

Final Report for Summer 2010 Faculty Development Grant: *The Language/ethnic Identity Relationship between 'Hispanic-Americans' and 'Spanish-Americans' in New Mexico: Another Tale of Two Cities*

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As specified in the proposal for this grant, I intended to conduct research in two different cities of New Mexico (specifically, Las Cruces and Albuquerque) in order to study the interaction between fluency in Spanish and ethnic identity within/between different generations of US-born Hispanics, and whether there was any relationship between this interaction and the fact that Hispanics at Las Cruces use the term “Hispanic/Mexican-American” to refer to themselves, whereas people at Albuquerque prefer the term “Spanish-American.” This project is the continuation of the research conducted for my dissertation (specifically, the use/maintenance of a particular feature of Spanish grammar in different generations of US-born Hispanics of Las Cruces, NM), where sociolinguistic-based factors rather than purely linguistic seemed to play a bigger role than expected when explaining the maintenance of this feature. Since the framework of my dissertation was more linguistic in nature, I decided to continue with the study of topic, this time focusing on the sociolinguistics/ethnic issues that I was unable to explore.

In order to conduct this research, I submitted my proposal to three different schools in order to obtain the necessary approval from the IRB (Institutional Review Board) to conduct research with human subjects. The idea was to give participants two different written tests, followed by a voluntary interview in a more informal context so that I could compare written versus oral production. My project was approved by the IRB at the University of Mary Washington, and also by the IRB at New Mexico University in Las Cruces, NM. The IRB at the University of New Mexico requested that the project be re-submitted to clarify in more depth some issues related to the methodology/instruments for my research; due to this, to the fact that it took longer than expected to approve the final version, and to other organizational issues, I was unable to collect data from the Albuquerque subjects. Now that I have the necessary approval, I will visit this New Mexico city during and conduct this research. I have already

contacted Dr. Damián Vergara Wilson, who is in charge of classes of Spanish as a Heritage Language at the University of New Mexico and also an expert in Sociolinguistics; he has graciously volunteered to help me organize the logistics of my research (his students in his Spanish for Heritage Speakers classes will be the main subjects of my research), so I am confident I will be able to collect the data I need to compare it to the data sets I already have for the participants at Las Cruces, NM.

Research conducted at New Mexico University took place thanks to the invaluable help of Dr. Patricia McGregor-Mendoza and Dr. Daniel Villa, who helped me distribute my tests among Hispanic students at their institution, and facilitated my being in contact with other subjects who reflected the generational spectrum that I was looking for. I was able to gather data from students at UNW (N = 18), and also from some of their relatives (N =7). All of them took the written tests and agreed to the oral interview. As of now, I only have to transcribe 3 more interviews, and the written data has already been tabulated. Because of the nature of the questions in both the written tests and obviously the interview, the results are qualitative in nature. The preliminary UNM results seem to support the findings outlined in my dissertation (i.e. the importance of extra-linguistic factors in order to identify oneself as “Hispanic/Mexican-American), with the participants being aware of the use of the term ‘Spanish-American’ in Albuquerque, a denomination that they do not share. However, more research and analysis needs to be conducted and, most importantly, compared to the data provided by subjects at Albuquerque in order to answer all the goals addressed in my proposal.

Once the Albuquerque data has been collected and analyzed, I intend to use this material to prepare several journal articles and conference presentations.