

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