Phenotypic Heterogeneity and the Unviability of Latino as a Unit of Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This article reviews the literature on the impact of phenotype on those classified as Latino to ascertain whether Latino is a suitable unit of analysis. The literature shows that phenotype has statistically significant effects on educational attainment, wages, job prestige, and other life outcomes; further those with more European phenotypes generally have more favorable life outcomes. These differences are obscured when Latino is used as a unit of analysis, suggesting that Latino is not a viable unit of analysis. Using Latino as a unit of analysis serves to misallocate resources intended to benefit victims of racial discrimination to Latinos with European phenotypes, as well as hiding the impact of discrimination on those with African or Amerindian phenotypes. The origin of Latino as a political term that attempted to distance and at the same time bring its members closer to whiteness makes its failure as a scientific tool unsurprising. Further research is needed on the impact of phenotype, and other areas of heterogeneity such as culture, religion, and language.

This article explores whether the classification of a phenotypically heterogeneous population as Latino, is sufficient to counter the importance that race, or phenotype has historically held in the United States in determining life outcomes. If all members of the

Latino category are treated the same because they belong to the same Latino category, then one would expect that their phenotype would have no or little impact on life outcomes. However, if phenotype is indeed significant then consistent with historical precedent those Latinos with a more European phenotype should be advantaged. Moreover, if phenotype is significant using Latino as a unit of analysis is departing from a false premise that Latinos are a homogenous group with shared experiences.

In considering the impacts of phenotype, it is not feasible to simply ask Latinos what their race is and assuming that this correlates with their phenotype. Latinos have been constantly told that they are Latino and not Amerindian, black, white, or some combination thereof. The absence of mixed-race categories also leads to inaccurate reports. (Roth 2010). The perils of relying on self-identification are shown in the predictively distorted results produced by the Census, which in 2010 found that Mexican Americans were 55.6 percent white, 41.5 percent some other race, and only 1.5 percent American Indian and Alaska Native (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2011). These results compare very poorly with the results from the last Mexican census that asked for the respondent's race, which found that 29.16 percent of Mexicans were Indigenous, 59.33 percent were mixed race, and 9.8 percent were white (*Departamento de la Estadística Nacional* 1928:62).

Phenotype can also be measured more directly through facial features and skin color. Although, these measurements are not entirely objective (Ben-Zeev et al. 2014; Hill 2002), they are superior to relying on distorted self-identification surveys. Therefore, this article considers only studies that measured phenotype. I have also included specific

nationalities when that information is provided. Different countries of Latin America have different racial compositions and so including this information can provide some clues as to the impact of phenotype. Further, the dates in which the underlying data was collected are included, as the strength and impact of classification as Latino category should have grown since its creation in 1970 (Rumbaut 2006). If phenotype continues to be significant decades after the creation of Latino category, then we can question when, if ever, classification as Latino will erase the significance of phenotype. The studies reviewed show that phenotype continues to have a significant effect, with those Latinos with a more European phenotype more likely to attain superior life outcomes. The continued significance of phenotype, despite nearly 50 years of efforts to racialize and homogenize Latinos, calls into question the viability of Latino as a unit of analysis.

PHENOTYPE'S EFFECT ON EXPERIENCES OF DISCRIMINATION

Perhaps the simplest way to ascertain whether phenotypical heterogeneity has any impact is to survey those classified as Latinos about their experiences with discrimination. If Latinos are discriminated because of their status as Latinos qua Latinos then their phenotype should not matter, however if Latinos suffer discrimination differentially according to their phenotype then one can conclude that phenotype still matters.

The 1979 National Chicano Survey in which phenotype was measured by skin color and physical features on a continuum from light to dark and from European to Native American (Arce, Murguia, and Frisbie 1987), found that those respondents in the dark/Indian group reported a significantly greater amount of perceived discrimination than did the “medium” group or the light/European respondents (Arce et al. 1987). Over

20 years later, the 1998 to 2002 Mexican American Study Project also found that having darker skin, as measured by interviewer rating (Ortiz and Telles 2012), results in more experiences of discrimination (Ortiz and Telles 2012), and seemingly contradictorily that skin color was unrelated to experiences of stereotyping (Ortiz and Telles 2012). Darker men experienced more discrimination than lighter men or women (Ortiz and Telles 2012). The 2004 Chicago Area Study in which 76.19 percent of the respondents were Mexican, and 12.06 percent were Puerto Rican (Uzogara 2018), and that measured skin tone based on interviewer rating (Uzogara 2018), found that among those with higher socioeconomic statuses, income and education, those with the medium and dark skin reported higher levels of discrimination (Uzogara 2018). Data from the 2006 Latino National Survey, which interviewed Dominicans, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans, and in which respondents described their own skin color (Araujo-Dawson 2015), shows that lighter-skinned Latinos were less likely to report experiencing discrimination than dark-skinned Latinos (Araujo-Dawson 2015). Latinos who describe themselves as having a dark skin tone perceived more discrimination at the workplace and in their neighborhood (Wilkinson and Earle 2012).

These findings are also supported by other measures of discrimination such as the impact of phenotype on socioeconomic status and educational attainment.

PHENOTYPE'S EFFECT ON SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

The 1979 National Chicano Survey found substantial earning advantages for those with a light phenotype when compared to those with a dark phenotype but no statistically

significant difference in earnings among Mexican American men with medium and light phenotypes (Telles and Murguia 1990). The differences persisted even after controlling for factors known to affect earnings (Telles and Murguia 1990). Further, despite respondents having achieved higher levels of socioeconomic status than their fathers the same statistically significant pattern in which those with lighter skin and more European features had higher socioeconomic status was reproduced amongst respondents (Arce et al. 1987). For Mexican American women skin color had a positive, but near zero relationship with income (Hunter 1999). Neither did skin color correlate to greater access by women to high status, well-educated spouses (Hunter 1999), although in qualitative interviews some Mexican American women expressed their belief that lighter skin was advantageous in the dating or marriage market (Hunter 1999). An article using the same data from the 1979 National Chicano Survey, but considering only skin color and not whether respondents' had a more Amerindian or European features, described the differences in income per level of lightness as statistically insignificant, although it found that light skinned Mexican Americans were more likely to have higher incomes (Allen, Telles, and Hunter 2000). It's likely that studies considering only skin color, without considering facial features and hair texture are not fully capturing the effects of phenotype. The San Antonio Heart Study found that the skin color of Mexican Americans was darkest in the low-income neighborhood, lighter in the middle-income neighborhood, and lightest in the high-income neighborhood, suggesting an inverse relationship of social class and Native American admixture (Relethford et al. 1983). Skin color data was measured using a Photovolt Model 670 portable reflectance spectrophotometer following

standard methods (Relethford et al. 1983); measurements were taken at the upper inner arm (Relethford et al. 1983). Whereas interviewer ratings of skin color are to some extent vulnerable to bias the use of a scientific instrument negates that possibility while confirming the results obtained through interviewer ratings. The 2004 Chicago Area Study in which 76.19 percent of the respondents were Mexican, and 12.06 percent were Puerto Rican (Uzogara 2018) found that the lightest skinned had higher socioeconomic status (Uzogara 2018). Socioeconomic status was a combination of income and education (Uzogara 2018). The 1992 to 1994 Los Angeles Study of Urban Inequality in which the Latino respondents were mostly of Mexican and Central American origin found that employment discrimination constrains those with darker skin, as measured by a “coethnic” interviewer (Morales 2008), to lower paying and less desirable jobs. Dark skinned workers were more likely to be employed in ethnic niches (Morales 2008), while those with medium and lighter skin were 72 percent less likely to be a niche worker (Morales 2008). Regardless of human capital the lighter skinned are better able to gain employment in non-niche work (Morales 2008). The 1990 Latino National Political Survey found that among Mexican and Cuban Americans the lighter skinned, as measured by interviewer rating (Espino and Franz 2002), had jobs with higher occupational prestige ratings, even when controlling for factors that affect performance in the labor market (Espino and Franz 2002). However, among Puerto Ricans those with medium-skin tones had the highest occupational ratings, although not at a statistically significant level (Espino and Franz 2002).

Among Puerto Ricans residing in New York those classified as black by enumerator observation in the 1950 Census were 37 percent more likely to suffer from especially severe underemployment (Katzman 1968). An estimated 19 percent of the underemployment was due to discrimination on the basis of color (Katzman 1968). However only minor differences were found in ability to obtain white-collar employment (Katzman 1968). The 1950 census was conducted before the Latino concept existed and before racial self-identification was permitted (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2002). The 1992 to 1994 Boston Social Survey among Latinos who were mainly from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic (Gomez 2000), found that those with lighter skin were more likely to own homes and to be married (Gomez 2000). Men with darker skin had lower earnings, however skin color did not affect women's earnings (Gomez 2000). The effects of skin color on women might have been muted by the types of jobs available to women (Gomez 2000). Dark skin continued to have a negative effect even when controlling for human capital variables, meaning that phenotype caused labor market discrimination (Gomez 2000).

The 2006 Latino National Survey found that Latinos who perceive themselves as being very light skinned have higher household income levels than those who identify as being dark skinned or as being neither very dark nor very light in complexion (Wilkinson and Earle 2012). A study of "Hispanic Influentials" in business found them to be particularly light skinned (Zweigenhaft and Domhoff 2006).

Segregation and exposure to the criminal justice system are also influenced by phenotype. Data from the 1990 Latino National Political Survey shows that darker skinned Puerto Ricans and Cubans were more segregated, while dark skinned Mexicans were also more segregated although the effect was statistically nonsignificant (South et al. 2005). The difference might be explained by the African features of the darker skinned Puerto Ricans or Cubans (South et al. 2005). Discrimination against African and Native Americans has historically taken different forms; therefore, it should not be surprising if Latinos with an Amerindian phenotype are discriminated in a different and likely lesser extent than those with a black phenotype. Data from the first four waves spanning 1994 to 2008 of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health shows that Latinos with darker skin tones, as rated by an interviewer (Finkeldey 2014), were more likely to be arrested as an adult (Finkeldey 2014). Skin color was measured as either white, light brown, medium brown, dark brown, and black (Finkeldey 2014); each darker skin tone was associated with a 25 percent increase in the odds of arrest (Finkeldey 2014). Controlling for factors like delinquency and substance use reduced the impact of a darker skin tone to an increased risk of arrest of 18 percent (Finkeldey 2014).

Phenotype's Effect on Educational Attainment

Phenotype can impact educational attainment, not because of any intrinsic relationship between phenotype and intelligence, but because of the direct and indirect impacts of discrimination. According to data from the 2012 American National Election Study “whites” find lighter, as measured by interviewer rating Latinos (Hannon 2015), to be

more intelligent (Hannon 2015). Likewise, interviewers in the 1979 National Chicano Survey judged the lighter and more European looking respondents as having a greater comprehension of questions and of being more articulate in their responses (Hurtado 1994). The more European looking respondents were also judged as more cooperative (Hurtado 1994). These stereotypes seem to have a significant effect on educational outcomes.

Data from the 1979 National Chicano Survey shows that among Mexican Americans, those with a more European phenotype, had the most education (Murguia and Telles 1996). This difference persists even after controlling for other variables that might impact educational attainment such as generational status, religion, and region (Murguia and Telles 1996). However, analyzing the same data but considering only skin color shows that skin color was only a significant predictor of educational attainment for Mexican American women, but not for men (Hunter, Allen, Telles 2001). Judgments about an individual's racial or ethnic identity are not made based solely on skin color, but also consider other aspects of phenotype like facial features and hair texture—studies that consider only skin color are unlikely to fully capture the effects of phenotype. The 1992 to 1994 Boston Social Survey found that among Latinos in Boston who were mainly from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic (Gomez 2000), those with lighter skin had more education (Gomez 2000). Data from wave 4 (2008 to 2009) of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, shows that among Mexican Americans those with white skin were 27 percent more likely to complete high school, while those with dark brown skin were 24 percent less likely to obtain a baccalaureate or more advanced college degree

than those with a light brown skin tone (Ryabov 2016). For Puerto Ricans those with a white skin tone were 41 percent more likely to graduate from college with a bachelor's degree than those with a light brown skin tone (Ryabov 2016). For Puerto Ricans skin color was significant even after controlling for parental occupation and occupational prestige (Ryabov 2016). Data from the 1995, 1996, and 2001 waves of the *National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health* and *Adolescent Health and Academic Achievement* shows that the effect of skin tone on GPA was not statistically significant among Latinos (Thompson and McDonald 2016). However, the trend was for those with lighter skin to have higher GPAs (Thompson and McDonald 2016). The 2006 Latino National Survey shows that Latinos who identify as being very light skinned have more education than those who identify as dark skinned or as neither very dark nor very light (Wilkinson and Earle 2012). A survey of 81 Latina college students in Western Massachusetts (Telzer and Vazquez-Garcia 2009), also found a larger proportion than would be expected were light skinned (Telzer and Vazquez-Garcia: 2009).

DISCUSSION

The studies reviewed show that phenotype has a significant impact on life outcomes of Latinos, and that consistent with historical practice non-European phenotypes are disfavored. Those classified as Latinos perceive discrimination as affecting more severely those with darker skin and other non-European features. This perception is borne out by surveys across nationalities, locations, and time periods consistently finding that those with more European phenotypes are more likely to have higher incomes, jobs with higher

occupational prestige, more education, be less segregated, and less likely to be arrested. Further they are more likely to have these things when controlling for other variables known to affect those outcomes.

Only one study found that Latinos with less European phenotypes were likely to have equivalent or superior life outcomes to Latinos with more European phenotypes at a statistically significant level. The 1990 *Latino National Political Survey* found that at a non-statistically significant levels Puerto Ricans with medium-skin tones had more prestigious jobs than light-skinned Puerto Ricans (Espino and Franz 2002). This did not extend to Cuban or Mexican Americans (Espino and Franz 2002), and the result for Puerto Ricans is contradicted by data on Puerto Ricans from the 1950 U.S. Census, *National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health*, the 2004 *Chicago Area Study*, and the 2006 *Latino National Survey*. Because the finding for Puerto Ricans with medium-skin tone is not statistically significant and is not replicated it can be discarded as an outlier.

The significance of phenotype to Latinos extends from before the concept of Latino was created as shown by data from the 1950 U.S. Census, to around the time the concept of Latino was created as shown by the 1979 National Chicano Survey, to decades after efforts to racialize Latinos began as shown by the 1990 Latino National Political Survey, the 2004 Chicago Area Study, and the 2012 American National Election Study.

The boundaries of the American idea of “white” have varied and at certain points it has excluded various European groups now considered white. Nonetheless, it has always been more advantageous in the United States to have a European phenotype than

to have a Native American or African phenotype. It should not be surprising that this extends to people of European descent who have been classified as Latinos. There is injustice in that Latinos with European phenotypes are able benefit from “white privilege” because of their appearance but are also able to claim a minority status in the situations when that is advantageous. Meanwhile the underrepresentation and discrimination of people of indigenous or African ancestry is hidden behind a Latino façade that portrays all Latinos as “brown” but diminishes the discrimination experienced by those who are actually “brown” or “black” by averaging it with a group that experiences less discrimination. For example, a company that hires only Latinos with European phenotypes as employees is not doing much for diversity but is rewarded by the government’s and social scientists’ use of Latino as the relevant unit of analysis. The full extent of the underrepresentation of those Latinos indigenous or African ancestry cannot be understood and addressed when Latino is employed as the unit of analysis.

Much of the literature considers only skin color in studying effects of “phenotype,” however this is an incomplete measure of phenotype and as such is likely to produce only an incomplete measure of the effects of phenotype. Judgments about an individual’s racial or ethnic identity are not made based solely on skin color, but also consider other aspects of phenotype like facial features and hair texture. Studies that measure only skin color do not reflect how phenotype is perceived in the world. Further, skin color alone may not distinguish individuals with different phenotypes but with similar skin colors. For example, someone with solely Amerindian ancestry might have a similar skin tone to someone of mixed African and European ancestry or someone of

predominantly European ancestry with a tan. An example of the incompleteness of the picture presented by skin color alone is found in the data from the *National Chicano Survey* which gathered data on both skin color and whether respondent's phenotype was closer to that of a European or of a Native American. When considering only skin color data from the 1979 National Chicano Survey appears to show that phenotype has only minimal effect (Allen 2000; Hunter 2001). However, considering whether the respondent's appearance is more European or Native American shows that phenotype does produce statistically significant effects on the life outcomes of Latinos (Murguía and Telles 1996; Telles and Murguía 1990). More studies should emulate the approach taken in the 1979 National Chicano Survey.

Skin color alone may not explain why dark-skinned Mexicans are less segregated than dark skinned Puerto Ricans and Cubans (South et al. 2005), or why the gap between light and dark skinned is greater among Puerto Ricans than among Mexican Americans (Ryabov 2016). The likely explanation is that darker skinned Puerto Ricans and Cubans are more likely to have black features, while darker skinned Mexicans are more likely to have Amerindian features. Those with black features classified as Latinos might face more discrimination than those with Amerindian features. Without studies that consider both skin color and other aspects of phenotype it is difficult to know for sure.

Interviewer ratings of skin color may to some extent be subjective as higher status respondents might be subconsciously assigned to the higher status phenotype. Nonetheless the results from studies employing interviewer rating were consistent when respondents were rated by a "coethnic" interviewer or when respondents rated their own

appearance. The San Antonio Heart Study used a Photovolt Model 670 portable reflectance spectrophotometer to measure skin color (Relethford et al. 1983), and the data came to the same conclusion.

The Latino category is a simplification of a more complex reality; ignoring language, culture, and phenotypical differences. Massey (1993) has criticized the Latino category as revealing “little or nothing about likely attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, race, religion, class or legal situation in the United States” (p. 454). Massey (1993) notes that the only thing reasonably certain about a Latino is that “either the person or some progenitor once lived in an area originally colonized by Spain” (p. 454). Forbes (1992) has rightly criticized the erasure of Native Americans, and the inordinate focus on Spain that are a product of the Latino/Hispanic category. Considering only the indigenous population in Mexico a United Nations Children’s Fund report found 67 different Amerindian ethnic groups speaking 64 different languages (UNICEF 2009). Yet in the United States this diversity is erased in favor of the imposition of a bland and artificial Latino category. Forbes (1992) estimated that there were 8,100,000 persons of Native American ancestry mislabeled as Hispanic. Gimenez (1989) argued that the interpopulation variations “render statements about ‘Hispanics’ in general either meaningless or suspect” (p. 560). The artificiality of the category creates a reliance on imputed commonalities or stereotypes (Gimenez 1989). Although Gimenez analyzed heterogeneity regarding immigration and nationality she came to the same conclusion as Forbes; the Hispanic category is unworkable and should be abandoned.

No other ethnic or racial group has been constructed in a similar fashion to Latinos, although the underlying logic could be easily extended to the English, French, and Portuguese empires (Forbes 1992). If Latino really captures something of unique importance then it would behoove us to also include “Anglic,” “Gallic,” and “Lusitanic” ethnic groups in our governmental forms and academic studies (Forbes 1992: 76). Of course, one would undoubtedly fail to understand American society if it was analyzed under the premise that all its members were part of one Anglic ethnic group. The focus on a purportedly homogenous Latino group means the averaging of experiences.

The failure of Latino to provide a suitable unit of analysis can be traced to its origins. After African American’s civil right struggles made governmental aid available to African Americans, some Mexican Americans desirous of obtaining similar assistance shifted from attempts to maintain a “white” identity to attempts to establish a “non-white” identity (Mora 2014). These activists worked with Puerto Rican activists as well as the Nixon Administration, which was interested in buying political support, to tabulate data so as to direct federal aid to the new minority group. (Mora 2014; Skrentny 2004). Indeed, Richard Rodriguez has dubbed Richard Nixon “the dark father of Hispanicity,” properly acknowledging the predominant role of the individual most responsible for its creation (Rodriguez 2004). This was not the only attempt to leave the “white” group to access the new benefits of minority status, but the attempts of “white ethnic” groups were unsuccessful or aborted (Skrentny 2004). Only understood as the product of political compromises does the Latino category make any sense.

While it's definitely true that labeling Mexican Americans as "white" was problematic, creating a Latino category was not the correct way to address this issue and is itself similarly problematic. First, all Latinos are not in fact viewed or treated in the same way. The literature reviewed here shows that phenotype still affects socioeconomic status. There are also many cultural differences subsumed by the Latino category. Second, it is difficult to understand the experiences of those with indigenous or African ancestry when they are grouped with those of European descent in studies of discrimination. Consider that the four current "Latino" senators are of European or predominantly European descent. Consider that the most prominent "Latino" Spanish language journalist is a blue-eyed Mexican criollo. Most Latinos are not of European or predominantly European descent, yet their exclusion doesn't register when everyone is "Latino." The Latino category has often resulted in people of European descent masquerading as people of color while keeping indigenous people out of leadership opportunities (Forbes 1992). There is no reason why the descendants of European colonists—who like their counterparts in the United States benefitted from genocide and slavery—should be receiving the same types of aid originally intended for the victims of slavery in the United States.

Creating the Latino Category was not a historic inevitability. Around the same time that the Latino Category was created there emerged a new Chicano identity—this identity emphasized the indigenous heritage that predominates in Mexico. Allowing Mexican Americans to identify as indigenous or as a Chicano could have allowed for data to be gathered on their socioeconomic statuses and for governmental assistance to have

followed. However, such an identity, tinged with radicalism, was not in favor with the Nixon Administration. Instead, the Mexican Americans in the Nixon administration seemed ambivalent about leaving the white group. This is reflected in the names they chose Spanish Surnamed, Spanish Origin, and Hispanic. While saying they were not white, they seemed hesitant to reluctant to distance themselves from whiteness. We can see this reflected in statements made by Martin Castillo (2010), former director of the Cabinet Committee on Opportunities for Spanish Speaking People, speaking at an event at the Richard Nixon Library. Castillo begins by discussing the impending expiration of the Interagency Committee on Mexican American Affairs which he had been appointed to head.

I didn't find this out till I got there it had a shelf life of six to eight months, so I was going to be out of a job in six to eight months after I'd shut down my practice you know. So, I figured something had to be done. So, I went to the White House and I told them I want to get a bill through congress. The president says well go do it. I never, how do you get a bill through congress? Well we figured out a way and I'm sure that the White House helped us, and we lobbied the Democrats; Senator Montoya, I remember Congressmen Menhaym. Senator Javits, the big Republican guy from New York with a constituency of Puerto Ricans helped us a great deal. Rubicoff helped us a great deal. All the guys from Texas most of them helped us Senator Tower certainly did, and it was a lot of Mexicans in Chicago, Kansas City. The Cubans helped us because we changed it to Cabinet Committee on Opportunity for the Spanish Speaking. And the reason that came about is one we had to get it through congress, okay and we couldn't get it through with Mexicans in the word, just Mexican. Although we were six to eight million the Puerto Ricans were one and half million the Cubans were half a million, and the others were a million, million and a half. We were the dominant group, but we didn't have a national presence, Bob Finch pointed that out to me one day when I was riding with him. And I said, "Mister Finch don't you think it's a little unfair? All the dollars that go out of here for the poverty programs for needy people, minority people, the majority goes to blacks: I said why is that?" It just doesn't seem fair. He says, "well look around you, you see any brown

faces?” We were riding through Washington, I said no. He says, “well neither do they.” So, I realized we had to have a national presence. So this, this idea, we had to get the bill through to keep alive, and we had to include the Hispanics too, Spanish Speaking, to get the votes, but it was also a great idea because all of a sudden we had a national presence. All of a sudden, we meant something to politicians. So now the first thing to do, I suppose, and probably the greatest accomplishment that the cabinet committee made, by the way we had to shape the bill, and we got it through and we became the Cabinet Committee on Opportunity for the Spanish Speaking and I was the first chairman. But the next thing we had to do was get some money and the way you get money in the federal government, especially for the minorities programs and everything by numbers, they go by numbers. Politicians do everything by the numbers, haven’t you noticed? So, to get numbers we had to get into the census as a group, well that was pretty tricky business because after all Mexicans are Caucasians, a lot of people forget that, but we all know that. And in fact, it really bugs me when a Mexican says, “Well those white people.” I say, “god damn it, god damn it, you’re white.” Anyhow that’s another story for another day, isn’t it? So, we had to get it, we had to get into the census and so Maurice Stans, was a very nice man, he was Secretary of Congress he helped us and of course the president was all for it. And so, we met with the Census people, with the help of Secretary Stans, we convinced them, they believed it, they bought it. A lot of White House pressure, I must say. Cause it was good for everybody. And we got it through. Well the money started coming in that way and our job as ombudsman was to see that various government agencies got it out to the right places and that’s where we had our staff for, we had a bunch of bright guys, bright young guys, some of whom are here... Carlos Conde wherever he is, he stepped out. He says it’s probably this effort of the cabinet committee, probably produced the greatest in equal opportunity, for the longest time of any of the things the cabinet committee did. And I firmly believe that, cause it’s still there, it’s still ginning on and a lot of people are mad at the word “Hispanics”, they call it a mythical term. Well it was a political term, okay? But it worked.

While efforts to assist a historically disenfranchised community are laudable, the mythic nature of the Hispanic category means that is a flawed vehicle to do so. We can do better.

CONCLUSION

The continued significance of phenotype, in a way that favors those with European phenotypes and disfavors those with non-European phenotypes, despite nearly 50 years of efforts to racialize and homogenize Latinos shows that Latino is not a viable unit of analysis. Using Latino as a unit of analysis is starting from a false premise that Latinos are a homogenous group with shared experiences. Although this article has focused on the impact of phenotype, phenotype is just one intra-group difference obscured by the Latino concept. Studies that ignore these intra-group difference produce distorted results. Given that the Latino category fails to reflect reality and hides the discrimination of those with Amerindian or African phenotypes. I propose that both social scientists and the federal government cease to utilize it. 15 U.S.C. §1516a should be repealed, so as to stop the misallocation of scarce resources meant for the victims of racial discrimination. These resources should be shifted to those who are actually harmed by racial discrimination. Further research is needed on how to best capture the real-world experiences now obscured by the Latino category.

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