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Influence of the Hispanics in America

The immigration and settlement of people of various cultures has created the need to embrace multiculturalism in America. Times are long gone when people assimilated and acted patriotic to America once hosted there. America has now embraced and settled to the fact that diversity must be allowed to take its course, particularly at a time when globalization factors are playing prominent roles in defining a successful economy. The notions of individuality and autonomy seem to be evidenced by allowing individuals to be what they are or what they wish to become. This has enabled immigrants to maintain their cultural ties while adapting to the American culture just as a prerequisite for co-existence. The Hispanics are among the people who strive to maintain their cultural ties while at the same time adapting to the American culture, particularly in linguistic concerns but there are more challenges than benefits perceived in their continuous inflow to America.

**Background Information**

According to Huttington’s argument, “It is unfashionable if not retrograde in most intellectual circles to defend Americanization, prompting Nathan Glazer to write in 1997 that assimilation has become a “dirty word” (Citrin et al. 33). Multiculturalism in today’s context is gaining momentum amidst emphasis on the need to embrace diversity as a way of coexistence. This comes at a time when America is harboring several immigrants, legal and illegal, with most of them being from Latin America, particularly Mexico (Huntington 31).

In the current context, language is the most important assimilation determinant as it is the only way through which people from distinct cultures can communicate. For the Hispanics, this is the only aspect that offers reliable data on the preparedness of this group to be Americanized. But when one focuses on an individual’s identity, Huntington’s fear is confirmed. As Citron and colleagues argue “The large number of Hispanic respondents preferring to label themselves as Latino/Hispanic can be viewed as partial support for Huntington’s concern” (41). This means that Citrin and colleagues do not support Huntington’s view that America is losing its identity.

**Statement of the problem**

While there was a time when America was proud of its culture and identity, it is no longer the case today as globalization has necessitated the embracement of multiculturalism and the consequences associated with it. Everyone is being sensitized to accept diversity as part of day to day life. The idea of learning from other cultures has also been promoted by scholars and professionals as a way of enriching the American culture. For this reason, Huntington sees America as a combination of several nation states with no specific name that can be attached to it, except, the United States (32). The implication is that the US has no national identity. If it has, then it would have a name that defines it as an independent state like others, such as Mexico and Brazil. This is the problem with allowing the immigrants to settle into the country without specific values in place to define the way of life of everyone. The entire problem lies with the high immigration rates from Mexico to the US. As Huntington puts it, immigration is not the problem but dominance. If the Mexico to America immigration stopped, then there would be no problem as the immigration rates would drop tremendously and those that would have to migrate from other countries to America would be manageable (32).

**Significance of the Study**

The study of the influence of Hispanics on America is important as it enhances the knowledge of non-specialist audience on how the US has changed through an increase in the immigration rates of the former. Through this knowledge, an individual will be in a position to make conclusions as to whether US still has its national identity or not and whether the domination of a single ethnic group in the immigration phenomenon has benefits to the cultural diversity or not.

**Justification of the Study**

Hispanics form a significant portion of the population in Latin America. In studying the culture of the latter, it looks plausible to pick this group in relation to the influence it has had in the US since the group also forms a majority of the population in the immigration phenomenon. The study of this group is also critical because the rate of its inflow, coupled with the fertility rates, yield fear among opponents of dominant immigration amidst the view that this population might form 25% of the American population in the next three decades (Huntington 34). It is, therefore, rational and appropriate to study Hispanics as they emerge as a group that will greatly determine the identity of America, particularly because it will be the next dominant group after the native Whites.

**Discussion**

The increase in the immigration rates to America has prompted a concern among scholars who feel that America is now losing ground as no one seems prepared to fully adopt the American culture as his or her way of life. Hispanics believe in maintaining their culture even as they learn English and adopt the eating habits of Americans. This belief is also embraced by other Latin Americans who maintain strong ties with their country of origin even when they are fully decided to be American citizens. Originally, the notion of assimilation was embraced by the US as a way of maintaining national identity (33). There were laws that guided immigration and settlement in the US and this reinforced assimilation to almost every aspect of the American way of life. From this argument, it is evident that the times when America is said to have had an identity was founded on forced assimilation of the immigrants (Citrin et al 32). However, today’s context allows one the freedom to decide what he or she wants. Again, diversity as globalization factor necessitates caution on a nation’s targets, including in making various policies that guide the welfare of the country.

Huntington’s ideas comprise of opposition to Mexicans’ immigration to the US as a way of resolving some issues. The argument, at some point, diverts from the loss of American identity to the problems caused by the Hispanics in the US. The notion of immigration being a problem to America is not considered generally but specifically in alignment with the Mexicans immigration. Huntington even predicts a scenario where America will be divided into nations, English- and Spanish-speaking which he refers to as “Anglo-America” and “Mexamerica” respectively (Citrin et al 32). However, this idea emerges as ill-informed as English is America’s national language and one that one has to inevitably learn to ensure coexistence with Americans. In fact, linguistic adaptation is considered as the first step in assimilation and one that is necessary for the acquisition of social mobility (Lutz 38).

Although Hispanics inflow to America is high, it has not reached the level of surpassing the natives in a way that the Spanish language can dominate. In fact, researchers and scholars, such as Lutz, argue that English is a prerequisite for an individual residing in America while bilingualism is just an ideology that a parent actualizes in the mind of a child as a way of maintaining cultural ties of one’s home country or for other reasons (Lutz 41). In fact, diversity reasons emerge as being among the factors for the embracement of bilingualism. The implication is that learning a new language is perceived as a way of privileging oneself in the diverse environment as this tends to be one of the determinant factors of fitting in the labor market (Lutz 43).

Huntington’s fear is further evidenced by the perception that the high fertility rate of the Hispanics in comparison to the natives might lead to the domination of this group in America (Huntington 35). Although he tries to put forth a point, it appears like his opposition to Mexican’s immigration leads him to arguments that are inconclusive. To Huntington, Mexicans should be barred from going to America and this will solve the foreseen problem of the Hispanics surpassing the natives. This has already happened in Los Angeles where 46.5% of the population residing there in 2000 were Hispanics with the non-Hispanic Whites forming 29.7% of the residents (Huntington 35). This depicts the incredible rate with which the Hispanic population is growing in America and one would subscribe to the notion that the Hispanics might even be more than the 25% predicted by Huntington and this might be sooner than three decades to come. The solution is not in barring the Hispanics’ in-flow to America but finding ways through which the economy can benefit from this influx.

**Summary**

Hispanics form a significant portion of Mexican population that is migrating to America, legally and illegally. This has led to the perception that the Mexicans are gaining dominance in America and their immigration should be stopped as a way of resolving various issues. Huntington suggests the idea of assimilating them as a way of recovering the national identity of America which is already lost. Citrin and colleagues, on the other hand, are of the view that assimilation would not be of help as these immigrants already have the elements they choose to adapt to once they are in America. Linguistic adaptation is one of the aspects that characterize the Hispanics. However, Huntington presents them as a monolingual group and expresses fear that America is headed for division into two independent nations: Anglo-American for the English Speakers, and Mexamericans for Spanish-speakers.

Linguistic differences between Hispanics and Americans is the main cause for Huntington’s sentiments that Americanization is inexistent in the contemporary context. However, research has shown that Hispanics learn English as a prerequisite for social mobility and as an adaptive strategy. Bilingualism is an idea with Hispanic parents and which they actualize as a way of, not only maintaining cultural ties with the home country, but also enhancing their children’s potential in the labor market and other endeavors. The implication is that the population increase of Hispanics in America is and the linguistic differences involved are not sufficient in predicting the division of the US but can also amount to higher levels of unity based on the benefits likely to emanate from the socio-economic mobility of the immigrants and the natives.

Works Cited

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