CODING FOR “LATINO/A” ETHNIC IDENTITIES

CARMEN FOUGHT
cfought@pitzer.edu
I. NEW DEMOGRAPHIC DATA ON LATINOS/AS IN THE U.S.

- 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 \textit{natural increase of the existing population} than of new international migration.

Also, tends to take place in what the Census calls \textit{“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:

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

- 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
References:


