

# Chicano English- Language Policy

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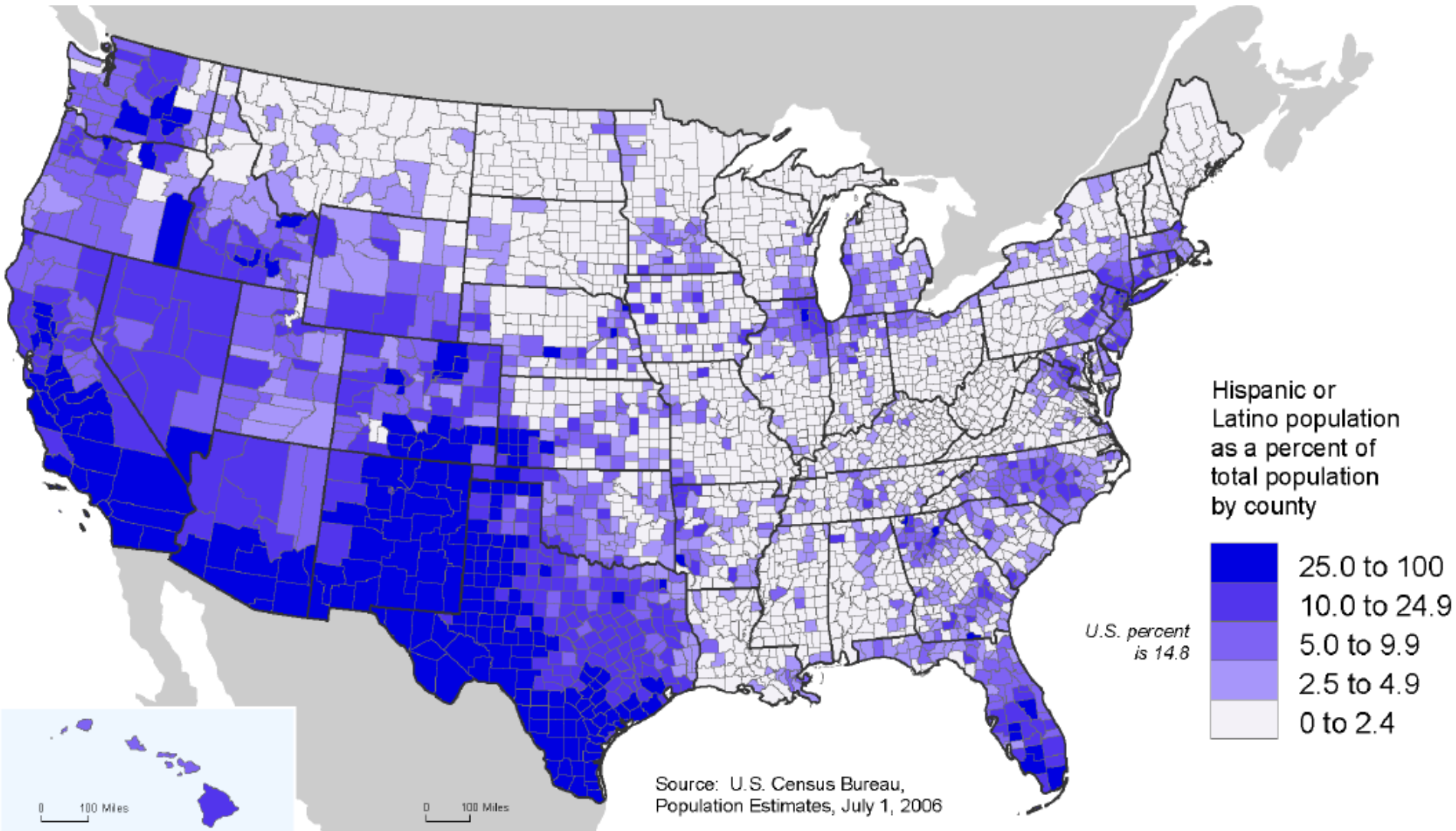
# General facts

- Many countries have a language policy designed to favour or discourage the use of a particular language or set of languages
- Language Policy= what a government does either officially through legislation, court decisions or policy to determine how languages are used, cultivate language skills needed to meet national priorities or to establish the rights of individuals or groups to use and maintain languages
- Although nations historically have used language policies
  - to promote one official language at the expense of others
  - many countries now have policies designed to protect and promote regional and ethnic languages whose viability is threatened

# Hispanic Americans

- the fastest growing minority
- three major groups:
  1. Cubans
  2. Puerto Ricans
  3. Chicanos

# Hispanic Population (2006)



# Hispanic Origin by Type: 2006

Type of origin	Number	Percent
Total	444,252,278	100.0
Mexican	28,339,354	64.0
Puerto Rican	3,987,947	9.0
Cuban	1,520,276	3.4
Dominican	1,217,225	2.8
Central American	3,372,090	7.6
South American	2,421,297	5.5
Other Hispanic	3,394,089	7.7

## **Cubans:**

- ca. 60% live in Miami
- ca. 20 % live in New York & New Jersey
- second – generation Cubans speak English fluently

## **Puerto Ricans:**

- ca. 60% live in New York
- many members are bilingual
- second generation speaks two kinds of English:
  - PRE and/or
  - BEV

## Chicanos:

- largest proportion of the Hispanic population
- include recent immigrants & native born Americans in the Southwest (Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado & California)
- the type of English spoken consists of several varieties



# History and language attitudes

- Arrival of Mexican settlers in Southwest of US
  - Spanish language as language of prestige and power
- Arrival of English-speaking settlers
  - Social and economic domination, language and its speakers were viewed as inferior
  - Feelings of shame, linguistic inferiority
  - Spanish as a “foreign language”; punishment for speaking Spanish in public schools
  - Refusal of language and culture
  - Effects resulted in a distinct variety of English because of limited social interaction with native English speakers (variety of Chicano English highlighted by a Spanish accent)

- Changes in the way Chicanos viewed their language and culture since the 1960s
  - Chicano movement across Southwest as a cultural revitalization
  - Spanish rated higher on status and solidarity scales in a home context, English higher in a school context
  - Spanish began to assume the role of a language variety associated with those of low social class and educational status
  - Today: many first- and second generation parents reject all vestiges of the Spanish language and make conscious decisions not to speak to their children in the language or to encourage them to use it

- Equation of educational and economic deprivation with Spanish use (as a result of own experiences)
- Parental attitudes coupled with urbanization, school integration and pressure to assimilate into mainstream society have served as an impetus to shift from Spanish to English → new generation of English-dominant speakers
- But: continued existence of Spanish and its many varieties because of the continuous influx of immigrants

# Varieties of English

- three major varieties of English spoken in Chicano community:
    - Standard English
    - English that is influenced by Spanish
    - English that is heavily influenced by Spanish
- include the language of both monolingual and bilingual speakers

# Chicano English (CE)

- an ethnic variety of AmE
- influenced by Spanish, but independent of it
- dialect spoken only by native English speakers
- separate both from Spanish & other local varieties of English
- not all speakers of CE speak Spanish
- passed from generation to generation

- CE can vary from less to more standard
- encompasses a wide range of stylistic options
- is not the same as Spanglish: needn't involve any Spanish words or structures
- important function in the Chicano speech community:
  - a symbol of ethnic loyalty

# Attitudes towards CE

- has low prestige in most circles
- often seen as non-native English spoken by people whose first language is Spanish
  - Spanish introduces 'mistakes' into their English
  - Spanish 'accent'
- **but:** not all speakers of CE speak Spanish
- its structure is often judged as 'incorrect'
- tendency to associate CE with gang members

“...He told me that he worked in sales for a large company in San Diego, and that it was his job to hire salesmen. He told me quite frankly that he would never hire anyone with a strong foreign accent, and especially not a Mexican accent. I asked him why. His only response was, ‘That’s smart business. I have to think of the customers. I wouldn’t buy anything from a guy with a Mexican accent.’”



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