

TRANSFORMATION OF THE LATINO IMAGE IN WESTERN CULTURE (BASED ON THE ANALYSIS OF AMERICAN MASS MEDIA)

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With rapid development of Latino communities and their members's active involvement in the US social and political life the attitudes toward Latinos (Hispanics) have changed, both from the outside and the inside. The Latino people themselves came to realize their self-identification and, consecutively, the portrayal of Latinos in the media has been altered. In this paper the author argues, that the range of Latino stereotypes has become wider today and that the model that used to work decades ago in picturing Latino migrants is no longer relevant. Thus, the main goal of the study is to mark out and describe the changes that have occurred in the US media regarding the images of 'Latinos' (/Latinas). Comparative analysis is the key method in addition to the content analysis of media publications. The empirical basis consists of 80 publications, including digital media footage, published in 2016-2020 (both in English and Spanish languages) – such as the New York Times, The Time, The Washington Post, El Opinion, etc. These newspapers and magazines are considered to be highly influential as they set the agenda, shape the opinion and affect public consciousness. The material of the study also comprises 20 TV episodes related to the coverage of Hispanic issues in the USA. Having analyzed the media content related to the Latino issue (mainstream media, online sources, TV footage), the author comes to a conclusion that the number of roles that are attributed to the Latinos/Latinas has increased significantly and the today's narrative to a larger degree is aligned with the changes occurring in real life of the Latino community.

Keywords: mass media discourse, discourse evolution, political correctness, media representation, race, culture, Latino image, stereotypes, image.

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the Pew Research Center, Hispanic Americans and Latino Americans (in this paper we are going to use both terms interchangeably) make up more than 18% of the U.S. population. Over 57 million Hispanics and Latinos live in the U.S. In fact, the United States has a larger Spanish-speaking population than many Hispanic countries, including Peru and Venezuela. The US Hispanic community's views about identity are changing. Forty years ago, the term "Hispanic" was used to describe a group of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban and other Latin American ancestry. No one ever heard the term "Latino" back then. Today both terms are widely used. The Pew Research Centre states that the Hispanic today prefer to identify

themselves more with terms of nationality. It has not always been that way. The social attitudes in the US towards diversity have changed due to big demographic trends, such as recent wave of Mexican immigration. Ultimately, this has affected the Hispanics' sense of identity. Today many teenagers hear their parents encouraging them to be proud of their Hispanic identity and speak Spanish" [Lopez, 2015], which was never a common thing just a few decades ago.

Previously, the typical representatives of Latin American culture fell into either of the following categories: "*greasy bandidos, fat mamasitas, romantic Latin lovers, lazy pens sleeping under sombreros, violent revolutionaries, sexy señoritas with low-cut blouses and loose morals, gang members, etc*" [Gutierrez, 2016]. Nowadays, there is a variety of characters.

As the experts on Latin American studies state, the media portrayal of Latin American immigrants at the turn of the century developed in parallel to those in other countries in the global North that are receiving immigrants from the global South. Research has shown that media seem to convey stereotypical portrayals of immigrants/minorities and to highlight the problems and threats in news coverage [Cottle, 2000; Hegde, 2016; van Dijk, 2006]. Public opinion on Latin American immigration has been based predominantly on information provided by a media-distorted glass [Retis, 2006].

Nowadays, the Latino voices are getting louder. More and more Hispanics are becoming actively involved in social and political life. On August 8, 2009, Sonia Sotomayor was sworn in as an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court. Born in Bronx to Puerto Rican parents, Sotomayor is the first Hispanic justice to serve on the nation's highest court. In 2018, Aleksandra Ocasio-Cortez drew national recognition when she won the Democratic Party's primary election for New York's 14th congressional district. She defeated Republican opponent Anthony Pappas in the November 6, 2018 general election. The US political establishment and media elite had to take this into consideration and gave a voice to Latino community. While a substantial amount of studies focus on the images of Latinos that existed in the US media in the mid and late 20th century, we are planning to shift our angle towards a more recent time frame. We believe there is a strong need to re-access the role of Latinos in shaping the US national identity and their contribution to American culture and the way it is projected in the media. In particular, we intend to focus on the present media content (mainstream media, including online sources and numerous stories reported via videos). We are also going to propose an algorithm to categorize and conceptualize the media content based on the categories of images they are conveying.

More specifically, the following research questions need to be addressed:

1. How (in which way) has the Latino identity changed over the years?
2. What are the main issues related to Latino community in the US (on the political, social and cultural levels)?
3. How accurately are these issues covered by the US media (is there any difference between the mainstream English language and Spanish newspapers and digital media)? What can be the possible reason for this difference?

The long-term goal of this study is to describe the specificity of Latino-related issues' coverage in the US media.

The primary research methods for this study are literature review and comparative analysis of the media sources available. In addition, we are planning to use content analysis (referring to the media content) and case studies (referring to videos, posts, particular programs footage).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A great variety of scholars have touched upon the issue of the Latin community and its development and growth in the US. There exists a substantial amount of academic resources dedicated to the use of mass culture and media to promote certain stereotypes regarding Latinos in the society. For instance, Isabel Molina-Guzman in her study “Dangerous Curves: Latina Bodies in the Media” focuses on the portrayal of Latina celebrities (Jennifer Lopez, Salma Hayek, etc.) in the US mainstream media [Molina-Guzman, 2010]. The author states that early ruling elites imagined the United States as a white, European-descended, monolingual nation, leaving outside the contours of Americanness those segments of the population that diverged from the imagined profile.

Thus, the process of racialization through which groups regardless of physical appearance, ethnic identity, or national origin were classified as different or outside the dominant U.S. classification of social identities is significant for studying depictions of Latino dad, Latina/o identity, and U.S. national identity in the media [Ibidem].

Another scholar, Stephen Bender, highlights the role of the legal regulation of migrants’ life and its relation to the stereotypical coverage of Latinos in the US culture and media. Bender argues that the legal rules that disadvantage Latinas/os, as well as the underlying images, often spur private citizens to enforce their dictates through injurious vigilantism [Bender, 2003]. Likewise, the author blames media outlets for painting a fake image of Latinos. For more than a year now the press (and particularly the Hearst press) has been building up anti-Mexican sentiment in Los Angeles. Using the familiar Harlem crime wave” technique, the press headlined every case in which a Mexican had been arrested, featured photographs of Mexicans dressed in “zoot suits”, checked back over criminal records to prove that there had been an increase in Mexican “crime” and constantly needled the police to make more arrests [Ibidem].

John Cones in his study “Patterns of bias in Hollywood movies” concentrates on the twisted nature of moviemaking. Thus, Cones believes that one of the less than desirable direct results of a film industry dominated by a small group of men who share similar backgrounds is a likely bias in the content of the movies [Cones, 2012].

Recently a new trend appeared in the academic media as both the journalists who are involved in covering racial issues and the scholars started to show their desire to find a way to

cope with such a challenging task as portraying life of today's Latinos/Latinas in the USA. A sociologist, Amitai Etzioni, in his manuscript "Don't 'Brown' the Hispanics" proposes a new way for journalists to handle the confusing task of using racial and ethnic identifications in news coverage. In particular, he explains that "most information available about Hispanics does not allow reporters to distinguish white Hispanics from others. Worse, the information there often transforms the Hispanics into members of a distinct race; they become 'brown' Americans" [Etzioni [http](#)].

Etzioni claims that there is still no clear understanding among media of how to describe Latinos living in the US. Besides, the scholar also comes to a conclusion that all the attempts to compare the Hispanics to some others turn out to be a biggest faux pas – as "Hispanics are not a race, and this renders all such comparisons dubious from the start" [Ibidem].

Another group of studies which we consider quite significant in covering the Latino issues is related to the difference in approaches to news coverage between Spanish language sources and English language sources. According to a new report from the Democracy Fund on the state of Hispanic media "Latino media [...] must take into account the complex diversity of the Hispanic population, which means that local audiences can differ from the shared history and culture of the Spanish-speaking outlet which serves that region" [Retis, 2019]. The author makes it clear that "Hispanic media have weathered the downturn better than many mainstream media because of its deep connection to community" [Negrón-Muntaner, Abbas, Figueroa & Robson].

Similar opinion is presented in America Latino Theme Study by Guitierrez [2016]. The scholar states that in addition to the linguistic difference between Anglo and Latino media (Anglo media use only English, while Latino media can come in Spanish, English, or bilingual formats using both Spanish and English), these two types of media have different focuses regarding reporting. Anglo media usually cover the story as an outsider, focusing on possible political motivations and ramifications, while Latino media pay attention to different angles. Latino media show the presence of stronger ties with the audience.

In our study we are going to focus on how recent changes in life of the Latin American community were covered in the US mainstream media as compared to certain Latino sources.

3. LATINOS' RECENT ENROLLMENT IN US POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL LIFE

It is worth mentioning that there is a significant difference between the level of involvement of Latino Community in the US life in the past and nowadays. First of all, according to the Center for American Progress and Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas, Latino community is becoming increasingly important to the economy, culture, and politics of the United States. Today, more than 55 million people – almost one-fifth of the U.S. population – are Hispanic, two-thirds of whom are of Mexican origin. Latinos in the United States are reaching new heights in educational attainment, making significant economic gains, and dramatically changing the political landscape. Within the next two decades, these

developments will have profound implications for the United States, Mexico, and the rest of the Americas [CAP Report, 2015].

Most of these young Latinos have one thing in common – they were born in the United States. Nine out of ten under 18 are U.S. born. For those under 35, it's about eight in ten, according to new figures from Pew Research Center. Over half of Latinos under 18 and roughly two-thirds of Latino millennials are second-generation Americans – born in the U.S. to at least one immigrant parent. One million Hispanic-Americans will turn 18 this year and every year for at least the next two decades, said Mark Hugo López, director of global migration and demography research at the Pew Research Center. That stream of adolescent Latinos coming of age in the U.S. started a few years ago and is now gushing [Pew Research Center, 2018].

According to Lopez, “this won't be a passing wave, but instead an ongoing process over the next 20 years as the young Latino population enters adulthood” [Ibidem].

Major transformations are taking place in the US political life, demonstrating active presence of Hispanics on political arena. For instance, on August 8, 2009, Sonia Sotomayor was sworn in as an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court. Born in Bronx to Puerto Rican parents, Sotomayor is the first Hispanic justice to serve on the nation's highest court.

Moreover, just recently, in 2018 Aleksandra Ocasio-Cortez (AOC) – a female of Puerto-Rican origin born and raised in New York, became the youngest woman in history to be elected to Congress. Prior to be elected, Aleksandra had been working as a bartender to help support her working-class family.

These trends could not have gone unnoticed by the mainstream media as more efforts were made by the reporters to portray the current state of affairs. In 2016, the New York Times, one of the most influential US newspapers launched a set of race related projects. One of them was called “A conversation with Latinos on race”. It was a short but very insightful documentary, where various representatives of the Latin American community shared their racial and ethnic identities.

Here are some of the opinions of the representatives of the Latino community:

“I think the Latino identity is pretty confusing to me. Because oftentimes I find it in little check boxes in a form. I am confused about what should I put on – Latino or Hispanic. But I am Mexican.”

“There is a community that is being built in the US regardless of the specific country which you come from.”

“It is like navigating three identities. If you are from the States you are American, you are Black and you are Latina. That is a lot to navigate through.” [A Conversation with Latinos on Race].

A similar project was launched in 2019 by NBC News, which was called “*Defining Latino: Young People Talk Identity, Belonging*” and involved self-reflection of Latino community members on their identification and race.

These were the young people of Latino origin born and raised in the US, sharing their views of reality. Berenize Garcia, one of the project participants, made an interesting remark, stating: *“How can I be Mexican, when I am pressured to be more American and how can I be more American, when I am pressured to be more Mexican?”* Jason Mero, another participant, mentioned that his parents *“were not encouraging him to show Hispanic roots to the world”* [Ibidem].

This report became a part of #NBCGenerationLatino, focusing on young Hispanics and their contributions during Hispanic Heritage Month.

We believe that with these projects the journalists accumulate invaluable experience and make a huge step forward in acknowledging the challenges of being Latino in the USA, in facing the real problems, in handling some of the issues the members of this community are dealing with.

Now let us take a look at the publications related to the Latino community in the US mainstream and Latino media and analyze them.

4. DISCUSSION AND PUBLICATIONS’ ANALYSIS

For our analyses we have chosen publications (80 publications and 20 TV episodes, including digital media footage total, published within 2016-2020) from mainstream media and Latino media in the US and classified them the following way:

Group A. Publications and footage related to Latino involvement in the US political life;

Group B. Publications related to discrimination against people of color and minorities;

Group C. Publications related to cultural heritage of Latinos in the US and Latino identity;

4.1. Group A

All the publications from this group can be divided into two sub-groups. Some are devoted to the achievements of Latinas (such as Sonia Sotomayor and Aleksandra Ocasio-Cortez) and the reasons they had gone that far. Another group of reporters are focused on the Latino vote considering the US Presidential elections coming up.

Here is how it is being manifested.

In a publication *“Can a Latina Girl Dream of Being President of the United States?”* by Jorge Ramos [Ramos, 2020] the author refers to an interview he conducted a year ago for his “Contrapoder podcast”. The journalist recalls that among the small audience was Sophie McCloud, 10. The girl had a question for Justice Sotomayor, the first Latina Supreme Court justice in American history. *“Do you think a girl like me could become president of the United States?”* Sophie asked.

Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor talked to children during an event promoting her children’s book in Decatur, Ga., last year.

The answer of Justice Sotomayor was really impressive as it has demonstrated the presence of her inner strength, self-power and authentic nature. She replied to the girl “Yes, yes” and went on to give the child a true life lesson, highlighting a number of things.

First of all, a girl like you should always dream big. Second, never let anyone say that you can't do it. And the minute they say that, you should do as I have done myself and say: 'You are telling me I can't do it? Well, I'll show you I can.' Third, you have to study, study and study. That's the only way you can achieve what you want in life. Education is the key to the future. And fourth, you have to work very hard. In life no one will give you anything for free. You must earn every single thing in this life. It is by studying and working hard that you will become president of the United States.”

Likewise, when it comes to recent accomplishments of Aleksandra Ocasio-Cortez, the reporters point out her ability to speak up and be upfront. For instance, the publication by the *Los Angeles Times* was centered around the way Ocasio-Cortez reacted to a Republican lawmaker's verbal assault (Rep. Ted Yoho). “*A day after rejecting an offer of contrition from for his language during this week's Capitol steps confrontation, Ocasio-Cortez and more than a dozen colleagues cast the incident as all-too-common behavior by men, including Trump and other Republicans*”. The reporter referred to the particular statements made by a young female politician: “*Having a daughter does not make a man decent. Having a wife does not make a decent man. Treating people with dignity and respect makes a decent man,*” she said. She added that a decent man apologizes “*not to save-face, not to win a vote. He apologizes, and genuinely, to repair and acknowledge the harm done, so that we can all move on*”. We believe this adds to an image of a new type of leader – who is confident, self-assured and fearless. The latter character trait received special attention as it became the central theme of the footage provided by the Huffington Post in which Aleksandra Ocasio-Cortez slammed Ivanka Trump after the first daughter said Americans don't want a guaranteed wage. Basically this is what Ivanka said: “*I don't think most Americans want to be given something. I have spent a lot of time travelling around this country over the last four years and what I saw people want to work for what they get. I don't think this idea of a guaranteed minimum (referring to Aleksandra's speech about “guaranteed jobs family-sustaining minimum wage for all Americans) is something most people want*”. And this is how the Twitter reaction of AOC looked like: “*As a person who worked for tips and hourly wages in my life instead of having to learn about it second hand I can tell you people want to be paid enough to live. A living wage isn't a gift, it's a right. Workers are often paid far less than the value they create*” [Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez vs Ivanka Trump].

In a different publication by Vanity Fair AOC reprimanded the US President's Daughter and her role in Trump's administration. “*Ivanka's questionable role in her father's administration is nothing new, but Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez put a fine point on the embarrassing exchange over Twitter*”. “*It may be shocking to some, but being someone's*

daughter actually isn't a career qualification," Ocasio-Cortez wrote. "It hurts our diplomatic standing when the President phones it in & the world moves on. The US needs our President working the G20. Bringing a qualified diplomat couldn't hurt either."

A second group of publications in this section is focused on the role of Latino voters. One of the vivid examples of popular narratives is illustrated in the publication that dates back to 2016 and is practically covering the specificity of Latino political power. For instance, here is what was stated by Damien Cave in "Yes, Latinos Are Rising but So Are Latino Nonvoters" by the New York Times: *"Here's the reality of Latino political power today: It's not what it could be."*

The reporter expressed concern over the current situation, mentioning the view of Mark Hugo Lopez, director of Hispanic research at Pew Research Center: *"We're seeing the number of people who could vote growing at a faster pace than those who do vote,"* said. *"There were more nonvoters than voters in the last election and those nonvoter numbers are rising."*

It is interesting to see the same issue being raised in various publications for instance "These Are the Voters Who Could Decide the Election" and "The Latino Vote: The 'Sleeping Giant' Awakens".

The journalists talk about the role of Latino community in making decision concerning the US political future. *"Long overlooked, Latino Democrats in California, Texas and around the country are invested in picking someone who can beat President Trump. And they could decide the 2020 race"*.

4.2. Group B

The narrative of the publications from Group B highlights the level of discrimination against the members of the Latino community. It is worth mentioning that the authors talk about both external and internal types of discrimination. For instance, Katie Mettler from the Washington Post is contemplating the idea of discrimination against Latinos on the corporate level. *"About a dozen black and Hispanic officers in the Prince George's County Police Department are asking their interim chief to address what they say is systemic discrimination within the force and immediately fill empty jobs with minority officers who have already qualified for rank promotions."* [Mettler, 2020].

In another report by Julissa Arce that appeared in *Time* (June, 2020) the author sounds an alarm regarding the violence against Latinos manifested by the police officers. The reporter is referring to the database compiled by the *Los Angeles Times*, according to which *"465 Latinos had been killed by police since 2000 in L.A. County alone. Nationally, 910 Hispanics have been killed since 2015. It's worth noting that Latinos are often undercounted in criminal-justice data since many states report race but not ethnicity"* [Arce, 2020].

The publications from the *La Opinion* (a Latino media published in Spanish) also fit into the same category as they provide the audience with detailed information concerning the violence against Latinos. However, the latter resource gives more details concerning the life conditions of a particular person. Thus, it allows the reader to better understand the problem.

For example, the publication “*Inmigrante hispano estuvo detenido casi un año por ICE*” (The Hispanic migrant was detained for almost a year) tells the story of Carlos Martinez, he was detained in Arizona for 355 days because of the immigration policy.

Carlos Martínez spent 355 days in detention in the Eloy Detention Center, in Arizona, where he was infected with COVID-19 and at times came to think that he was going to die, but after a long legal fight, he achieved what very few did: got out of those facilities as a legal resident. “*It has been one of the worst stages of my life. He had never been detained, much less in a prison, because that is a detention center, a prison. The immigration agents treat you with a lot of racism, indifference, you can't even try to fight for your rights because they send you to punishment cells,*” recalls the Mexican immigrant.

“*I felt like locked in a golden cage, I did not know what to do, I hope others learn from my mistake,*” – said the Mexican, who came to this country when he was only 8 years old.

It is worth pointing out that the Spanish language version of the *New York Times* provides a more detailed coverage of migrant issues. For instance, in the publication “*México, déjalos pasar*” (Mexico, let them go) by Jorge Ramos the reporter is talking about harsh living conditions and violence towards the in their home country. A group of Mexicans, who wanted to migrate to the United States, were attacked by the local police and left inside the country.

“*The brutal images of a recent incident on the highway between Ciudad Hidalgo and Tapachula, in the Mexican state of Chiapas, near the border with Guatemala, prove it. Dozens of shock agents from Mexico’s new National Guard, armed with helmets, batons and shields, repressed hundreds of people who have migrated from Central America who wanted to reach the United States*”.

The Mexican police also threw pepper spray at the caravan in which, in mid-January, some 4,000 immigrants were advancing and in which there were many children and women. In the end, *hundreds of refugees have been detained in Mexico* or deported to their countries. The reporter concluded that this is actually the way the country itself has become another immigration police for US President Donald Trump. “*In its two borders: in the South they contain Central Americans; in the North they make them wait*”.

This publication seems to be reflecting the current state of affairs in appropriate way as for many Latino community members, immigration policy remains to be on the highly debated issues. For example, according to the Pew Research Center, Latinos have stronger ties to their immigrant roots than the US general public [Lopez, Gonzalez-Barrera & Krogstad, 2018].

In another publication (also by *La Opinion*) the reporter focuses on the living conditions of undocumented Latino immigrant who is suffering shortcomings due to the lack of economic income because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The Hispanic female invites Governor Andrew Cuomo to visit her home in Spanish, where she will offer him a plate of beans, which is practically the only food she can afford. She

also shows her mostly empty refrigerator, where she has some milk, some eggs, and a few vegetables.

“I invite you to sit, at my house, at my table [...] humbly I can invite you to my house and I can cook you a sad and good dish [...] some beans,” says the woman, who then opens her refrigerator in a modest housing. “I invite you to come to my house and see [...] and judge for yourself the level of poverty we are in with this epidemic. We need your help [...] this is an epidemic for everyone, not just for the rich [...]. Keep in mind that we need help [...] don’t just focus on those rich friends, thank you very much, I hope this video reaches you”.

Again the reporter is sharing some specific details of the person’s life, making this image more complete, so that the reader can in a way identify himself with the protagonist.

4.3. Group C

First, we need to state, that there are not so many publications devoted to cultural heritage of Latinos. However, the very fact of their presence speaks for itself. We believe that the attempt made by the reporters to attract the audience’s attention to this issue is valuable and it will definitely contribute to the fulfillment of the bigger task – creating a more complete and accurate image of Latinos.

A bright example of coverage of this issue would be a publication by Time “Smithsonian Museums Are Supposed to Tell the American Story. So Where’s the One Dedicated to Latinos?” The author is sharing her personal story referring to Hispanic roots and their role in American culture. *“When I was growing up in San Antonio, Mexican culture permeated every aspect of American culture. I heard Spanish every day: at the grocery store, on the playground and, of course, at home. The staples in the school cafeteria included corn dogs, but also cheese enchiladas. Kids of every background broke piñatas at their birthday parties. But in large parts of America, Latinos were seen as foreigners and outsiders, mentioned only in the context of drugs, gangs or immigration news”* [Smithsonian Museums Are Supposed to Tell the American Story. So Where’s the One Dedicated to Latinos?].

According to the author, not much has changes since then. The journalist believes that there is one reason Latinos and Americans are cast as two distinct groups, and it is America’s obsession with assimilation to white culture. *“Only as a white person in America is your Americanness not in question. Some people, like our President, have no problem denigrating the rest of us simply because of the color of our skin. But another reason Latinos are viewed as outsiders is our erasure from the American consciousness”.*

A number of publications that we decided to categorize as belonging to the same group are focused on the stereotypes about Latinos that are present in the mass culture, in particular in Hollywood movies.

The author makes a number of points here. First, according to the study conducted by the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative, it was found “that across 1,200 of the most popular films released from 2007 to 2018, only 3% of protagonists were Latino, and Latinos made up just 4.5% of *all* speaking or named characters. This despite the fact that Latinos account for 18%

of the U.S. population and 23% of movie ticket buyers” [Smith, Choueiti, Pieper, Clark et al, 2019].

Another fact that stroke the reporter was related to the depiction of Latino characters in these films – “as criminals, in poverty or without any links to a rich Latino heritage or community – dramatically extends the scope of the problem” [Ibidem].

Another publication where the same issue is brought up appeared on NBC news website (“*Hollywood Latinos vow to ‘change that narrative’, fight harmful stereotypes*”). The author was referring to Latino Media Fest, which was aimed at celebrating content creators who are helping make the industry a more diverse and inclusive place. Television producer, writer and director Gloria Calderon Kellett said that most of the roles being offered to Latino actors “*are still wildly stereotyped*”.

“That leads to children in cages. That leads to fear-mongering in this country. It is all starts with the narrative. You guys, we have the power to change that narrative – it is so vital. And so important,” she said.

In another interview to NBC News Gloria while referring to a project “One Day at a time” (a series featuring everyday life of a Cuban-American family) confessed that the Cuban-American family was something she had brought to it. “*Could I have written a different Latina family? Sure. I grew up in San Diego, which is predominantly Mexican, and now I live in Los Angeles. But the specificity wouldn’t have been there for me. Poking fun, in particular, is so specific to my Cuban experience*”.

There are also plenty of episodes on *Hollywood Reporter*, *LATV Network*, *Pero Like* related to the sitcom and Calderon’s reflection on being Latina in Hollywood. These are all precious pieces of information as they help to connect with the audience and touch upon some vital issues.

5. CONCLUSIONS

At the beginning of our study we mentioned a number of research questions. Now here is what we have found out.

The Latino identity and its representation in mass culture and mainstream media have changed over the past years. First of all, this is due to obvious reasons, such as the demographic changes that lead to further Latino involvement in political and cultural life of the country. Another very important reason for this transformation is that the children of the first wave generation Latinos have grown up and they have embraced both identities. Being fluent in both languages – English and Spanish, they are also exposed to bicultural environments, which appears to be a privilege.

The main issues related to the Latino community include a number of aspects: immigration policies, cultural heritage, their role in the political and economic life of the country. Although discrimination and stereotypical portrayal of Latinos still remain a problem.

According to the Pew Research Center, nearly four-in-10 Latinos (37%) say that during the past 12 months, someone expressed support for them because they are Hispanic or Latino. Yet about the same share (38%) also say they have recently experienced one of the four incidents that includes being called offensive names, being told to go back to their home country, being criticized for speaking Spanish in public, or experiencing discrimination or unfair treatment because they are Hispanic [Lopez, Gonzalez-Barrera & Krogstad, 2018].

Overall, about a quarter of Latinos (24%) say someone has discriminated against them or treated them unfairly because of their background, while 22% say someone has criticized them for speaking Spanish in public. About 20% say they have been told to go back to their home country, and about 16% say they have been called offensive names.

Now moving on to the coverage of the issues mentioned above we would like to highlight the following:

- 1) The mainstream media provide better coverage of the Latino issues than it did 30-40 year ago, but it still lacks some very important details. On the contrary, the Spanish language media (La Opinion, the Spanish language version of the New York Times) definitely demonstrate a tighter connection with Latino audience as they present the stories of particular people and give more details. The difference probably is in the fact that many of the reporters who work for the Spanish language media have had their own experiences and better understanding of the particular problem, as they see the story from the inside.
- 2) The mainstream media should continue focusing on the issues related to Latino identity, their inclusion in community life. It is also important to create more examples of positive images of Latinos both in the mass culture and in the media. This way the reporters will be able to draw attention of the audience to burning issues.

We agree, that it is not easy to change the way people think and perceive others. One cannot expect someone's mind to be transformed over night. However, what looks important here is the constant attempts and fearless efforts of members of various communities including journalists to keep sounding the alarm and educating the people around them.

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