

**Felix M. Padilla. *Latino Ethnic Consciousness: The Case of Mexican Americans, and Puerto Ricans in Chicago.* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985) 187 pp., \$9.95 paper.**

Felix M. Padilla's contribution to the growing body of literature on Latino/Hispanic identity in the United States represents a significant departure from the way most social scientists have approached their analysis of ethnic identity and consciousness. On his way to putting together a conceptual framework for supporting his thesis of an emerging Latino ethnic identity and consciousness, Padilla provides a substantial in-depth analysis of the Mexican American and Puerto Rican community-based organization in Chicago during the early 1970s.

The creation of a Latino identity, Padilla suggests, grows out of a "primordial" historical bond which is built around the shared language as well as a commonly shared belief, by two or more Spanish-speaking groups, that specific structural factors in their larger environment (city-wide or as he theorizes perhaps on a national level) demand corrective social and political action. These functional activities bind people together; and ultimately, these actions seek to bring about social, political, and cultural change for the betterment of the collective community. "Latino ethnicity is fabricated out of shared cultural and structural similarities, and functions accounting to the *perceived needs* [italics are the reviewer's] of Spanish-speaking groups." Therefore, Latino ethnic identity and consciousness results when distinct communities reach beyond their own ethnic boundaries as Mexican Americans or Puerto Ricans, and others, to attack (component of "ethnic mobilization" is essential) social political conditions which are perceived collectively to perpetuate the continued structural inequalities in their environment. That these larger structural conditions or issues (job discrimination, unequal education, poor housing), are essential non-ethnic phenomena, does not really seem to matter at all as long as they are linked or connected through the commonly shared elements of culture and language.

Padilla's departure from the standard definitions and constructs of what constitutes ethnic identity is built around a model which proposes a new synthesis; in essence, it combines the "traditionalist" and "emergent" theories frequently used to define and describe ethnicity in American society. Padilla suggests that the Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago were and continue to be moving toward what he conceptualizes as an authentic Latino or Hispanic ethnic identity or consciousness. Those who might challenge his expanded notion of ethnicity, perhaps using the traditional definitions of "genuine" and "spurious" culture, as suggested by E. Sapir back in 1924, may indeed argue against this proposition on the grounds that this particular form of ethnic consciousness is simply lacking "authentic" or "genuine"

elements of culture. Yet others, I am sure, will see that the cultural bond that is created is indeed genuine, and constitutes an advancement and protection of the cultural integrity of the group as a whole, and its constituent communities. Latinos are increasingly defined and treated as a monolithic mass by non-Hispanics. While we know that each group possesses unique historical and cultural origins; it is, nevertheless, a well known fact that prejudiced treatment by the larger society is such that it has resulted in creating pockets of poverty, oppressive living conditions, and unequal opportunities in our nation's schools. A response to those societal conditions, as a Spanish-speaking people, requires a shift in consciousness from one's membership in a distinct Hispanic community to a sense of belonging to a larger ethnic aggregate.

If we are able to accept the notion of *biculturalism* as a way of surviving in American society, without necessarily giving up certain traditions and beliefs, then I would certainly imagine that we could extend that proposition to include the idea of an emergent and dynamic *tri-culturalism* which would allow Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans, Dominicans, Cubans, and others to go beyond the boundaries of their own communities without losing a sense of who they are and where they come from. Latinos interact not only with other Hispanics, but with African Americans and the Anglo world as well. Acculturation is a reciprocal and dynamic phenomenon which at the same time seems to be a multidimensional as well as multidirectional.

This model, if applied outside of the Latino community, could enhance our understanding of other aggregate ethnic groups similarly dispersed throughout the United States (Native American, Asian American, African American). If applied carefully, further extrapolations of this concept could also help shape the development of the newly emerging curricular ventures in combined *Latino Studies Programs*. As Hispanic communities become more diverse, and as researchers' interest in these communities increases, established ethnic studies programs (Chicano Studies, Puerto Rican Studies, Cuban Studies, etc.) will be faced with the challenge of how to integrate Latino diversity into the existing curricular structures. I would suggest that other readers will be as equally challenged to see how Felix M. Padilla's ideas might be applied to other ethnic communities in other geographical settings.

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