



# CODING FOR “LATINO/A” ETHNIC IDENTITIES

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# I. NEW DEMOGRAPHIC DATA ON LATINOS/AS IN THE U.S.

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- 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 = more a product of the **natural increase of the existing population** than of new international migration.
- Also, tends to take place in what the Census calls **“metropolitan counties”**, mid to large cities.
- Through the 1990’s, and still continuing = growth of **Latino populations in new areas, e.g. the South.**  
[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 might shape ethnic identity?

## II. FACTORS TO CONSIDER IN CODING ETHNIC IDENTITY AMONG LATINAS/OS:

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### GENERATION:

- ❖ second generation vs. first generation
- ❖ first generation long-term residents vs. recent immigrants
- ❖ recent immigration from one state to another



## **NATIONAL ORIGIN:**

- ❖ 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 1994)

- ❖ 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 ARCHIVING:

**Self-identification data (non-structured) collected in interviews: (Fought 2003)**

*When people ask me [about ethnicity] I say Mexican but, but then they say, ‘No you’re not. You don’t speak Spanish.’*

*It’s funny, though. Like I’m all into this Chicano activist shit and....*

*They ask me “Are you black?” I’m like, “No, I’m Hispanic.” (from Bailey 2000)*



## Questions focusing on the meanings of specific identity terms:

*I: What about “Hispanic”? S: That sounds better. More professional, you know. Like ‘the Hispanic flu’.*

## Or naturally occurring comments:

*A lot of Hispanics, like, Mexican families, they’re really strict, especially with the girls.*

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

*The vanamachos... that's what everybody calls them and shit. You know the border brothers or whatever, and then... like, my homeboys be jacking them or whatever you know.*

*If you're walking down the street and there's a group of just- straight- just- you know, schoolboy- just- nobodies, and there's a group of gangbangers, they might, you know, harass them because they know they can get away with it.*

- 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

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- ❑ 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

(Just counting varieties of English.....)

- 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?
- 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?

# **SPANISH VOICES: SPANISH AND ENGLISH IN THE SOUTHEASTERN UNITED STATES**

North Caroling Language and Life Project  
(NCLLP)

Produced by Danica Cullinen and Walt Wolfram

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