

## CONCLUSIONS

The varied nature of Latinos, has recently leading to a closer and more careful study of its population, as a matter of fact, trying to discern what the Latino identity is, represents an interesting task, although most definitely, not an easy one.

What makes a Latino? Who is considered a Hispanic? We have already established that the term applies to any of the Spanish-speaking peoples coming from Latin America or Spain. Yet, one of the reasons for the erratic approach of the concept has got to do with the fact that “Latinos are made in the USA” as Suarez-Orozco and Paez indicate. They precise that the “very term *Latino* has meaning only in reference to the U.S. experience” and that certainly, outside this context we do differentiate the origins of peoples, may it be Mexican, Cuban, Colombian, etc. (4)

So, why is it that these very diverse peoples were gathered in a single denomination? The answer can be traced to September 12, 1969 when President Richard Nixon designated the National Hispanic Heritage Week looking to recognize the role played by Hispanic groups in the conformation of the United States. In time, the week was transformed into a month beginning on September 15. It is clear that the strengthening of a, then, incipient multicultural ideology across the United States propelled this event, thus the State decided to foster it.

Nevertheless, Latinos, united as a sole group, are the result of the tactical alliances made by people from different homelands and different classes, and who overall, are pursuing their own particular goals according to Geoffrey Fox. He adds that the creation of a new ethnic force of Spanish-speaking people in North America is a great collective construction, but that this structure has no master architect (15). Therefore, one might

assert to say that, per se, “Hispanics don’t exist” (Robinson, Linda 1998). Suzane Oboler deepens this idea and stresses that the indiscriminate use of a homogenizing ethnic label such as “Hispanic” obscures both their respective experiences in this country and the power and status differences within the Hispanic population while minimizing these distinctions in relation to the larger U.S. society (100).

If there is not a solid and real Hispanic identity, why has the State sought, so insistently, the construction of one? “One reason why racial and ethnic categories are relevant is that they have become critical tools in the workings of the state apparatus” explain Suarez-Orozco and Paez. The use of these labels fulfills various purposes, such as census counting, taxation, and apportionment for political representation (5).

Although, Latinos little by little seem to rely on this generalizing label, Silvio Torres-Saillant has demanded that the so-called Latino identity recognizes its separate Latin American background and acknowledges the broken rapport within its groups, be it mainly racial. Torres-Saillant argues that although the academia, the media and the consumer market have incited the idea of a seamless Hispanic identity this has not yet eliminated the ancient borders inside this social structure (435-441). Indeed, the configuration of this unifying identity has so many cracks that it runs the risk of splitting when least expected. However, I believe that although racial, economic and dialectical differences are ever present in the Latino community, the search for a common goal – achieving a significant social and political representation- urges the distinct groups integrating this artificial ethnicity to work side by side.

Hispanics in the United States are not a family, according to many observers, but I would say they are; a family that is structured like most families with its members having different opinions, shapes, personalities, likes and dislikes.

Bilingual Education intended to provide non-English speaking children – particularly Latinos- with the opportunity to develop their capacities and be integrated into the mainstream society based principally on the acquisition of the English language, but also to conserve part of their cultural background thru their native language, Spanish. In response to the questions posed at the beginning of this study I can conclude that:

1. Bilingual Education achieves its primary goal of providing Limited English Proficient (LEP) children with the tools for a fair start at school. There is evidence that bilingual instruction does succeed in providing students with the elements needed to learn English, but also the cognitive spectrum includes reading comprehension, mathematics, and sciences.
2. Bilingual Education does not interfere with integration of LEP students into the American mainstream culture. The ultimate goal of bilingual education is the successful functioning of students into the United States society. But, under the understanding that, this contemporary American society is in constant inner renovation and reconfiguration, and that it also plays an inextricably role in the demanding global arena.
3. Bilingual Education focuses on the acquisition and development of the English language assisted by the LEP students' primary language. There is no evidence that bilingual education incites to place Spanish as a second national language, since there is not a first, to begin with. English is the

language used by the population of the United States on a day-to-day basis, but it is also the language of economics, technology, and politics on the international arena. Its importance is obvious. Latinos are arriving at such speed that one can hear Spanish spoken on most big cities in the United States, in order to succeed, Latinos have to speak English but it has become normal for them to switch languages when necessary. Paul Johnson believes that “language cannot be dictated by elites ruling from above. It is the one naturally democratic force in the world--surging up from below”. Hispanics will certainly continue using their mother tongue, bilingual education or not.

4. The strengthening of the Spanish language is not necessarily construed as the ultimate empowerment of the Latino identity. We discussed that this unifying identity has so many cracks that it runs the risk of splitting when least projected and Spanish language is not the superglue that will keep it together.
5. The Latino identity does not walk on solid grounds. Its recent birth has yet to prove if Hispanics are indeed a consolidated entity. Therefore to believe that Latinos could pose a threat to the American values is a far-fetched scenario. Assimilation to the United States society of a great part of individuals labeled as Hispanics is a reality; some Latinos cannot see themselves as any other thing but Americans. Bilingual education has faced major drawbacks mainly due to a debilitating sentiment of the American identity. The fact that some Americans feel under siege by the

new arrival faces speaks more of their lack of cohesion and weakens values than of the empowering stand of Latinos.

6. The State has gone thru deep changes regarding social issues in order to provide a real freedom of individuality. The creation of the categorization of Hispanic or Latino was a tool created by the mainstream culture of the United States to find better approaches to the understanding of the new population. The “All-American identity” is a term that day by day becomes more blurred and its frontiers become wider, therefore being American can easily accommodate being at the same time Latino.

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