

CHAPTER TWO
LATINOS, THE NEW FORCE IN THE UNITED STATES.

What! The Mexicans, Americans?
Gabriella Arredondo

The term Hispanic, as utilized in the United States, is one of the various designations meant to describe the peoples whose background is any of the Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America or Spain. However, it is indeed, a very tricky concept since it intends to comprise in a single category people from different backgrounds, nationalities, and races but who share a common language, Spanish.

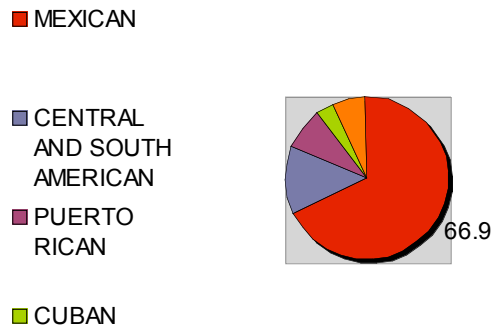
In recent decades, the word Latino has been used as a synonym of Hispanic. But, this probably creates more confusion on what the meaning really is. While the terms are still unclear to define, we could say in short, that, a Hispanic essentially refers to a person from any of the Spanish-speaking countries of the Americas or Spain, while the concept of Latino, refers to the broader idea of any person from Latin American, notwithstanding, the usage of any of the other Latin languages spoken in the area.

However, most people wishing to address solely Hispanic issues in the United States use both terms indistinctively, therefore, in this study I shall do so as well.

2.1 Early immigration from Latin America.

Immigration of Hispanics to the United States is a very peculiar phenomenon. Certainly, as stated above, the Hispanic population comes from various countries, but Mexicans are clearly, the largest group among them.

Figure 2.1 Hispanics by origin: 2002. (In percent)



Source: Ramirez, Roberto R., and G. Patricia de la Cruz, 2002, *The Hispanic Population in the United States: March 2002*.

When discussing Hispanic Immigration, it becomes necessary to look into the annals of the Spanish Empire history in the American continent. Hispanic presence, per se, in the United States dates back to the early eighteenth century with the inclusion of the Louisiana and Florida to the United States. Furthermore, a significant number of Hispanic peoples were absorbed when Mexico lost more than half of its territory in the 1848 Mexican-American war, and later on, with the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1898, Puerto Rico also became inextricably tied to the United States' future.

Ever since, political, economical, and even military involvement of the United States in Latin America, has led to a series of circumstances that sparked the migration

movement into the United States. Alejandro Portes illustrates this point expressing that “the countries that supplied the major Spanish origin groups in the United States today were, each in its time, targets of the expansionist pattern” (115).

Regarding the process of migration, Oscar Handlin argues that, it is certainly, an event that must be viewed in the mass, however, it would be a mistake to forget it was made up of individuals, each and everyone motivated by hopes and fears of their own (16). The Hispanic experience is certainly no exception to this. Thus, the three largest nationalities that compose the Hispanic population in the United States, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans, have gone thru very different experiences regarding their entrance, settlement and rapport in American soil.

2.1.1 Mexican Immigration.

The signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo marked the end of the 1848 Mexican-American war, and it established, that Mexico was to cede the territories, which nowadays conform, in part or as a whole, the states of California, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, Colorado and Wyoming. This cession, plus the annexation of Texas, created *ipso facto* the basis of the Chicano population, what is now called the Mexican American community.

Migration flux was relatively slow at the end of the nineteenth century, however, with the beginning of the Mexican Revolution in 1910, thousands of people left Mexico heading north, looking for refuge and jobs. The United States was going thru a desperate need of workers due to World War I, consequently, the cheap labor offered by Mexicans was indeed welcomed. Although, Mexicans had been actively participating in the economic life of the United States, the stumble of the Great Depression caused a massive

repatriation campaign, only to be reversed at the commencement of World War II and the institutionalization of the “Bracero Program”.

The so-called “Bracero” program began in 1942 and it instituted the provision of contracts for Mexican laborers to work on farms in the United States. It is estimated that some 5 million workers labored on the much-needed agricultural sector of the United States’ economy. On this regard, several scholars coincide that when the program finally ended in 1964, “the United States did not stop employing Mexican workers; it simply shifted from a de jure policy of active labor recruitment to a de facto policy of passive labor acceptance, combining modest legal immigration with massive undocumented entry” (Durand, Massey and Parrado)

The Mexican migration experience clearly, has gone thru many levels of rapport. “The longer history of Mexicans in the United States makes them more generationally diverse than other Hispanic origin groups” express Frank Bean and Marta Tienda. Both point out that, once the hysteria for repatriation in the early 1930’s ended, a part of the Mexican American community, specifically the urban mobile one, grew a sentiment of cultural loyalty to the United States (21). This experience did not last long and faced a harsh reversal when “Operation Wetback” was implemented in 1954 and a hostile sentiment towards Mexicans resurged. This legislation expelled around 3.8 million Mexicans, even some who had not received due process. It is during this time, that a barbed wire fence along the border was erected. After these events, the 1960’s saw the uprising of the Chicano movement, which became the soil for the Bilingual Education Act, which we will discuss in the next chapter. The geographical proximity between Mexico and the United States has created a sensitive dual relationship that inexorably

links these two countries. High levels of Mexican immigration in certain states, such as California, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona have created a fear of Mexican-American separatism from the Union. The concern is often based on the stories about a putative land called “Aztlán” which Mexicans would supposedly try to put back together.

Furthermore, part of that anxiety comes from the comparison between the rising Mexican settlements in the south –which clearly maintain their cultural heritage and language- and the Quebec self-determination in Canada. This comparison has worried politicians, scholars and primarily the general public as the census figures show the rapid increase of the Mexican population –either by immigration or birth- in the southern states.

2.1.2 Puerto Rican Immigration.

Since the culmination of the Spanish-American War in 1898, Puerto Rico’s path became tied up to that of the United States. In 1952, the island was officially designated as the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, providing its citizens with certain privileges, such as an open door policy to enter the mainland, so many seized the opportunity to emigrate to the city of New York. In time, this resulted in a massive migration mainly rooted in severe levels of unemployment in the little Caribbean nation. Unfortunately, this relatively easy access of Puerto Ricans to the United States did not facilitate their integration into the American society, quite the opposite, Puerto Ricans were relegated to the lowest levels of the labor market and were exposed to discrimination (Bean 25). The dependence of the Puerto Rican economy with the mainland proved to be more a curse than a blessing. This became more representative during the early years of the 1980’s, when Puerto Rico became one of the worst examples of a colonial welfare economy, with vices surpassing, by far, the virtues, according to L.H. Gann and Peter Duignan. Several

measures imposed on the island –including the cut back on tax advantages to Puerto Rican industries- caused a major increase on the public debt and unemployment levels. Gann and Duignan further reflect that “just as many of their relatives in New York had become dependent on welfare and some of them had lost the traditional work ethic, so had a good many islanders” (77). Nowadays, recurrent migration from the island into the United States is directed mainly to urban centers, particularly to the states of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Florida.

Although, Puerto Ricans enjoy a large political advantage in comparison to Mexicans, Marta Tienda reveals that “of all Hispanic origin groups, they have the lowest labor force participation rates, the highest unemployment levels, the highest incidence of poverty and the lowest levels of education” (cit. in Bean 25).

2.1.3 Cuban Immigration

The Cuban experience seems to be the exception to the rule of Hispanic immigration to the United States. Alex Stepick and Carol Dutton Stepick stress:

“First-generation Miami Cuban immigrants have achieved economic and political power unprecedented in the entire history of U.S. immigrants... not only are Cubans the most economically successful Latinos in the United States, but for forty years they have evinced an extraordinary solidarity based upon and identity as intransigent anticommunist Cuban patriots” (75).

Cuba was a major economic interest of the United States since the mid nineteenth century. The Platt Amendment –forced into the Cuban Constitution in 1902- provided the United States the right to intervene in Cuban internal affairs and turned the island into a political and economic protectorate. Even though, U.S. interests prevailed, Cuba never

became a recruiting ground for inexpensive agricultural labor, explains Alejandro Portes, mainly because of the slight higher level of development of the island's economy (119). Cuba did represent a somewhat secure political and economic bastion until Fidel Castro came into power in 1959 waving a socialist flag; afterwards, the relation turned into an ideological stand. With the arrival of the Socialist government, and particularly after the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion, emigration from the island to the United States - primarily to Southern Florida- became a constant. However, it turned into a major issue in 1980, when some 125,000 Cubans crossed the Florida Straits to the United States during what became known as the "Mariel boatlift". In 1987 the two countries signed an agreement allowing 20,000 Cubans to emigrate annually to the United States, however, tens of thousands have also migrated illegally (Encyclopædia Britannica. 2004). The first Cuban arrivals in the United States were called the "Golden Exiles", white, well-educated families that were granted state-provided benefits -job training, professional recertification, assistance in securing employment- that other Hispanic immigration groups were not. Although, this was not the general rule for all the Cuban immigrants, later arrivals did benefit from the work of previous middle and upper class immigrants from the 1960's, conclude Gann and Duignan (102).

During the 1960's several attempts were made to resettle Cubans away from Miami, however, the Cuban American community decided to make southern Florida its home. Thus, Cubans have created a strong geographical influence that has been favored by the ideological struggle that remains between the United States and the Castro regime. "The result has been a most economically successful immigrant community" (Stepick 78).

2.1.4 Immigration by other Hispanic groups.

Dominican, Central and South American immigration has been as varied as the experiences of those discussed above. The peoples involved in these movements are so different that generalizations are difficult; the enormous contrasts between countries prove difficult to categorize realized Gann and Duignan (114).

Dominican immigration has the 1980's as the decade for the commencement of a substantial exodus from the island. Indeed, the economic recession played an important role on the migration phenomenon. Like Puerto Ricans, Dominicans settled in New York and are said to lead dual lives, thus suggesting that Dominican immigrants have developed high levels of transnationalism. (Suarez-Orozco and Paez 6).

Most immigrants who left Central America did so during the worst decades of the politically unstable region. A clear example is that of Salvadorans -the largest group of Central American immigration- whose devastating 12-year civil war in the 1980's launched a massive exodus. Nowadays, the remittances sent by Salvadorans in the United States –particularly settled in Maryland, the District of Columbia and California- to their families back home, represent an essential income for the devastated nation. Anti-communist Nicaraguans also fled their country during the 1980's and settled in Miami along with the Cuban community, with whom sympathize regarding their political views. Hondurans and Guatemalans faced stories alike and are now vastly dispersed in United States' soil in search for a better life.

South American immigration is not easier than Central American to discern. The populations of the countries of South America seemed to be the most diverse of Latin America. Recent migrations from other parts of the globe –Greece, China, Lebanon- have

built not only multiracial societies, but the dialects spoken in each country, constitute per se, an identity feature.

Most of the immigrants from South America were wealthy business and professional people who escaped from their countries due to the stumbling of their economies in the 1980's. Namely, Argentinian and Chilean immigrants arrived in the United States pursuing professional development; just as Colombians, who in the first half of twentieth century arrived to New York and settled in a middle class area of the city.

In recent decades, immigration from Peru and Ecuador has replaced in importance, the numbers of those nationals from Argentina, Uruguay and Chile. Numbers may not be quite as striking as those of Mexicans or Central Americans, but South American immigration has definitely provided a "further color to the already complex Hispanic palette in North America" (Gann & Duignan 114).

Visibly, economic reasons still conform the main cause of immigration for the countries of Latin America, but the conditions for this process, also deals with political uneasiness in the region. Numbers are definitely a reflection of the stability of a country and the need of its population to search for better opportunities abroad.

Table 2.1 Countries of origin of the Hispanic population: 2000

Subject	Number	Percent
Hispanic or Latino origin		
Total population	281,421,906	100.0
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	35,305,818	12.5
Not Hispanic or Latino	246,116,088	87.5
Hispanic or Latino by type		
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	35,305,818	100.0
Mexican	20,640,711	58.5
Puerto Rican	3,406,178	9.6
Cuban	1,241,685	3.5
Other Hispanic or Latino	10,017,244	28.4
Dominican (Dominican Republic)	764,945	2.2
Central American (excludes Mexican)	1,686,937	4.8
Costa Rican	68,588	0.2
Guatemalan	372,487	1.1
Honduran	217,569	0.6
Nicaraguan	177,684	0.5
Panamanian	91,723	0.3
Salvadoran	655,165	1.9
Other Central American	103,721	0.3
South American	1,353,562	3.8
Argentinian	100,864	0.3
Bolivian	42,068	0.1
Chilean	68,849	0.2
Colombian	470,684	1.3
Ecuadorian	260,559	0.7
Paraguayan	8,769	0.0
Peruvian	233,926	0.7
Uruguayan	18,804	0.1
Venezuelan	91,507	0.3
Other South American	57,532	0.2
Spaniard	100,135	0.3
All other Hispanic or Latino	6,111,665	17.3
Checkbox only, other Hispanic	1,733,274	4.9
Write-in Spanish	686,004	1.9
Write-in Hispanic	2,454,529	7.0
Write-in Latino	450,769	1.3
Not elsewhere classified	787,089	2.2

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1.

In years to come, Mexicans will remain as the number one nationality group entering the United States for many obvious reasons, (geographical proximity, kinship), but as opportunities narrow in the rest of Latin America, we can only expect an increase in the immigration demand from the population of those countries. John H. Coatsworth reminds us that the history of the Latino community in the United States is being made in Latin America, not only in the United States (93).

2.2 Acknowledging a presence. The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986.

We have seen that immigration from Latin America is a complex, and often disconcerting process. Their countries of origin are as distinct as can be. Comparing the circumstances for their immigration would be a mistake. There is no map to follow and no rule to apply when trying to construe a single Hispanic identity. Not even people with the same national background adapt to a specific mold, therefore it is impossible to gather all these nationalities and pretend to treat them as a homogenous mass. Latino or Hispanic identity is created by an American society eager to conceptualize this trend in order to understand it fully. There is nothing wrong with that, but it requires a deeper look than the one currently is given.

Having seen in the previous chapter, that immigration in the XVIII, XIX and early XX centuries was tailored to keep Europeans as the largest ethnic group within the United States, the second half of the past century took a different direction by broadening its immigration authorization to the countries of the Western Hemisphere and Asia, with the establishment of the Immigration Act of 1965. It is at this time that Latin Americans start being fully acknowledged and their presence is definitely felt.

Rising levels of illegal immigration during the 1970's resulted in a new legislation that wanted to provide more control over the new population. Based on the 1979 Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy, the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) aimed to control and stop illegal immigration by establishing financial penalties for anyone employing illegal aliens as well as reinforcing the border with Mexico. The most significant provision of the Act was the possibility for illegal aliens -who had already worked and lived in the United States since January 1982- to apply for regularization of status. The provision, commonly known as "amnesty" provided the chance for millions of irregular workers to eventually acquire full citizenship. Since the commencement of the process began on May 5, 1987, it was seen as an operation tailored to a specific ethnic group, Hispanics. David Simcox presented it like this:

“The choice of "Cinco de Mayo," an important Mexican holiday, as the starting date was a recognition that the amnesty would be a predominantly Latino affair. More than 85 percent of the 2.7 million ultimately legalized were from Latin American countries. Mexico and Central America alone supplied nearly 84 percent of all legalizations” (Measuring the Fallout The Cost of the IRCA Amnesty After 10 Years).

The IRCA gave immigrants the possibility of laboring outside the shadow of illegality and provided them with the chance of diversifying their field of work. However, as Lawrence Fuchs points out, the flow of illegal immigration could not be eradicated due to the powerful attraction of jobs for underemployed and unemployed Mexicans, but more importantly “given the historic pattern of circular migration that had become so

entrenched over the decades” (254). It appears to be that the IRCA backfired at those intending to keep foreigners out of the United States:

“Rather than slowing down the rate of undocumented entry, IRCA seems only to have succeeded in transforming a seasonal flow of temporary workers into a more permanent population of settled legal immigrants. Indeed, more than any other factor, IRCA is responsible for creating a new era in Mexican immigration to the United States and thus transforming social, economic, and political conditions on both sides of the border” (Durand, Massey and Parrado).

2.3 Hispanics: A Perennial Immigration.

As previously stated, there is no doubt that the main reason for immigration is economic. After the implementation of IRCA, the immigration flow from Latin America has not slowed down. In the particular case of Mexico, even though, the 1990’s saw the opportunity to reconfigure the relationship of the three countries that conform North America, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) did not become a solution for the immigration pattern. Jorge Chapa stressed this point in 1998 claiming that economic integration would boost Latino, and specially Mexican, immigration to the United States. The weakening of broad sectors of the Mexican economy, Chapa foresaw, would dislocate millions of workers, increasing thus, the cause for emigration. (72). Although there is a Hispanic authorized immigration nowadays, it is, by far, surpassed by the unauthorized one.

2.3.1 Hispanic unauthorized Immigration.

Hispanic settlement –regardless of its legal status- in the United States is a phenomenon of unavoidable salience. The fact that part of this migration process operates outside the official guidelines, gives the Hispanic community a disadvantage regarding its

acceptance into the United States society. Figures from the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) indicate that, by January 2000, the population residing, unauthorizedly, in the United States was 7.0 million, and Mexico constituted the largest source for this unauthorized settlement with almost 69 per cent of the total unofficial residents.

Table 2.2 Estimated Unauthorized Resident Population. Top 10 countries: 1990 and 2000
(Numbers in thousands; parts might not add to totals because of rounding)

Country of Origin	Estimated population		Growth 1990-2000	Percent of total population	
	2000	1990		2000	1990
All countries	7,000	3,500	3,500	100.0%	100.0%
Mexico	4,808	2,040	2,768	68.7%	58.3%
El Salvador	189	298	-109	2.7%	8.5%
Guatemala	144	118	26	2.1%	3.4%
Colombia	141	51	91	2.0%	1.4%
Honduras*	138	42	96	2.0%	1.2%
China	115	70	45	1.6%	2.0%
Ecuador	108	37	71	1.5%	1.0%
Dominican Republic	91	46	45	1.3%	1.3%
Philippines	85	70	14	1.2%	2.0%
Brazil	77	20	58	1.1%	0.6%

*Includes 105,000 Hondurans granted temporary protected status in December 1998.

Source: Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: 1990 to 2000. Office of Policy and Planning. U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service.

Additionally, California was, by far, the state with the largest concentration of unauthorized immigrants. Immigration, particularly Latino, has come to challenge the paradigms of an established society.

Table 2.3 Estimated Unauthorized Resident Population, Top 5 states: 1990 and 2000.
(Numbers in thousands; parts might not add to totals because of rounding)

State of residence	Estimated unauthorized resident population.					Total pop. 2000 census
	Estimated population		Growth	Percent of unauthorized population		State total
	2000	1990	1990-2000	2000	1990	
All states	7,000	3,500	3,500	100.0%	100.0%	281,422
California	2,209	1,476	732	31.6%	42.2%	33,872
Texas	1,041	438	603	14.9%	12.5%	20,852
New York	489	357	132	7.0%	10.2%	18,976
Illinois	432	194	238	6.2%	5.5%	12,419
Florida	337	239	98	4.8%	6.8%	15,982

Source: Ibid.

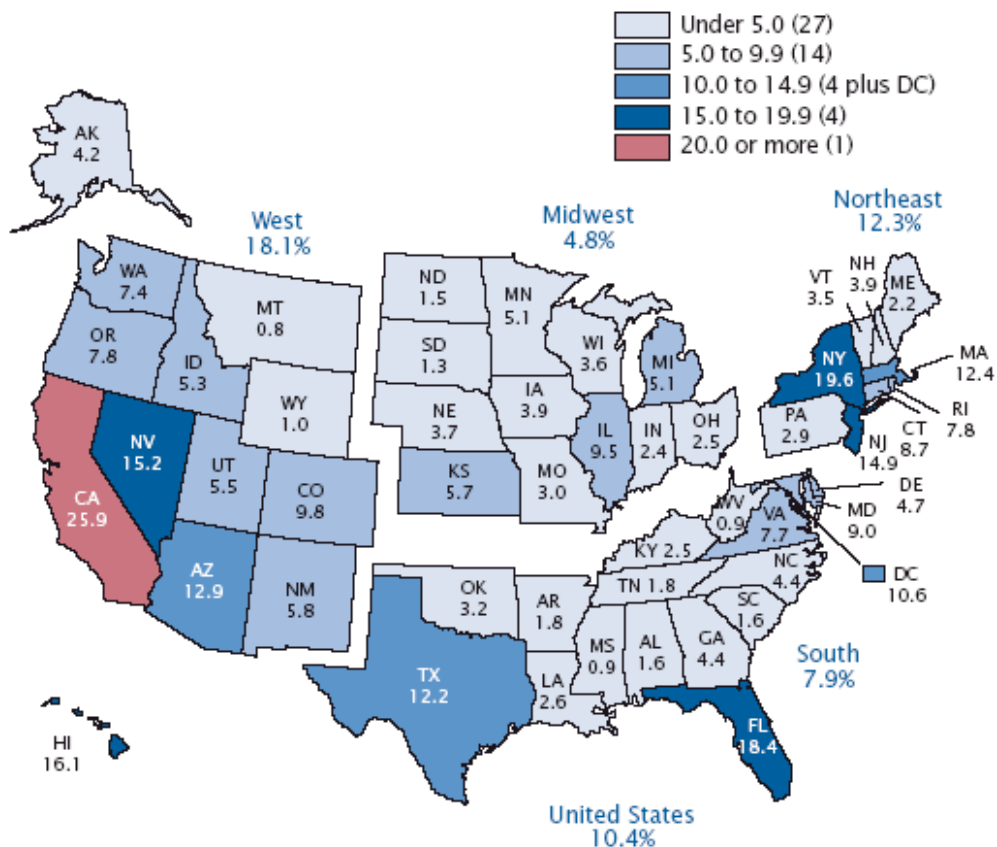
For some, it comes as no surprise that, Hispanics have surpassed the expectations of numeric growth given at the end of the last century, hence forcing the society in the United States to come up with a new rapprochement. As a matter of fact, immigration – regardless of its origin or status- certainly generates much concern among Americans.

The idea that 1 out of 10 habitants of the United States is foreign-born¹ has raised loud

¹ The foreign-born population is classified by citizenship status: those who have become U.S. citizens through naturalization and those who are not U.S. citizens. Natives, as defined by the Census Bureau, were born in the United States, in U.S. Island Areas such as Puerto Rico, or were born in a foreign country of at least one parent who was a United States citizen. The foreign-born population includes immigrants, as defined above, legal nonimmigrants (e.g. refugees and persons on student or work visas) and persons illegally residing in the United States. (See Schimedly)

voices regarding the state policies on immigration. Observing the data provided by the 2003 U.S. Census Press Release, we clearly see that Latinos are making their presence felt by their noticeable arrival numbers. The percentage of the Hispanic population that was foreign-born in 2002 reached a distinctive 40 percent. Among this foreign-born Hispanic population, it is estimated that 52 percent entered the United States between 1990 and 2002.

Figure 2.2 Foreign-Born Population for States: 2000
Percent Foreign-Born. Number of states in parentheses



Source: Schmidley, A. Dianne, U.S. Census Bureau.

Again, the Mexican-origin population stands out as the largest group in this category. The number of foreign-born people in 2002 who were born in Mexico, by far accounted more than any other Latin American country or any other country in the world for that matter. Other Latin American countries of origin with more than half a million foreign-born were

- Cuba (887,000),
- El Salvador (873,000),
- The Dominican Republic (654,000),
- Colombia (566,000) and,
- Guatemala (511,000).

Evidencing, thus, the idea that most Hispanic immigration is due to precarious economic conditions of the country of origin of immigrants but also, because of the easygoing settlement conditions provided by family networks. Overall, there are 17.3 million foreign-born people from Latin American countries (Census Press Release2003).

Be it legal or illegal, immigration is not a popular topic among United States citizens. Most of them fear not only for their jobs and security, but for the coherence of their culture, values and traditions. “How will all these new immigrants change the nation?” “Will America retain the culture and values that make it unique in the world if the share of the foreign-born population continues to rise?” (U.S. News and World Report). These are the kind of questions that the media poses and that definitely make echo on the average U.S. citizen. It is decisively the perennial immigration of Spanish-speaking peoples, the one that makes the more noise.

“The most serious potential problem associated with a larger and less diverse immigrant population is that it may hinder the assimilation and integration of immigrants by creating the critical mass necessary to foster linguistic and spatial isolation. In contrast, a more diverse immigrant population may increase incentives to learn English or become familiar with American cultural more generally(Camarota, Steven and McArdle, Nora)”.

Do Latinos pose a real threat to the American ideology? Is the incipient Latino identity strong enough to resist assimilation to the American mainstream? Some people seem to believe so (Buchanan, Huntington 2004), however, in order to mind those opinions, we must first discern if there is indeed a Latino identity and measure its actual cohesion and strength, hence we could asses if there is real “threat” to American culture.

2.4 A closer look on Latinos distinctiveness.

Counting and defining the Latino population is a fairly recent measure made by the state in order to better handle this very elusive portion of the society. Geoffrey Fox reflects, that on the overwhelming task of classifying people, the State has certainly being the one that sets the parameters for integrating a Hispanic ethnic group. Surnames, language usage, country of origin, all these features are considered indicators of “Hispanicness” or “Latinoness”, creating thus an inaccurate perception of a Latino. Most Americans would assume, that Hispanic denomination is related immediately with Spanish-speaking people or medium colored appearance, and not with origin or descent; therefore, producing a large paranoid sentiment in the average American, who impressed by the Census numbers would feel invaded by millions of dark-skinned, foreign in speech and manner immigrants from the south. Fox emphasizes that Latinos include people of

every race, and particularly, of every degree of assimilation, furthermore, for a large part of them Hispanic-Spanish heritage is scarcely a memory (32-33).

In spite of all prejudice, Hispanics are here to stay (Cornelius 168), so an accurate understanding of their performance in the social context, is on the best interest of the rest of the population. We already know where Latinos came from and how they arrived, but there is much more to know to fully comprehend the role played by Latinos in the American Society.

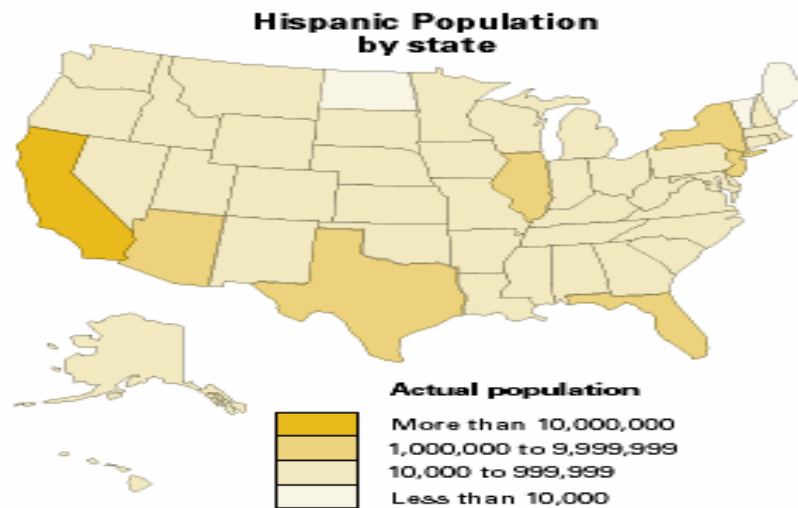
Regardless of their status in this country, Latinos present a major social, political and economic force in large areas of the United States. Where are they settled? How old is the population? Which are the characteristics of their social development? The United States Census Bureau has gathered this information and when the numbers were recently released many were surprised.

2.4.1 Settlement.

The most recent data available from the U.S. Census Bureau shows that Hispanics are the largest minority group in the United States and comprise almost 40 million people. Its growth has been faster than any other ethnic group in the United States. Indeed, if this growth rate continues, the Hispanic population in the United States will number between 80 to 100 million by year 2050 (Census Press Release of 2003). Such an important number demands planning for this future human force.

Nowadays, California is the state that accommodates the largest Hispanic population. Having an economy so intertwined with immigrant labor, leaves no doubt that California will remain for years to come as one of the states with an important number of Hispanic community.

Figure 2.3 Settlement of Hispanic population by state.

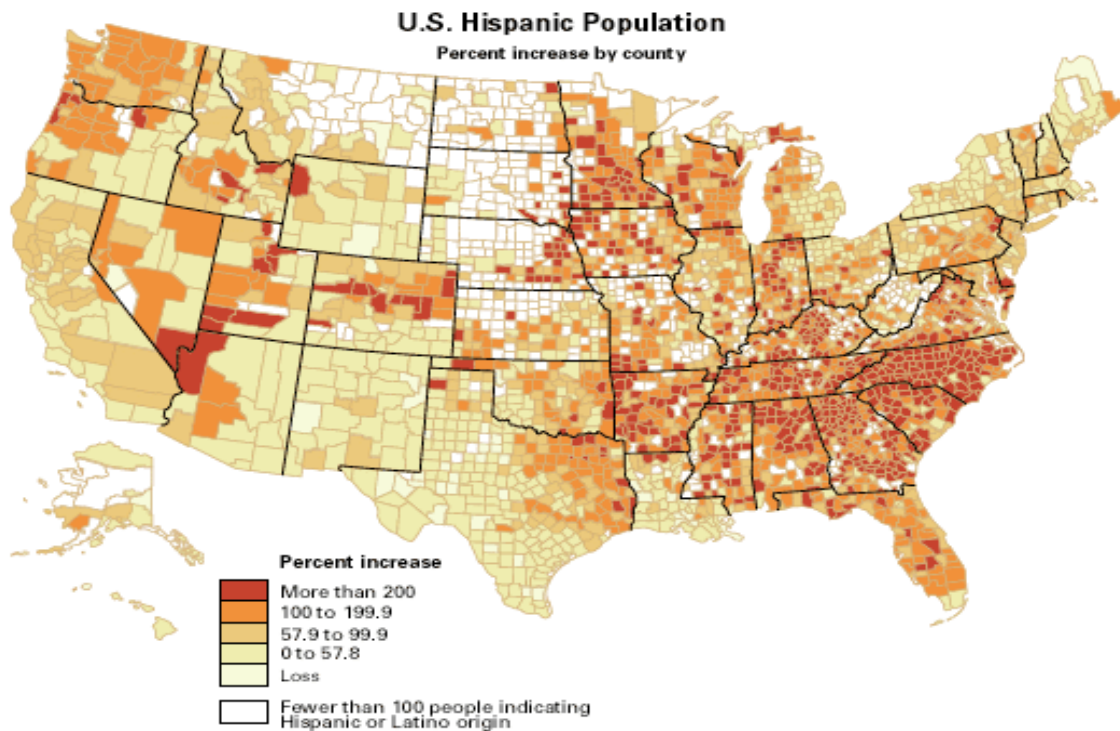


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000.
(in www.britannica.com)

2.4.2 Expansion.

Hispanic immigration settled in different parts of the country according to the distinct nationalities preference upon arrival in the last century. The 2000 Census Bureau showed that diversification of residence preference among Latinos has substantially increased. California being a major pole of attraction, experienced a degree of saturation of labor markets, thus Mexican and Central American migrants, have ventured East and North of the country (Durand and Massey 1998).

Figure 2.4 Regions with a Hispanic population increase.

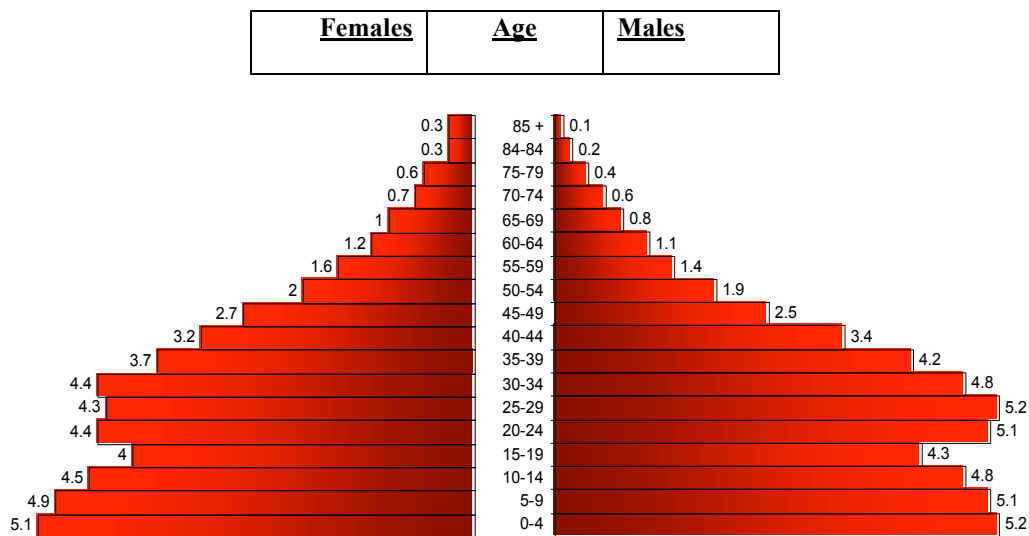


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000
(cit. in www.britannica.com)

2.4.3 Age, Sex, and Family.

Hispanics are a young and vibrant population that constitutes an undeniable work force. In 2002, 34.4 percent of the Hispanic population was under 18 years old, whereas non-Hispanic Whites numbered 22.8 percent (Ramirez 3). A significant number of Latino youngsters are the offspring of immigrants, who after having settled financially -and hoping to reunite the family- have sent for their children to come live with them in the United States, increasing namely a promising social and economic force.

Figure 2.5 Hispanic population by Age and Sex: 2002.
(In percent)

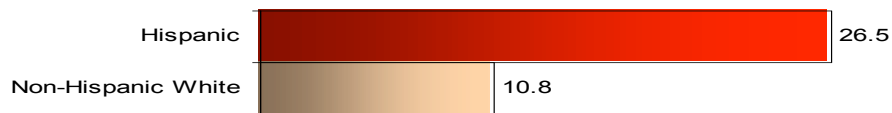


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Demographic Supplement to the march 2002 Current Population Survey. Ramirez, Roberto R., and G. Patricia de la Cruz, 2002, The Hispanic Population in the United States: March 2002.

One of the features that stand out the most about Latinos is that Hispanic families tend to be larger than those of non-Hispanic Whites (Ibid 4). Perhaps one of the main reasons that the migration movement is so constant has to do with the solid links pertaining the Latino family structure. There is an impression that Hispanic families have the strong and lasting bonds, that can even endure the migration process:

“Latinos’ ethnic narratives almost invariably stress familism: inclusiveness and interdependence. In family system terms, family connectedness –the obligation to care and support one another- is a defining feature of the extended family life. This cultural tendency toward family connectedness seems to withstand migration and to persist in some form for at least one or two or more generations (Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco 1995; Sabogal et al. 1987 cit. Suarez-Orozco and Paez 271)”

Figure 2.6 Hispanic Family Households with five or more members: 2002.
(In percent)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Demographic Supplement to the March 2002 Current Population Survey. Ramirez, Roberto R., and G. Patricia de la Cruz, 2002, *The Hispanic Population in the United States: March 2002*.

Merilee S. Grindle reflects on the family environment of Latinos pointing out that, although census, survey and other kinds of quantitative data regularly indicate that Latinos fall short of many others in terms of income, social mobility, and education, they do outpace many others in terms of the incidence of crime, unemployment, substance use, and socially unstable lives (in Suarez-Orozco and Paez 146).

2.4.4 Economic conditions.

We know that most Hispanics come from much less developed countries and upon arrival to the United States work conditions are not always optimal. Wayne Cornelius points out that “labor-force participation rates among the recent Latino immigrants to the United States –men and women, legals and illegals- are high” (ibid. 166). It is no secret that many Hispanic immigrants often bear multiple jobs in order to support themselves, but most importantly to send money to their families back in their countries of origin.

2.4.4.1 Jobs.

It is fundamentally true that most of the recent immigrant Hispanic population functions in low-paid jobs. It is no news that there are certain kinds of jobs avoided by Americans; thus, creating an opportunity for recently arrived Hispanic immigrants to rapidly find employment in the United States. Geri Smith claims that “several U.S. industries are already hooked on Mexican labor--legal and illegal” and that “Americans, in turn, have become used to low prices, be it for VCRs or hand-picked berries”. Nevertheless, Latinos are represented in a wide variety of occupations. The number of Hispanic physicians and surgeons reached 36,200 by 2002. It is also estimated that, there are about 51,400 Hispanic postsecondary teachers; 34,700 chief executives of businesses; 28,600 lawyers; 5,400 news analysts, reporters and correspondents; and 650 legislators (<http://www.census.gov/PressRelease>).

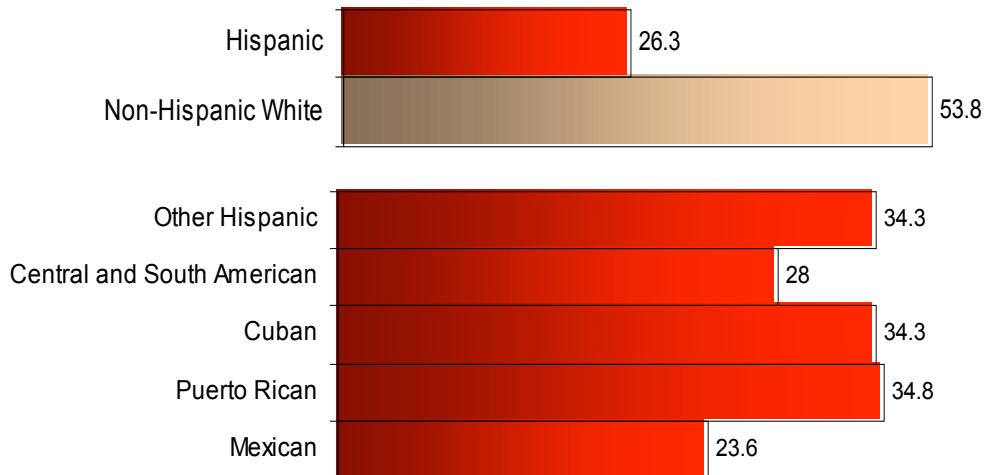
On the other hand, unemployment is no stranger to the Latino persona. Hispanics have not always fulfilled the “American Dream” and definitely remain in the obscurity of lacking a formal occupation. Figures revealed by the Census in March 2002, indicate that 8.1 percent of Hispanics in the civilian labor force aged 16 and older were unemployed, compared to 5.1 percent of non-Hispanic Whites (Ramirez 5).

2.4.4.2 Income.

Latinos are still struggling to reach an income similar to those of the national average, some \$66,000 USD. Low wages perceived in Hispanic bound jobs, keep Latinos relegated to the lowest levels of economic conditions.

In year 2001, the proportion of workers making \$50,000 USD or more was 12.4 percent for Hispanics, compared to the 31.8 percent registered by non-Hispanic Whites.

Figure 2.7 Full-Time Year-Round Workers with Annual Earnings of \$35,000 USD: 2001. (In percent)



Source: (Ibid)

Certainly, low-income levels among Hispanic workers can be explained by many reasons but one survey by the Pew Hispanic center, suggests that language has much to do with economic performance.

Table 2.4 Household income among Latinos by primary language

	Spanish-dominant	Bilingual	English-dominant
Less than \$30,000 USD	65%	37%	35%
\$30,000-<\$50,000 USD	16%	31%	29%
\$50,000 +	4%	26%	29%
Don't know	15%	6%	7%

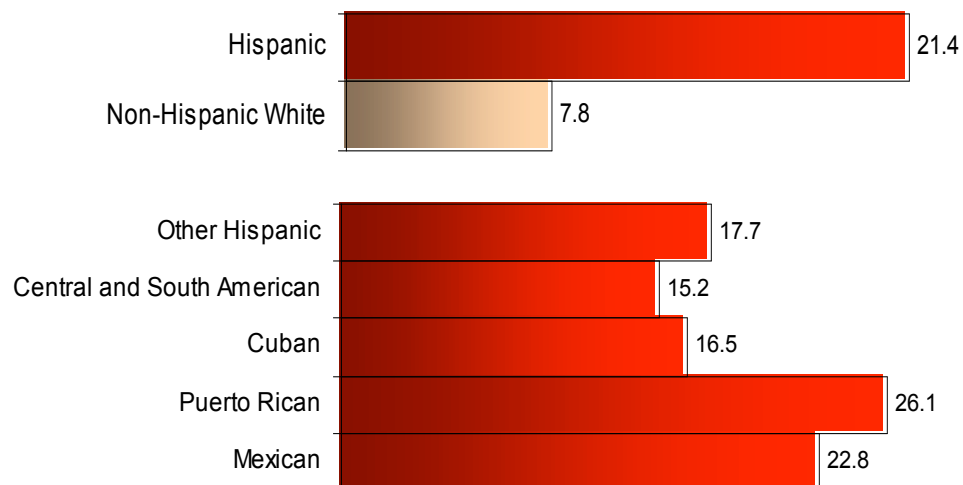
Source: 2002 National Survey of Latinos. Pew Hispanic Center

2.4.4.3 Poverty

A large portion of the Hispanic community is based at the lowest levels of the economic well-being ladder of the United States; a situation, which is no much different than their surroundings back in their home countries.

Although there were two long periods of economic growth during the last decades of the twentieth century in the United States, the poverty numbers rose significantly for Hispanics. Elaine Levine argues that although it is easiest to attribute this socioeconomic deterioration to high levels of Hispanic immigration, there are other influential factors to bear in mind: globalization and the restructuring of business enterprises, which have transformed the labor market in such a way that the less skilled workers posses fewer opportunities to access higher income levels (5-6).

Figure 2.8 People living Below the Poverty Level by Detailed Hispanic Origin: 2001
(In percent)



Source: (ibid)

Again, the social and economic characteristics of the distinct Hispanic groups are not as homogenous as implied by the generalizing labels of being “Latino” or “Hispanic”.

Table 2.5 Selected characteristics of Hispanics by Type of Origin

	Hispanic	Mexican	Puerto Rican	Cuban	South/Central American	Other Hispanic
Total population (millions)	35.3*	20.7	3.0	1.4	4.5	2.1
Median Age (years)	26.1	24.2	27.5	41.3	29.9	28.3
Educational Attainment						
Less than High school	43.9%	50.3%	36.1%	29.7%	36.0%	28.9%
High school or More	56.1%	49.7%	63.9%	70.3%	64.0%	71.1%
Bachelor’s or More	10.9%	7.1%	11.1%	24.8%	18.0%	15.0%
Percentage in Labor Force						
Male	78.4%	80.4%	66.3%	73.4%	80.8%	72.3%
Female	55.8%	55.2%	52.6%	49.2%	61.8%	57.1%
Percentage of unemployed	6.7%	7.0%	7.3%	4.9%	5.9%	6.4%
Median earnings:1998						
Male	\$18,430	\$17,395	\$22,711	\$22,864	\$18,961	\$21,146
Female	\$12,910	\$11,995	\$16,444	\$20,673	\$13,309	\$14,832
Household income: 1998 (median income in dollars)	\$28,330	\$27,361	\$26,365	\$32,375	\$31,636	\$30,463
Type of family						
Married couple	68.0%	69.9%	56.7%	79.2%	66.6%	61.7%
Female-headed	23.7%	21.3%	37.2%	17.0%	23.7%	30.6%
Male-headed	8.2%	8.7%	6.1%	3.7%	9.7%	7.8%
Families below the poverty line: 1998	22.7%	24.4%	26.7%	11.0%	18.5%	18.2%
Children below the poverty line: 1998	34.4%	35.4%	43.5%	16.4%	26.6%	31.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 1999.

Clearly, Hispanics tend to exercise the worst paid jobs in American society. Latino's education still ranks the lowest among immigrants, and this certainly does not provide the tools for occupational mobility. Being education a fundamental part of social and economic success therefore the next chapter will deliver a deeper look on education of Latinos and specifically to the genesis and development of bilingual education.