

Gov't & Politics

Search Our Site

[E-mail this story to a friend](#)[View printer-friendly version](#)**Many Hispanics eschew racial categories, study finds**[Read detailed results of the study](#)**SERVICES**[Subscriber Services](#)**NEWS**[Westchester](#)[Rockland](#)[Putnam](#)[New York](#)[Newswatch: Iraq](#)[Crime/Public Safety](#)[Education](#)[Environment](#)[Gov't&Politics](#)[Health](#)[Religion](#)[Transportation](#)[Obituaries](#)[Weekly Publications](#)**PHOTOS**[Daily gallery](#)[Local sports](#)[Photo index](#)[Order reprints](#)**SPORTS**[NY report](#)[Varsity Central](#)[High schools](#)[All-Stars](#)[• Rockland](#)[• West.-Putnam](#)[Columnists](#)[• Rick Carpinello](#)[• Jane McManus](#)[• Ian O'Connor](#)[National](#)[Suburban Golf](#)**BUSINESS**[Business News](#)[Markets](#)[Local stocks](#)[Real estate](#)[Technology](#)[Space](#)**LIVING**[Life&Style](#)

By JORGE FITZ-GIBBON AND ERNIE GARCIA

THE JOURNAL NEWS

(Original publication: July 15, 2003)

A state university study released today raises questions over how Hispanics perceive themselves in terms of race and highlights the sometimes vast social differences that exist within the Hispanic community.

Compiled at the University at Albany, SUNY, using U.S. census data, the study found that an increasing percentage of Hispanics are bypassing traditional racial categories to identify themselves, suggesting the emergence of a separate Latino identity.

"I'd say that one of the big issues that the study raises is whether in America you have to think in terms of a black-white hierarchy, or whether it's possible in the future in this country to see things in different terms," said Albany professor John Logan, the study's author. "In the past 100 years, the color line has been so strong and so much a part of American society, it may be that the influx of new groups into the society will bring in a different perspective."

The Albany study analyzed U.S. census statistics dating to 1980 and found that nearly half of the nation's 35 million Hispanics list "Hispanic" or "Latino" as both their race and their ethnic heritage, bucking traditional racial classifications. The study calls the group "Hispanic Hispanic," a category which increased from 43.2 percent of the Hispanic population in 1980 to 47.4 percent in 2000.

The Hispanic Hispanic group has also grown locally. In Westchester, they made up 29.7 percent of the Latino population in 1990 and 43.5 percent in 2000. During the same 10-year span, the number grew from 25.2 percent in Rockland to 38.5 percent, and from 15.4 percent to 27.7 percent in Putnam.

"It definitely shows an awareness that being Hispanic or Latino is a distinct identity in the United States," Logan said. "And it's a rejection of the standard racial categories that we have historically used in this country. So the assertion of another group identity is, I think, very important."

However, the 12-page study also found that slightly more than half of Hispanics continue to classify themselves by race, and some — primarily blacks — share more demographic characteristics with their racial group than with other Hispanics.

The study determined that white Hispanics have the highest incomes and the lowest rates of unemployment and poverty among Hispanic racial groups, although they still lag far behind non-Hispanic whites. Meanwhile, black Hispanics have one of the lowest median incomes — comparable to African-Americans' — and higher unemployment and poverty levels than any of the population groups analyzed.

The study tackles the controversial subject of race within the multinational, multiracial Hispanic culture. Race remains a complex and sometimes reluctant topic for Latinos, some of whom say they mask their race in responding to the census to avoid discrimination or in a desire to fit in. In fact, most Hispanics are mestizo — a mix of European and Native American ancestry.

- [Art](#)
- [Antiques](#)
- [The Bridal Book](#)
- Columnists**
 - [• Mitch Broder](#)
 - [• Martha Stewart](#)
- [David Jacobson](#)
- [Day in the Life](#)
- [Food](#)
- [Calendar](#)
- [Travel](#)
- [TV Listings](#)

"The majority of (Hispanic) people don't speak about being mestizo: They say they're white," said Maria Rojo of White Plains, a Peruvian native. "They don't want to be marginalized, so they say they're white or they don't even say what race they are."

The tendency to identify as white is not uncommon among Hispanics. At a Peruvian celebration in Ossining on Sunday, dancers with Native American features and dark complexions danced in traditional masks depicting rosy-cheeked, blue-eyed Europeans.

Manhattan resident Miguel Rodriguez, who sold flowers outside St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church in Yonkers on Sunday, answered without hesitation that he was white. Only when pressed further did he acknowledge that the more accurate answer is mestizo, which makes up 60 percent of the population in his native Mexico.

Still, Clara Rodriguez, a professor of sociology at Fordham University, cautioned that drawing conclusions based on how Hispanics respond to census queries about race and ethnicity — as the Albany study does — could be problematic. A person's answer could change from one census to the next, while the way the questions are posed has also changed over the decades.

For instance, the 2000 census allowed more than one racial category to be selected for the first time.

"These are very fluid categories, particularly when it comes to measuring Latinos," said Rodriguez, whose book, "Changing Race," examines race and the Latino community. "People who might have reported themselves as Hispanic in this census alter their classification 10 years from now into another one of the categories."

"What I think analysis of this type of data does do is it raises the whole question of how the U.S. has constructed its racial categories."

Some local residents agree, saying they simply object to being labeled based on traditional criteria.

"Personally," said Stony Point resident Ernie Torres, "I just feel that this country is very black and white. They want you to be one or the other. As a Latino, I don't think I could be. I don't need to be white or black. I'm just Latino."

Logan, the Albany study's author, said his research simply raises crucial issues about the rapidly growing Hispanic population and its place both within the Latino community and in the nation as a whole.

He said he hopes the resulting discussion will expand attitudes about race and ethnicity in America.

"I think, actually, the distinctions are important distinctions, and the direction we need to go is to be more sophisticated in understanding that black or Hispanic or Asian or even white doesn't mean just one thing in America," Logan said.

"It means a lot of things, and the direction I would go is to understand better the diversity and what it represents to people."

Send e-mail to [Jorge Fitz-Gibbon](mailto:Jorge.Fitz-Gibbon)

- ENTERTAINMENT**
- [Dining](#)
- [For kids](#)
- [Movies](#)
- [Music](#)
- [Theater](#)
- [THE LINE](#)
- WEEKLIES**
- [The Item](#)
- [The Patent Trader](#)
- [Review Press](#)
- [Standard Star](#)
- [The Star](#)
- [The Times](#)
- OPINION**
- [Editorials](#)
- [Letters](#)
- [Matt Davies](#)
- Columnists**
 - [• Bob Baird](#)
 - [• Arthur Gunther](#)
 - [• E.J. Kessler](#)
 - [• Laurie Nikolski](#)
 - [• Phil Reisman](#)
- CLASSIFIED**
- [Jobs](#)
- [Homes](#)
- [Cars](#)
- [Coupons](#)
- [Local Classifieds](#)
- [Local Stores](#)
- FYI**
- [Corrections](#)
- [News Standards](#)
- [About us](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [FAQ](#)
- [Subscribe](#)
- [How to advertise](#)

[Home](#) - [Business](#) - [Sports](#) - [Life&Style](#) - [Classified](#) - [TheLine](#) - [Contact Us](#) - 914-694-9300 - [Obituaries](#)
- [Newspaper Subscriptions](#) - [How To Advertise](#) - [About Us](#) - [Job Opportunities](#)

This site is best viewed using Microsoft Internet Explorer or Netscape 6.0



Copyright 2003 The Journal News, [a Gannett Co.](#) Inc. newspaper serving Westchester, Rockland and Putnam Counties in New York.
Use of this site indicates your agreement to the [Terms of Service](#) (updated 12/17/2002)