

2 Nuevo Chicago?

Language, Diaspora, and Latina/o Panethnic Formations

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INTRODUCTION

In February 2010, the *Chicago Sun-Times* ran a series of stories titled “Nuevo Chicago: How Young Hispanics are Reshaping the Region”. The ambivalent use of English and Spanish in the title of this series corresponds to the stories’ alternate framing of the experiences of Latinas/os¹ growing up in Chicago as “two cultures finding a happy medium in the mainstream” and “living in two worlds”. The stories suggest that “emphasis on language and identity seem to go hand in hand” and point to examples such as one young man who “thinks of himself as Mexican” even though he “was born in Chicago and speaks fluent English without an accent”. This series of stories exemplifies the contested terrain over which language is positioned as a sign of assimilation and distinctiveness for Chicago Latinas/os. It also raises questions about the ways that the relationship between language and “Latina/o-ness” is constructed within Chicago’s specific urban context.

In this chapter, I analyze the interplay between ideas about language and place in the construction of panethnic identities. I focus on Chicago as an urban sociolinguistic context and “US Latina/o” as an emergent panethnic category-concept that comprises US-based persons of Latin American descent. Chicago’s Latina/o population is predominated by Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. Many Chicago-based Mexicans and Puerto Ricans engage in diasporic spatial practices by representing different community areas throughout the city as “Mexican Chicago” and “Puerto Rican Chicago”. This reterritorialization, in which Mexico and Puerto Rico are remapped as part of Chicago, calls into question geographical borders between the US and Latin America. I show how this imbrication of US-based and Latin America-based geographical borders corresponds to an imbrication of English and Spanish linguistic borders through the creation of hybrid Spanglish forms.

For Chicago Latinas/os, linguistic repertoires consisting of culturally valorized varieties of English and Spanish are linked to differing perspectives on the linguistic signs that correspond to Puerto Rican, Mexican, and Latina/o identities. Based on the language ideologies associated with many non-Latina/o perspectives, Spanish is a homogeneous language that indexes Latina/o identity

in straightforward ways. These perspectives view Spanish language practices as homogeneous linguistic phenomena that function as signs of homogeneous Latina/o identities; this means that many US Latinas/os are faced with the erasure of their ethnic specificity, for example, Mexican, Puerto Rican, and so on, and positioned as members of the Spanish-language community regardless of whether they possess sociopragmatic control of the Spanish language. Meanwhile, from in-group perspectives, Mexican Spanish and Puerto Rican Spanish often play a central role in defining Mexican–Puerto Rican difference (De Genova & Ramos-Zayas, 2003; Zentella, 2009 [2002]). These competing constructions demonstrate the centrality of language ideologies and linguistic practices to the creation of Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Latina/o identities. Chicago-based Mexicans and Puerto Ricans navigate these contradictory viewpoints by simultaneously embracing their Mexican and Puerto Rican ethnic specificity and constructing panethnic Latina/o identities.

This chapter investigates the sociolinguistic fashioning of Latina/o panethnicity in New Northwest High School² (henceforth NNHS). NNHS is a Chicago public high school whose student body is more than 90% Mexican and Puerto Rican, including many “MexiRican” students who have immediate and extended families that are composed of Mexicans *and* Puerto Ricans. In this context, minute features of the English and Spanish languages are enregistered as emblems of ethnolinguistic and institutional affiliation. The concept of enregisterment captures the processes through which forms of language are endowed with cultural value as coherent sets in relation to models of personhood (Agha, 2007; Silverstein, 2003). In this case, the focus is on how particular features of the English and Spanish languages are enregistered as signs of Puerto Rican, Mexican, and Latina/o models of personhood. While Mexican and Puerto Rican students demonstrate varying Spanish and English linguistic repertoires, they often stereotypically position Spanish as the primordial Latina/o tongue and signal their investment in demonstrating their intimate knowledge of Spanish. Yet students’ interactions and presentations of self in the context of this American public high school are powerfully anchored by hegemonic, standardizing language ideologies that position English as the language that “ideally express[es] the spirit of a nation and the territory it occupies” (Gal, 2006, p. 163). These dynamics shape students’ investment in speaking what is ideologically constructed as “unaccented” English *and* manifesting their Latina/o identities by referencing their intimate relationship with Spanish. This tension between the embrace and stigmatization of languages other than monoglot Standard English (Silverstein, 1996) is characteristic of what Farr (2011) refers to as Chicago’s “urban plurilingualism”. Latina/o NNHS students navigate these competing ethnolinguistic demands by enregistering Spanish and English forms into a set of practices that I call “Inverted Spanglish”. This register formation, which consists of Spanish lexical items and English phonology, becomes a sociolinguistic emblem and enactment of panethnic Latina/o identities among Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago. These dynamics inform my suggestion

that Chicago's unique (im)migration, political-economic, and social histories structure ethnolinguistic transformations such as the emergence of Latina/o panethnicity.

The chapter begins by analyzing the ways that Puerto Rican and Mexican NNHS students construct national identities by creating and engaging in symbolic practices that remap the boundaries between Puerto Rico, Mexico, and Chicago. I argue that Puerto Rico and Mexico are understood to exist in Chicago through processes of reterritorialization (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992). These negotiations of borders surrounding national identities and geographical territories take shape in relation to the reconfiguration of borders associated with varieties of Spanish and English. I point to a set of hybrid language practices to demonstrate how the diasporic remapping of Puerto Rico and Mexico within Chicago corresponds to the linguistic remapping of Spanish within English. I show how Latina/o students' experiences of learning and transforming these "ethnolinguistic borders" (Rosa, 2014) are linked to the creation of panethnic US Latina/o identities.

CONSTRUCTING DIASPORIC LATINA/O EMBLEMS IN CHICAGO

New Northwest High School was opened in 2004 to offset overcrowding at a nearby Chicago public high school. As an open-enrollment, "neighborhood" high school, NNHS draws its students from several surrounding communities. Based on the highly segregated demographics of these communities, more than 90% of NNHS's roughly 1,000 students are Latina/o.³ The majority of these students are Puerto Rican and Mexican. While Chicago Public Schools does not statistically track students of mixed-Latina/o parentage, many of the students with whom I worked had both Mexican and Puerto parents and/or family members. In NNHS and its highly segregated surrounding communities, where I conducted ethnographic and sociolinguistic fieldwork between 2007 and 2010, profound forms of spatial, racial, and class marginalization characterize Latina/o experiences. For example, nearly all of the 60 NNHS students with whom I worked most closely did not know a single White peer by name.⁴ This is a result of the racial segregation between neighborhoods and community areas for which Chicago is notorious. Chicago's neighborhood segregation is tied to various forms of inequality and discrimination in realms such as employment, housing, education, health care, and policing. These issues were a central part of the discussion in my first meeting with the principal of NNHS, Dr. Baez, which took place in the fall of 2007. She introduced me to the school by explaining that one of her long-term goals as principal is to transform her students from "at-risk youth" into "young Latino professionals". I was interested not only in Dr. Baez's critical awareness of her students' experiences of spatial, racial, and class exclusion but also in the question of what a "young Latino professional" might sound like.

Dr. Baez's notion of "young Latino professionals" invokes broader ideas about Latina/o identities in Chicago, the US city with the third-largest population overall and the fifth-largest Latina/o population (Bureau of the Census, 2011). Throughout Chicago, various Latina/o emblems circulate in a range of semiotic modalities, from advertisements and community-based organizations to hairstyles and language use (see Figures 2.1 and 2.2). These Chicago-based Latina/o emblems interact dynamically with the construction of Latina/o identities across local, national, and international scales. Such constructions often involve exoticizing stereotypes that position Latinas/os as a unified consumer market regardless of ethnic difference, as in Puerto Rican, Mexican, and so on. Dávila has analyzed this commodification of Latina/o identity at length (2012 [2001]; 2008). She critically examines the ways that seemingly positive, "Whitewashed" portrayals of Latinas/os are linked to forms of homogenization and stigmatization more typically associated with explicitly negative representations of Latinas/os as an undesirable population.

On the surface, Dr. Baez's notion of "young Latino professional" appears to coincide with the very forms of Whitewashing and homogenization that Dávila critiques. This certainly does not stem from her lack of knowledge of Puerto Rican and Mexican specificity. Dr. Baez, a middle-aged Puerto Rican woman who was born on the island but raised in Chicago from the age of 4, had closely interacted with Mexicans in Chicago throughout her life. In fact, she is a mother to MexiRican children, that is, children of Puerto Rican and Mexican parentage. The notion of "young Latino professional" reflects Dr. Baez's required adherence to the homogenization of Latinas/os within local,



Figure 2.1 A mural that reads "latino flavors with the spice of life". This mural adorned the side of a Latino fusion restaurant, Carnivale, located in downtown Chicago. It succinctly signals the coherence of Latino panethnicity, its objective sensory existence in experienceable "flavors", and its links to a "spicy" way of life. Photo by David Flores.



Figure 2.2 A “Latino Express” bus. This Latino emblem involves the creation of a Chicago bus company named “Latino Express”. Buses with the company’s name prominently displayed on them can be seen throughout the city. The use of the term “Latino” in the name of this business demonstrates the marketability of Latino identity. Photo by David Flores.

state, and federal educational policy.⁵ On each of these scales, Latina/o ethnic specificity, such as Mexicanness and Puerto Ricanness, is systematically erased. This erasure contradicts students’ perspectives, from which signs of Mexicanness and Puerto Ricanness are ubiquitous (see Figures 2.3 and 2.4).

Boundaries of “Mexicanness” and “Puerto Ricanness” were alternately emphasized and erased as students engaged with ethnolinguistic emblems to negotiate modes of shared identification. Mexicans and Puerto Ricans constitute the two largest US Latina/o national subgroups. Chicago is the only US city in which Puerto Ricans and Mexicans have been building their lives alongside one another in large numbers since the mid-20th century. Chicago contains the fourth-largest Mexican population of any US city and the fourth-largest mainland US Puerto Rican population (Pew Hispanic Center, 2012).



Figure 2.3 Student artwork juxtaposing Puerto Rican and Mexican flags displayed in a ninth-grade NNHS classroom. Photo by Author.



Figure 2.4 Puerto Rican and Mexican flag representations throughout Chicago. The top left shows a monument to the Puerto Rican flag. The flag in this picture is located on Division Street near California Avenue in Chicago's Humboldt Park community. An identical flag is located a few blocks away, near Western Avenue. The two steel flag monuments flank a strip of Division Street called *Paseo Boricua* (Puerto Rican Promenade), which is filled with predominantly Puerto Rican community organizations, businesses, and residences. They contribute to the nationalist pride of Puerto Ricans born in Chicago and elsewhere. They also buttress claims that the area between the flags is *un pedacito de patria* (a little piece of the homeland), which I will describe in detail later in this chapter. The top right picture shows a tattoo on a 12th-grade Puerto Rican NNHS student that includes the Chicago skyline and the steel Chicago Puerto Rican flag. The top of the tattoo says "City of Wind", a play on Chicago's nickname, "The Windy City", and the bottom says, "Yo soy de aqui" (I am from here.) There is a playful ambiguity between whether *aqui* ("here") means Puerto Rico, Chicago, or both; this young man was born in Chicago. The lower left picture shows a Nike Air Force One shoe with the colors and design of the Mexican flag, as well as the Chicago skyline in the green portion of the shoe. The lower right picture shows a tattoo on an older sibling of an 11th-grade Mexican NNHS student that includes the State of Illinois, the Mexican flag, and the words "Lil Village", a slang reference to Little Village, a community area on the South Side of Chicago widely recognized among Chicago residents as the center of Mexican Chicago. Each of these designs consists not simply of generic "Puerto Rican" and "Mexican" symbols but of Chicago-based representations of Puerto Ricanness and Mexicanness. Photos by David Flores.

NNHS students made sense of Puerto Ricanness and Mexicanness through these longstanding histories of face-to-face, frequently intimate interactions that rendered their differences all the more tangible and, oftentimes, negligible. They were classmates, boyfriends, girlfriends, teammates, neighbors, and family members. There were many students with one Puerto Rican and one Mexican parent, a situation that has led to the creation of “MexiRican” and “PortoMex” as identifiable categories (Potowski & Matts, 2008; Rúa, 2001). Thus, for some students, Latina/o panethnicity was definitional of their identities. However, even though the vast majority of students identified specifically as either Mexican or Puerto Rican, they developed intimate knowledge of both Mexicanness and Puerto Ricanness. This knowledge was often reflected in the invocation of various stereotypes about one another’s physical appearance, musical tastes, styles of dress, and language use; these Chicago-based Mexican and Puerto Rican stereotypes have been analyzed extensively in previous research (De Genova & Ramos-Zayas, 2003; Pérez, 2003). Rivera-Servera (2012) characterizes the complexity of these intra-Latina/o relationships as forms of “frictive intimacy”.

The beginning and end of each NNHS school year coincide with parades and carnivals that celebrate Puerto Rican and Mexican identities. September 16 officially marks Mexican independence, and young people in many Northwest and South Side Chicago neighborhoods can be seen waving Mexican flags on street corners and seeking supportive “honks” from passing cars throughout the month. The Puerto Rican complement to these practices begins in early May, when vendors line the edges of Humboldt Park with Puerto Rican paraphernalia of all kinds⁶ in preparation for the annual Puerto Rican festival and parade in June. A second annual Puerto Rican festival, “*Bandera a Bandera*” (flag to flag), is held during the first weekend of September; both of these festivals take place just a few blocks from the school. The name of this festival refers to the massive steel Puerto Rican flags that flank Division Street between Western and California Avenues (see Figure 2.4).

By no means were students’ celebrations of Mexican and Puerto Rican identity limited to these scheduled ritual events. Inside NNHS, the respective flags could be seen on headbands, necklaces, bracelets, notebooks, gym towels, book bags, and artwork that hung on classroom walls (see Figure 2.3); outside of school, where an entirely different uniform policy took hold, flags adorned sneakers (“gym shoes” in the Chicago idiom), jerseys, t-shirts, shorts, jeans, dresses, cars (on bumpers, rear windows, rearview mirrors, seat covers, and so on), houses, apartment windows, storefronts, fanny packs, bicycles, hats, beach towels, key chains, and even haircuts. The flag can be artfully shaved into the back or sides of one’s hair; this could be seen most frequently around the time of the Puerto Rican parade.

The knowledge of one another’s Puerto Rican or Mexican identities, or a combination of both, was oftentimes a requirement for everyday interactions. Students either presupposed one another’s ethnoracial identities or

they explicitly inquired about them at the outset of interactions. What does it mean to be Mexican, Puerto Rican, or simply Hispanic/Latina/o in the context of Chicago? How could students identify so strongly with these categories if they were born and raised primarily within the US mainland? Even the few Latina/o students who had never visited Mexico or Puerto Rico still identified strongly as Mexican or Puerto Rican. The following section demonstrates the ways that being born in Chicago can be reimagined as a way of being born in Puerto Rico or Mexico.

¿DE QUÉ PARTE? (FROM WHAT PART?): DIASPORIC DETERRITORIALIZATION AND RETERRITORIALIZATION

While most NNHS students were born and raised in Chicago, many of them had either lived in Puerto Rico or Mexico at some point or visited several times throughout their lives. However, Mexican and Puerto Rican identities were not necessarily restricted to students who had “concrete” ties to these nations, such as close family members residing in Mexico or Puerto Rico or family-owned property there. In fact, many Mexican and Puerto Rican students who had either never been to Mexico or Puerto Rico or who had not visited in many years were not regarded as less “Mexican” or “Puerto Rican” than anyone else. After learning of one’s Mexican or Puerto Rican identity, students would often ask, “¿De qué parte?” (From what part?). One’s response to this question was not interpreted literally as a statement of birthplace but rather of ancestry. Students who were born and raised in Chicago, including those who had never been to Mexico or Puerto Rico, responded to this question by identifying particular Mexican or Puerto Rican localities. The most common Mexican states students identified were Michoacán, Jalisco, Guerrero, and Guanajuato; Puerto Ricans named cities such as Ponce, Bayamon, and San Sebastián. While there are no official statistics on the Mexican and Puerto Rican localities from which Chicago-based Latinas/os emigrate, previous research has analyzed transnational relationships between Chicago and Michoacán, Mexico (Farr, 2006), as well as Chicago and San Sebastián, Puerto Rico (Pérez, 2004).

It is not by chance that students could be born in Chicago and still be “from” Mexico or Puerto Rico. Various parts of Chicago, including areas around NNHS, are formally and informally identified as “Little Puerto Rico” or “Little Mexico”. “Paseo Boricua” (“Puerto Rican Promenade”), the stretch of city blocks between the steel Puerto Rican flags described and pictured earlier, is popularly referred to as “*un pedacito de patria*”, or “a little piece of the homeland”. For many residents and visitors, including visitors from Puerto Rico, Paseo Boricua is *part of Puerto Rico*. From these perspectives, Puerto Rican restaurants, bakeries, music shops, hardware stores, schools, architecture, murals, parades, music, folklore, and festivals resituate Humboldt

Park within the boundaries of Puerto Rico (Ramos-Zayas, 2003). Similar kinds of formal designations exist in Mexican neighborhoods; for example, La Villita or Little Village, the neighborhood referenced in one of the pictures in Figure 2.4, has its own monument, a gateway that states “*Bienvenidos a Little Village*” (“Welcome to Little Village”), on the South Side of Chicago (De Genova, 2005). Puerto Rican and Mexican activists who participated in the naming of these community areas sought to counter negative images of and ideas about Puerto Ricans and Mexicans that circulate in popular cultural representations, news media, and the everyday conversations of city residents. These activists also attempted to encourage young Puerto Ricans and Mexicans, who might otherwise be ashamed of their identities, to take pride in their respective histories.

This reworking of geographical borders, in which parts of Chicago become linked to Puerto Rico and Mexico, should be understood as a process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. While diaspora is often analyzed as a phenomenon that is chiefly characterized by territorial displacement, I seek to highlight here the ways that displacement is called into question when social actors such as NNHS students reconstruct Chicago as *part of* Puerto Rico and Mexico. The ritualized events and symbols described earlier, in conjunction with extreme forms of neighborhood segregation, inform Chicago Puerto Ricans’ and Mexicans’ remapping of national borders. In many ways, by reframing spatial segregation, these forms of deterritorialization and reterritorialization counteract forces of internal colonialism. That is, decades of community struggle have allowed Chicago-based Puerto Ricans and Mexicans to resist spatial, racial, and class exclusion. By laying claim to parts of the city in which they dwell en masse, generations of Puerto Ricans and Mexicans valorize their national identities and the Chicago-based territories to which they are understood to correspond. Such diasporic imaginaries demonstrate students’ engagement with competing ideas about their identities and unsettle straightforward narratives of assimilation and transnationalism.⁷

There were even situations in which borders constructed around particular areas within the school and specific classrooms became playfully figured as transnational spaces. In one freshman classroom, a group of Mexican students sat together each day. They spoke English and Spanish in their interactions with one another and with other students. One day in this classroom, a Puerto Rican student who was not part of this group announced that he needed to borrow a pencil from someone; when a Mexican student in the aforementioned group offered to let him borrow one, the Puerto Rican student jokingly suggested that he would have to cross the border in order to get to her. She playfully responded by demanding that the Puerto Rican student show his green card in order to approach her desk. Similarly, a group of 12th-grade Puerto Rican students who ate lunch together referred to their table as “Division and Cali”. This phrase is a reference to the Humboldt Park intersection between Division Street and California Avenue where one of the steel Puerto Rican flags pictured in Figure 2.4 can be found. In many ways,

the phrase “Division and Cali” is emblematic of Puerto Rican identity. Talk of national borders, ethnoracially identified neighborhood areas, “papers”—that is, US citizenship—and green cards was common in school interactions and showed how students, the majority of whom were Chicago-born US citizens, understood one another in relation to broader conceptions of Mexican-ness and Puerto Ricanness. Thus, deterritorialization and reterritorialization take place on multiple scales.

Despite these complicated in-group dynamics, out-group perspectives often invoke presumptions of Latina/o homogeneity. These presumptions rest on intuitions about a cultural quality of “Spanishness” that is associated with music, food, and, most importantly, language; none of these extensions of “Spanishness” existed to Latina/o students as straightforwardly homogenized concepts. “Spanishness” is a particularly powerful emblem of Latina/o identity. This highlights the ways that “Latina/o” is constructed as a distinctly *ethnolinguistic* concept. The following section links the diasporic remapping of national borders analyzed earlier to the remapping of ethnolinguistic borders and the construction of panethnic Latina/o identities.

CONSTRUCTING SPANISH AND ENGLISH AS SIGNS OF MEXICAN, PUERTO RICAN, AND LATINA/O IDENTITIES

While one might assume that the Spanish language is a ready-made vehicle for the creation of Latina/o ethnolinguistic identities, Spanish in fact becomes a prime ideological site in which to locate Mexican–Puerto Rican difference. Students learned to do impressions of Mexican and Puerto Rican Spanish and became acutely aware of the ideologies surrounding these different varieties. In the school’s Spanish language classes, these ideologies often took the form of playful lexical debates about the correct word for objects such as socks (Mexican: *calcetines*, Puerto Rican: *medias*), drinking straw (Mexican: *popote*, Puerto Rican: *sorbeto*), and cake (Mexican: *pastel*, Puerto Rican: *bizcocho*). At times, students delighted in teaching each other different Mexican and Puerto Rican words. This was especially the case when a given word meant something very different in Mexican and Puerto Rican Spanish, such as the last example above, in which “bizcocho” means “cake” for Puerto Ricans but for Mexicans is a vulgar way of referring to female genitalia. On other occasions, Puerto Rican students complained that particular Spanish-language teachers privileged Mexican Spanish over Puerto Rican Spanish. For many students, Mexican Spanish was stereotyped as more “correct” than Puerto Rican Spanish because stereotypical Mexican forms often corresponded more closely to those found in Spanish-language textbooks and mainstream Spanish-language popular media.

When I asked Carlos (Mex, Gen. 2, Gr. 9)⁸ to compare Mexican and Puerto Rican Spanish, he initially communicated an egalitarian perspective, simply claiming that every Latino national subgroup has its own variety of

Spanish. He pointed to my paleta-velar pronunciation of /r/ as /l/ in the word */verdad/* (really) as an example of how Puerto Rican and Mexican Spanish differ. Upon further questioning, Carlos went on to say that Mexican Spanish is probably a little bit better than Puerto Rican Spanish because it is more correct. He said that he knows this because Mexican Spanish is the variety taught in NNHS language classes and the variety spoken on television and on the radio. On the other hand, he also joked with me about the fact that he had only recently learned from friends at NNHS that words such as “*chévere*” (cool/awesome) and “*bochinche*” (gossip) are in fact Puerto Rican, *not* Mexican Spanish terms.⁹ These categorizations of phonological patterns and lexical items as Mexican and Puerto Rican demonstrate students’ investment in the Spanish language as a sign of intra-Latina/o difference.

Like Carlos, most students viewed Mexican Spanish as more standard than Puerto Rican Spanish. At the same time, they also invoked stereotypes that positioned Puerto Rican Spanish as “cooler” than Mexican Spanish. As evidence, they pointed out that stereotypical Puerto Rican phonology, lexical items, and syntactic constructions often corresponded more closely to forms heard in popular reggaeton songs.¹⁰ These stereotypes were fodder for debates between Puerto Rican and Mexican students about what cultural and linguistic practices constitute an ideal panethnic Latina/o identity (Urciuoli, 2008).

While ideas about the Spanish language figured centrally in the construction of identity within NNHS, there was also a strong investment in speaking what was ideologically constructed as “unaccented” English. Students often performed exaggerated impersonations of school employees’ pronunciations of English words with Spanish accents. Ms. Lopez, a Puerto Rican support staff member, was a frequent target of students’ linguistic derision. A student-created Facebook group titled “You know you went 2 NNHS when . . .” included postings such as, “You know you went to NNHS when you cant understand a damn thing Ms. Lopez says!!! Hahahaha” and “when you had 3 yrs of Spanish and you still cant understand Ms. Lopez”. Ms. Lopez generally spoke to students in English, so the joke here is that even though students possessed English and Spanish comprehension skills, they still could not understand Ms. Lopez. The same students who valued Spanish language skills in some contexts disparaged particular Spanish accents depending on the situation. Spanish language skills were valuable only inasmuch as they did not interfere with one’s ability to speak unmarked English. These ideas positioned people, such as Ms. Lopez, as objects of students’ ridicule. This embrace of mainstream ideologies of accent (Urciuoli, 1998) demonstrates the hegemony of monoglot Standard English ideologies in the context of US schools. Whereas Mexican and Puerto students distinguished between one another in terms of Spanish language use, they created shared identities in relation to these ideas about English.

NNHS students valued the ability to speak “unaccented” English at the same time that they were invested in the significance of Mexican and Puerto Rican varieties of Spanish. The felt need to speak “unaccented” English

and manifest one's Latina/o identity by referencing Spanish presented Mexican and Puerto Rican students with the paradoxical task of signaling their Latina/o identities by always coming across as if they could speak Spanish while speaking English, but never letting too much "Spanish" seep into their "English". What linguistic materials might allow them to negotiate these competing demands?

ENREGISTERING LATINA/O LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY: INVERTED SPANGLISH AS A PANETHNIC EMBLEM

NNHS students responded to the paradoxical demand that they demonstrate their ability to speak Spanish *in* English without being heard to possess an accent by enregistering (Agha, 2007; Silverstein, 2003) forms of language that signaled their intimate relationship with Spanish and their ability to produce "unaccented" English. They enregistered conventional and hyper-anglicized English phonology on the one hand with in-group and out-group Spanish lexical items and phrases on the other. Importantly, enregisterment must not be understood simply as a linguistic process; it simultaneously renders visible panethnic Latina/o identities and linguistic practices. I call this register formation "Inverted Spanglish" because it involves both a lexico-phonological inversion by combining Spanish lexical items and English phonology and an ethnolinguistic inversion by signaling neither Puerto Ricanness nor Mexicaness but a US Latina/o ethnolinguistic identity through the use of particular Spanish and English forms.

In Example 1, Victor (Mex/PR, Gen. 3, Gr. 11) produces an Inverted Spanglish¹¹ usage in one of my interviews with him:

Example 1

- JR: Does your birth mom speak Spanish?
 V: Yeah.
 JR: What kind of Spanish does she speak?
 V: Regular Spanish, like she just learned it from *Inglés sin Barreras* [/ingleis sin ɓaɪeɪas/] (Spanish, [[/ingleis sin ɓaɪeɪas/] sin bareiras], "Inglés sin Barreras", "English without Barriers")
 JR: And how is that regular Spanish?
 V: To me, that's like a new breed thing right there. But my mom talks Spanish, she sound like a Mexican.
 JR: Okay.
 V: But my step-dad sounds like Puerto Rican when you hear him talk Spanish.

Victor references "Inglés sin Barreras", an English language-learning course that is often advertised on Spanish-language television channels. By

pronouncing “*Inglés sin Barreras*” with English phonology, with potentially the most noticeable difference being his use of the English alveolar approximant /ɹ/ in the place of the Spanish trill /r/ and tap /ɾ/ in “*Barreras*”, Victor jokingly suggested that his mother speaks generic Spanish like the variety spoken in the commercials for *Inglés sin Barreras*. This indexicality requires Latina/o in-group knowledge of language and culture.

NNHS students also used written forms of Inverted Spanglish. Mayra (Mex, Gen. 1.5, Gr. 11) showed me a notebook in which she and her friends wrote jokes to one another. The words “pink cheese, green ghosts, cool arrows”, which when read aloud sound like the Spanish, “*pinches gringos culeros*”, in other words, fucking American (or White) assholes, were written largely across one of the pages of her notebook. Mayra told me that she and her friends loved to trick their favorite White, monolingual English-speaking teachers into reading this out loud in front of the class. In this case, Inverted Spanglish takes the form of a coded message in which Spanish words are disguised as English graphemes. The written forms are intended to be pronounced with English phonology and the humor is derived from non-Latinas/os’ inability to recognize—at least at first glance—that these written English forms correspond to Spanish words when spoken aloud. Despite the surface appearance of aggression in this particular example, I saw students engage in this sort of public practice only with teachers around whom they felt the most comfortable.

Other Inverted Spanglish usages consisted of hyper-anglicized pronunciations of widely understood Spanish words in the course of English-dominant interactions. These tokens of Inverted Spanglish involved neither intimate Spanish vulgarities nor private conversations. In one case, a teacher began the day in a sophomore study skills classroom by asking students to remind her of the date. One student yelled out, “November *cuatro*” [kwɒtɹɪoʊ/] (Spanish, /kwatro/, “*cuatro*”, “four”). Later in the class, another student responded to the teacher’s request for a volunteer to answer a question on a worksheet: “I’ve got the answer to *numero tres*” [numɜːɹɪoʊ tɹeis] (Spanish, [numero tɹeis], “*numero tres*, number three). These usages, which involve Spanish words that are familiar to many non-Latinas/os, more directly parody the speech of Whites and others who might know and use basic Spanish words such as “*tres*” and “*cuatro*”. The parodic nature of this language use is signaled by the students’ hyper-anglicized pronunciations, which in effect mock Americanized pronunciations of Spanish words. These examples suggest that Inverted Spanglish is a way in which US Latinas/os respond to what Hill (1998) calls “Mock Spanish” usages, which involve non-Latinas/os’ incorporation of “Spanish-language materials into English in order to create a jocular or pejorative key” (Hill, 1998, p. 682). Similar to Zentella’s (2003) and Mason Carris’s (2011) accounts of Latinas/os using mock language practices to parody the speech of Whites, Latina/o students at NNHS flipped the script on Mock Spanish by using Inverted Spanglish to mock non-Latina/o Spanish language use.

The enregisterment of particular language forms referred to here as Inverted Spanglish downplays Mexican–Puerto Rican difference, thus creating a linguistic emblem of Latina/o panethnicity. Whereas Spanish is a sign of Puerto Rican–Mexican difference and unmarked American English is a sign of Whiteness, Inverted Spanglish is a sign of US Latina/o panethnicity. At the same time, Inverted Spanglish represents students’ satirical response to Dr. Baez’s project of transforming their identities. Inasmuch as the aforementioned category of “young Latino professional” attempts to balance assimilation and cultural identity maintenance, Inverted Spanglish is, it would seem, students’ playful way of saying, “we get it”. Inverted Spanglish indexes not only the fashioning of panethnic Latina/o identities but also the principal’s project of socialization within NNHS.

CONCLUSION

It is not by chance that the creation of linguistic emblems of Latina/o panethnicity would take place in an urban context such as Chicago. The city’s sociohistorical dynamics uniquely position it as a producer of emblems of panethnic Latina/o identities that are composed of elements associated with the nation’s most populous Latina/o subgroups, Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. By creatively forging diasporic identities through the reterritorialization of Chicago as part of Puerto Rico and Mexico, Chicago-based Latinas/os respond to the forms of spatial, racial, and class exclusion with which they are continually faced. The linguistic corollary of this diasporic reterritorialization can be seen in the enregisterment of language practices such as Inverted Spanglish, which maps the US onto Spanish linguistic forms and Latina/o panethnicity onto English linguistic forms. Inverted Spanglish is just one example of a linguistic emblem of Latina/o panethnicity. This chapter has sought to illustrate spatial-diasporic and ethnolinguistic elements of panethnic category-making processes, with the ultimate goal of demonstrating how Chicago becomes a central site for imagining and experiencing Latina/o panethnicity.

NOTES

1. In this chapter I use “Hispanic” and “Latina/o” interchangeably to refer to US-based persons of Latin American descent. This is how the terms were used among the research participants in the ethnographic setting that I analyze later in the chapter.
2. The names of the school and all research participants are pseudonyms to protect anonymity.
3. Almost all of the school’s non-Latina/o students are African American.
4. Throughout the United States, “Latina/o” is variously ethnicized and racialized in relation to categories such as “White”, “Black”, “Asian”, and “Native

American". In the context of my research, Latina/o was constructed as a distinctively non-White racial category. This means that even very light-skinned Latina/o students who might be viewed as White in other contexts were seen as non-White in NNHS and its surrounding communities.

5. Elsewhere (Rosa, 2010), I argue that Dr. Baez's notion of "young Latino professional" is a complex bureaucratic strategy that reflects alignment with Chicago Public Schools policy while also creating a space for alternative constructions and enactments of Latina/o identity within NNHS.
6. These items range from flags, clothing, and beach towels adorned with the Puerto Rican symbols to cooking utensils and food associated with Puerto Rican cuisine.
7. Importantly, these modes of identification erase the heterogeneity internal to the categories of "Mexican" and "Puerto Rican". In contexts that are either predominantly Mexican or Puerto Rican, labels that distinguish between types of Mexicans or types of Puerto Ricans on grounds such as perceived degree of US assimilation are much more prevalent.
8. Students are coded using abbreviations of self-ascribed Latina/o national subgroup categories such as "Mexican" (Mex) and "Puerto Rican" (PR), as well as generation cohort with respect to (im)migration and grade year in school. For example:

Pedro (PR, Gen. 3, Gr. 10)

Name (self-ascribed identity, immigration cohort, grade year)

Generation 1: born and raised outside of the US mainland until the age of 12 or older

Generation 1.5: born outside of the US mainland but raised within the US mainland before the age of 12

Generation 2: born and raised within the US mainland by parents who were born and raised outside of the US mainland

Generation 3: born and raised within the US mainland by parents who were born and raised within the US mainland

I use the phrase "US mainland" to distinguish between the continental United States and its territories and possessions; Puerto Rico is an unincorporated US territory. Thus, someone born in Puerto Rico is born "outside of the US mainland". This allows for a unified designation for people born in Puerto Rico or anywhere else in Latin America.

9. It is important to emphasize that these distinctions between Spanish language forms as Mexican or Puerto Rican reflect ideological investments in Mexican-Puerto Rican difference rather than objective linguistic facts about different varieties of Spanish. The very notion that "Mexican Spanish" and "Puerto Rican Spanish" are homogeneous language varieties involves the erasure of infinite linguistic differences in Mexico, Puerto Rico, and their respective diasporas.
10. Stereotypes linking Puerto Rican Spanish and reggaeton, a musical genre with Spanish/Spanglish lyrics, Afro-Latin American/Caribbean/hip-hop influences, and predominantly Puerto Rican artists, are tied to the broader coconstruction of Puerto Ricanness and Blackness. In Chicago, this coconstruction is reflected in the stereotype that Puerto Rican Spanish is analogous to "Black English". Each of these language varieties is stereotyped as "cool", yet incorrect. In this context, both Mexican Spanish and "White English" are often stereotyped as correct, yet uncool.

11. Inverted Spanglish usages are bolded, italicized, and followed by phonetic transcriptions in brackets. The corresponding Spanish versions of these usages are also presented with Spanish phonology, written with Spanish orthography, and translated into English. For example: **numero tres** [numɜ:ɪʊ tɹeis] (Spanish, [numero treis], “*numero tres*”, number three)

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