Four distinct regions of the country each have unique Spanish-language situations. Our first zone is the five states of the Southwest (Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas). These states have a long-standing history with regard to the Spanish language. Many Hispanic families in these states trace their history in the region back many generations, in some cases for centuries. Many of the studies of Spanish in the Southwest have centered on language use in these states and, while the language is still being maintained in many areas, Figure 4.3 also shows that growth is not happening in some of the more traditional regions like New Mexico and West Texas. Continued immigration is a key factor in language maintenance in a community and, in the absence of a consistent in-flow of Spanish speakers, language shift occurs.

A second Spanish-speaking zone is what we will call the Northwest, consisting of Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington. This zone is noteworthy for multiple reasons. First, it continues to grow. Nevada, for example, has seen a growth in count of over 1000% since the late 1990s. Additionally, each of these states claims a Hispanic density of over 10%. Finally, the Northwest provides a significant contrast from the Southwest in the sense that it is a much newer Spanish-speaking area (which explains Nevada’s inclusion in this group, in spite of its
geographical position). Rather than large numbers of multiple generations of Spanish speakers, figures suggest that two or three generations would be the norm in the Northwest, and that many first-generation speakers in the families are still there.

An even newer zone is what we will call the Southeast, comprising Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. This cluster of states is where massive growth has happened, mostly from Mexico, since the late 2000s. A third-generation Spanish speaker in this area would be the exception rather than the norm. Florida is excluded from this cluster not because it is not Spanish-speaking, neither because it doesn’t have a significant number of recent Mexican immigrants, but rather because the significant Cuban population, which now counts more than 50 years since the beginning of the Cuban revolution, is in itself a contrast from these other communities. A separate study based solely on language maintenance and use among the Latino populations in Florida is warranted.

A final group is the Northeast, consisting of Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island. These four states were selected because each of them has a Latino population greater than 10%, and because they provide a significant contrast from the other groups in the sense that these are the only states in this study that do not have a Mexican majority among Latinos. This cluster also differs from the others due to the lack of a rural Spanish speaker, a commonality in the other three groups.

Loyalty figures for the four regional clusters show that language loyalty in the Southwest and the Northwest are virtually identical, with the Southwest reporting 77.5% loyalty and the Northwest reporting 78%. The Northeast, by comparison, has an overall loyalty rate of 86%, and the Southeast reports language loyalty at a staggering 93%. The high rate of loyalty in the Southeast lends itself well to the notion that the population is so recent that most of the Spanish speakers are still first- and second-generation speakers, thus maintaining the language as a home language. At the other end of the continuum, the longitudinal presence of Hispanics in the Southwest has led to lower claiming, as third- and fourth-generation (and beyond) speakers are much more common.

When looking at individual counties, the highest maintenance figures in the four clusters come from the Southeast. Of the top 20 counties in loyalty, 19 are from the Southeast cluster. Given that this is the region of the greatest new growth, the figures stand to reason. With regard to rapid growth in Colorado based on 2000 Census data, McCullough and Jenkins (2005) found that “migration of Spanish-speakers into Colorado from abroad is serving to reinforce the measures of linguistic loyalty and retention, against the tendencies to the contrary in the absence of such support.” They found that immigration was the single, most important variable with regard to Spanish language maintenance in Colorado. This appears to be the case in the Southeast, as well.

Intergenerational retention varies by regional cluster as well. The Southwest reported a retention rate of 82.3%; the Northwest was once again virtually identical at 83%; and the Southeast once again had a higher rate at 86.1%. This time, the Northeast has the lowest intergenerational retention rate at 77.4%. The higher figure for the Southeast can be explained for much the same reason as the higher loyalty rate—Spanish speakers are so new to the area that even the younger children belong to the so-called “generation 1.5,” meaning that they were born in Mexico and moved here between the ages of 6 and 17—still belonging to the younger age group as defined in this study and continuing to speak Spanish as a home language.

As for the lower retention rate in the Northeast, several possibilities abound. One is the low rate of growth for the existing Puerto Rican population. While the smaller Mexican population has shown a growth rate of 73% over ten years, the majority Puerto Rican population has not. In New York, for example, the Puerto Rican population grew by only 2% in the latest decennial census period. The absence of immigration within the community, then, lacks the necessary
reinforcement of the language from abroad. Another possibility is the absence of the rural (and the abundance of the urban) Hispanic (cf. Fishman 1972). Porcel (2011) states that:

[c]ities are the type of setting exerting strong pressures toward cultural assimilation due to demands from the labor market, as well as insertion into more open and diffused social networks in which people have to engage in their daily lives. In contrast, rural dwellers usually enjoy greater isolation and self-sufficiency.

p. 631

In the West and in the South, Spanish-dominant, Mexican-origin agricultural workers are found in abundance in rural areas. In the Northeast, where population densities are the highest in the country, these types of areas are much less prevalent. The dual threat of urban pressure and lack of rural occupational opportunity may be at play. The rural–urban dichotomy certainly merits further investigation.

**Implications for Spanish for heritage speakers**

Given the widespread use of the Spanish language through the country, the reality is that communities of heritage speakers can be found in almost every corner of the nation. These communities are as diverse as they are ubiquitous. Major cities with high densities of Spanish speakers such as Miami, Los Angeles, New York, and Chicago have as many systemic, political, and educational challenges with regard to heritage speaker and/or bilingual education as smaller communities with equally high densities. Communities with lower densities (or low counts) will have to determine at what point a critical mass has been (or will be) reached, and plan accordingly. The longitudinal differences in language communities, as illustrated earlier, present a living laboratory for educational practices among heritage speakers. Of course, one size does not fit all. Identity (Potowski 2012; Rivera-Mills 2012) plays a major role in how heritage language programs are constructed. What may work in rural New Mexico may well not work in rural Idaho, just as what works in Los Angeles might be quite different from what would be effective in Chicago, yet as communities become more established, patterns for success can also vary. What would be ineffectual in Portland or Raleigh right now might be warranted a generation (or less) from now.

Beaudrie (2012) identified U.S. universities that offer Spanish for Heritage Speaker (SHS) programs, and found the national rate to be at 40%. In the five Southwestern states, where SHS programs are among the oldest in the country, that figure was only 39% (64/163). The Northwest counted only 8 university programs out of 24, or 33%. Only one program (in Georgia) was identified in the Southeastern region, while Northeastern programs came in at a rate of just over half (53%). Beaudrie points out, however, that most of the Northeastern programs consist of a single course offering, suggesting that, with newer SHS programs, they simply have not had the opportunity to expand their offerings (2012, p. 210). Given the low rate in the Southwest, where densities are highest and Hispanic communities have the longest histories, there is no question that the field is ripe for growth of SHS programs.

High density and/or high count areas with lower retention rates would suggest the most fertile ground for SHS programs, as they contain a critical mass of students who require educational support for language maintenance or recontact (see Lynch 2000). Communities with higher densities would, on the face of it, engender more support for such programs, given the language investment by a higher portion of the community. Conversely, higher retention rates should be fostered through bilingual educational programs, thus leading to a greater possibility of transmission to the next generation.
Notes

1 Unless otherwise noted, general demographic data come from the 2010 U.S. Census, Summary File 1 (U.S. Census Bureau 2011). As the Census has simplified its format to the point that now only ten questions are asked, any figures and correlations unavailable in the 2010 Census data come from five-year estimates of the 2008–2012 American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau 2013).

2 The U.S. Census uses the denomination “Hispanic or Latino” for ethnic claiming. In the present study, the terms “Hispanic” and “Latino” will be used interchangeably.

3 Migration trends show that Mexicans from Northern Mexico tend to settle in those U.S. states closest to their Mexican state of origin (i.e. those from western Mexico tend to settle in California and Arizona, those from the states that border Texas settle most often in Texas), with southern Mexican emigrants showing a greater diversity of settlement due to lack of proximity to any one U.S. state. The top three destinations for immigrants from Tamaulipas, a border state with Texas, are Houston, McAllen, and Dallas, while the top destinations for *veracruzanos* are Raleigh, Chicago, and Atlanta (Instituto de los Mexicanos en el Exterior 2015).

4 Many native New Mexicans tend to eschew the term “Mexican,” but rather claim “Spaniard” (65,045 New Mexicans claimed accordingly in 2010), “Spanish” (57,021) or “Spanish American” (10,501) on the Census, even with little immediate connection to Spain. See Bills and Vigil (2008) for further discussion of this phenomenon.

References


