



Apr 9th, 2:35 PM - 3:35 PM

The Perception of Bilingualism in the United States

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Cruz, Rebeca and Isabelli, Faculty Advisor, Christina, "The Perception of Bilingualism in the United States" (2011). *John Wesley Powell Student Research Conference*. 6.

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Poster Presentation P12

THE PERCEPTION OF BILINGUALISM IN THE UNITED STATES

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This study evaluates what it means to be a Spanish-English bilingual speaker in the United States and the language shift that is occurring from Spanish to English among native and first generation Spanish-speakers. The questions raised are: What does it mean to be bilingual? Through what process did these bilinguals acquire the second language as well as maintained their heritage language? What may explain the wide spectrum of why some Spanish speakers in the US are mainly monolinguals in Spanish or retain a low level of Spanish? The data will be collected using oral interviews and electronic questionnaires from participants between the ages of 18 and 28 that are from a Hispanic community in a metropolitan area in the Midwest. With increased globalization, there is a greater need for individuals to acquire a second language but first generation Spanish-speakers may be missing out on this opportunity due to the consequences of bilingual education goals of the US educational system. By defining what it means to be bilingual, I hope to provide insight on how bilingual individuals view themselves in our North American society.