

Demographic coding for sociolinguistic archival preparation  
Coding for Latin@-American ethnic identities  
CARMEN FOUGHT

## **I. New demographic data on people of Latino/a ancestry in the U.S.**

(Mainly from Pew Report)

- In 2003, the U.S. Census shows that Latinos and Latinas had replaced African Americans as the largest minority ethnic group in the U.S.
- Since the turn of the century, Hispanics have accounted for more than half (50.5%) of the overall population growth in the United States
- As of mid-2007, Hispanics made up 15.1% of the total U.S. population
- Latino population growth in the new century has been more a product of the natural increase of the existing population than of new international migration
- Latino population growth tends to take place in what the Census calls “metropolitan counties”, mid to large cities.
- Through the 1990’s, and still continuing, we see growth of Latino populations in new areas, such as the South. For example, between 1990 and 2000, North Carolina experienced a higher percentage of growth in its Mexican-American population than any other state (Wolfram, Carter and Moriello 2004).

QUESTION: How are these factors likely to affect linguistic patterns?

QUESTION: What are some of the ways these trends may shape ethnic identity?

## **II. Factors to consider in coding ethnic identity among Latin@s:**

### **GENERATION:**

example: Like second-generation speakers in all communities, Latino-Americans are often interested in distinguishing themselves linguistically, as well as in other ways, from first-generation Mexican immigrants. How is this manifested?

- second generation vs. first generation
- first generation established vs. recent immigrants
- recent immigration from one state to another

### **COUNTRY OF ANCESTRY:**

example: In many places, there is a dominant group (e.g. Mexican-Americans in L.A.). How does this affect the identity of people from smaller groups (e.g. Salvadorans)?

- country of ancestry
- dominant ancestry of local population
- possibility of mixed ancestry from 2 or more Spanish-speaking countries

### **RACE (meaning “racial projects” – as in Omi and Winant):**

example: In some areas, many speakers identify as “Latino” and “Black”. How is this identity constructed differently from that of someone who identifies as half Latina and half Black?

- racial group of origin as identified in community ideologies
- possibility of “unmixed” racial overlap, as described in example
- possibility of “mixed” racial identification (e.g. one white parent, one Latino parent)

### **III. Possible methods for collecting these for archival:**

#### **Self-identification data (non-structured) collected in interviews**

example: speaker refers to herself as “Mexican”

#### **Questionnaires on the meanings of specific identity terms**

example: *What does Latino mean to you? Do you feel like this word describes you? Does it describe your mom? How about your friend Angie?*

#### **Documentation of “tensions” and boundaries in the community ideology**

example: ethnography shows that there are two rival Latin@ clubs at the high school, one in Spanish and one in English, and they “don’t get along”. (from Fought 2003)

QUESTION: How can the particular term a speaker uses to self-identify give us insight into their ethnic identity (if at all)?

### **IV. Latino language varieties**

Along with more complex coding for ethnicity, we must pursue more complex coding for the linguistic codes available within a community and within the competence of the individual speaker being interviewed. i.e. “English” or “Spanish” or “bilingual” is not enough. Just within English we can find (Fought 2006):

- **A "Standard" English**
- **A Latino English variety** (e.g. Chicano English)
- **Other local varieties of English** (e.g. Appalachian English, African-American English)
- **Non-native Speaker English** (influenced by Spanish)
- **Code-switching**

What is particularly interesting about this complex array of linguistic codes is how it reflects the complexity of ethnic identity—particularly second-generation identity—among Latin@-Americans.

QUESTION: Is it possible we could work backwards and allow the speaker's use of particular linguistic codes to help us define their ethnic identity?

QUESTION: What can the development of incipient Latino Englishes, e.g. the ones being studied in North Carolina, tell us about the construction of ethnic identity?

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