



Experiences of Hispanic Population in the United States

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Abstract:

Immigrants come from around the world to the United States. Some come legally, some come in other ways. Legal immigrants are those who are able to come through legal channels such as marriage to a citizen or permanent resident, through an employer, or as a refugee. Others come on temporary visas such as student or tourist visas. Discrimination is something that has been very common among human race. This can be experienced both consciously and unconsciously. Discrimination among ethnic minorities has to do with how people perceive foreigners or immigrants. This is an exploratory research based on existing literature that critically analyzes the experiences of Hispanic population in America. This study concludes that human services profession can be most effective responding nationally with collective efforts across the country based on these experiences. Additionally, the information gathered can help them better navigate the human service agency system as they try to find assistance for their immigrant clients.

Keywords: *Cultural Patterns, Hispanic population, Human services profession, Human service agency*

1.0 Introduction

Immigrants come from around the world to the United States. Some come legally, some come in other ways. Legal immigrants are those who are able to come through legal channels such as marriage to a citizen or permanent resident, through an employer, or as a refugee. Others come on temporary visas such as student or tourist visas. Very few people in the world are eligible to come in these ways and many are permanently ineligible (Jasso, et.al., 2008). Unauthorized immigrants are those who either do not use those legal channels when entering the United States or who enter through legal channels but stay longer than their visas allow. It is estimated that nearly half (40-50%) of unauthorized immigrants in the country at this time became unauthorized by overstaying their visas (Pew Hispanic Center, 2006, May). Contrary to popular opinion, immigration law and the breaking of that law are civil matters, not criminal matters (Antos-Fallon, 2008). This paper analysis the experiences of Hispanics or Latinos, their cultural values and patterns and provides implications for human services profession.

2. History of Hispanic Population

History reveals that since our country's beginning, immigrants from each continent have come to America. During the early years, the settlers came mainly from the British Isles, Northern and Southern Europe. The twentieth century was marked by two great waves of immigration. The first wave was from 1800 until 1927 when 21 million immigrants came to the United States. We

are now in the midst of the second great wave in which the country has seen 27 million new immigrant arrivals. The most obvious difference between the immigrants at the beginning of the last century is their places of origin. Most of the earlier immigrant populations came from Canada and Europe. However, during the 1920s, Mexico emerged as the most significant contributor to the United States and still accounts for the greatest immigrant population (Johnson, 1999).

The earlier immigrants who came primarily from Europe settled in the U.S. Northeast and Midwest while recent immigrants from Central and South America are moving eastward (Johnson, 1999). The 1990s marked the beginnings of new immigration trends in which the fastest growth in the immigrant population was represented in such states like New York, California and Baltimore.

The 1980s brought a large wave of Hispanics to Maryland, California, and New York. As outlined in a report by the Baltimore Catholic Archdiocese, between 1980 and 1990 the Hispanic immigrant population increased by 93% to more than 125, 000 people in New York (O'Mara, 1993). Further, between 1990 and 1994, the Hispanic immigrant population grew by an additional 29% and by 1995; the Hispanic immigrant population had grown to 112,000 people in Maryland (Maryland Department of Human Resources 1997 "Fact Book" 1997; Maryland in Perspective, 1997). Data have shown that the Hispanic immigrant population has continued to grow throughout the 1990's, in the entire country (Maryland Department of Human Resources, 1997).

According to the U.S. Census Reports (2003), the primary Hispanic immigrant groups originate from Mexico. During the last hundred years, few racial or ethnic groups have had as much an impact on the demographics in America as the Hispanics. Gratton and Gutman (2000) report in 1900 there were a little more than 500,000 Hispanic immigrants living in the United States. Over the past 30 years immigration has heavily shifted the socioeconomic and demographics of the United States. Suro and Singer (2002) explain that the Hispanic immigrants are responsible, and currently the Hispanic population numbers more than 35 million. They represent one of the most culturally diverse groups in this country.

3. Treatment of the Group (Discrimination and Policies)

Discrimination is something that has been very common among human race. This can be experienced both consciously and unconsciously. Discrimination among ethnic minorities has to do with how people perceive foreigners or immigrants. In the United States, immigration policy has always made distinctions and clarifications by ethnicity, race and social class (Trattner, 2009). Many may argue that discrimination and racism no longer exist, and think that minorities are pushing too hard for equality, that their demands are unfair and illegitimate, and that they get too much sympathy and attention. They tend to be very proud of holding traditional American values, which they use to justify their negative attitudes towards minority groups. They rely heavily on stereotypes and discrimination (Sears, 1988). They also tend to blame the minorities themselves for their disadvantaged positions. They don't believe themselves to be racists and are unlikely to use racist language in public that show that they have the potential to discriminate, but when around someone that will listen, they are more than willing to make known their negative feelings about minorities (Neil et. al. 2003).

Aversive racists believe that racism and discrimination still exist and are likely to support public social policies that promote racial equality and try to amend the consequences of racism. They believe themselves to be non-prejudiced and non-discriminatory. However, they still

unconsciously (or sometimes consciously) have negative beliefs and feelings about racial or ethnic minorities. Those beliefs can conflict with their individually held ideals such as equality and fairness. They are not hostile towards minorities but they feel uneasiness or discomfort and sometimes disgust or fear when they are around individuals from different racial or ethnic groups. They sometimes do express racial bias, but this is usually when they can rationalize it away as based on something other than race (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Dovidio & Gaertner, 1998, 2000; Quinton et. al. 1996).

Historically, the 1924 immigration law introduced a big distance between white and black and other immigrant population. As a result, white people were able to buy homes in many restricted areas to prevent blacks or Hispanic, and other minorities from living in their neighborhood. The activities of civil right movements improved the condition of ethnic minorities by creating fairness in immigration laws (Schram & Mandell, 2009).

In 1986, the congress passed immigration reform and Control Act as a response to concerns of ethnic minorities against discrimination. Due to this reform, ethnic minorities can be employed and employers can also be sued and fired if they hire illegal immigrant workers. To avoid discrimination against ethnic minorities in 1996 immigration laws changes and ruled in favor of about 300,000 refugees who flew from countries like Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala and were given temporary permit to work and protection from deportation (Schram & Mandell, 2009). In the past, the immigration laws made it difficult for ethnic minorities especially Hispanics to visit their family members from country of origin until recent changes which allow free movement by ethnic minorities who visit their homeland.

In 1996, lawyers in California challenged the law income requirement for permanent residency and citizenship and found it to be unconstitutional and discriminatory, especially to hispanics. In addition, some states even after 9/11 have granted driver's licenses to many ethnic minorities who were legally qualified under the new immigration laws. In 2007, Bush introduced the "Guest worker programs" which supplied more workers to employers at a price they want to pay. This allows many ethnic minorities to work in the United States temporarily and still able to visit their family in their home countries (Vanderhole, 2008). Internationally, it must be noted that ethnic minority discrimination is prohibited in every major international human right treaty. Nevertheless, it still persists despite all measures that are being taken both through legislation, media attention and legal remedies (Vanderhole, 2008).

4. Cultural Patterns

Latino (Hispanics) parents want their children to be safe and protected. Latino parents tend to exhibit both greater intimacy and more protective behaviors and strictness than non-Hispanic whites. At home, adolescents live in a traditional cultural environment where, although children, they face economic demands that often force them to take on adult roles (Arcia & Johnson, 1998). Their peer group also is closely monitored by parents and limited to a few friends whose parents share similar values, including those on virginity, submissiveness, and family fidelity. Extended family members, godparents, neighborhood friends, and clergy may be able to provide physical and emotional support to families and even serve as formal or informal foster parents, when necessary (Orellana, 2003).

Another value is the value of respect that a Hispanic person holds which effects the way in which they operate in all areas of their life. According to Hispanics, the value for one's self will drive one to be a better worker and to seek to promote oneself in whatever profession the individual is working in. That is the main key to why so many Hispanics come to America and Canada and do

so well in settling and making a good life for themselves. There is a drive that supersedes what others see in you. It is the level of respect one holds for himself that will drive him to persist when faced with daunting odds. To respect who one is and one's heritage is a value that all Hispanics should have and many who come to this country maintain. It is that respect for who one is that keeps them in touch with their roots, heritage, customs and values (Vazques, 2009).

5. Hispanic Experiences and Issues

Latino immigrants particularly those who are undocumented, are at high risk of poverty, inadequate health care; poor working conditions; stigma and a constant fear of being arrested or deported. However, many survive these challenges and overcome them. It is noted from the existing literature that experience of being a new Latino immigrant, particularly if undocumented is always portrayed as suffering (Bathum & Baumann, 2007).

In Texas, in 1996, Courts of civil Appeals argued that school authorizes could not arbitrarily segregate Mexican/Mexican Americans and other minority children solely because of their ethnic background. As a result, it became obvious to make sure that segregation becomes illegal in Texas and other states (Wash, 1994). News media have also contributed significantly in educating the public against ethnic discrimination in the United States. This is evident in the case of Rodney King in Los Angeles in April and May of 1992. The four police officers were racially motivated to pull King over and the height of discrimination within the officers was so pronounced that many of them lost their positions (Booth & Adler, 2002).

Another legal remedy of discrimination against ethnic minorities is the Affirmative Action, which provides opportunities for immigrants in terms of education, employment and social status. Latinos are the largest minority group in the United States despite that they are not so much associated with slavery, it is pertinent to understand that they still suffer discrimination in terms of education, income and occupation because they may not receive same income, equal payment, attend best, or good school (Luna, 2003). Some scholars believe that eliminating the plight of hispanics will eliminate discrimination from which other communities suffer. As a result, the history of public school desegregation is another typical example which shows that discrimination exists among various ethnic communities. Also, as a result of many changes in immigration laws, Mexicans/Mexican Americans have become more affluent in the United States especially in New York and California but more work still needs to be done to eradicate discrimination as it is being experienced by them (Wash, 1994).

It is important to note that ethnic discrimination and immigration issues is very complex and as a result, some people are happy while others are unhappy with new immigration laws and regulations. Recently, much of these laws are geared toward the recognition that there are good and bad immigrants. They believe that the good immigrants are the early immigrants that have been referred to as hard working, and honest (Schram & Mandell, 2009).

In 2002, illegal minorities were paid \$ 6.5 billion in social security which they would never have been paid in the past, undocumented immigrants were guaranteed access to a free public education from kindergarten through twelve grade by a 1982 supreme court decision and finally, recently a new bill has been introduced in the house called the DREAM ACT which would make it possible for ethnic minorities to pay-in state tuition, and would make it easier for them to become legal permanent residents (Schram & Mandell, 2009).

6. Conclusion and Implications

In article, it is established that Latino immigrants experience with their community and family provides a natural support system. First, community bond represents how individuals and

families unite to build strength in times of stress (Delgado & Humm-Delgado, 1982). Unity pertains to an interdependent process involving systems such as family, community and organizations (Doron, 2005). In this case, professionals like social or human services workers may utilize their support systems to assist many of them that may be experiencing discrimination at work or in schools etc to overcome issues related to it.

Also, human services profession can be most effective responding nationally with collective efforts across the country based on these experiences in this paper to promote policies that will improve Hispanic and other minority lives so that they can feel that they are a part of the country. Working directly with client, it can help counselors understand some of the experiences of their immigrant clients, and help those clients process those experiences and learn how to cope within the community they live. It can also help them when working with very prejudiced clients.

Additionally, the information gathered can help them better navigate the human service agency system as they try to find assistance for their immigrant clients. At the direct community level, when working in the community at large, the information will guide them as they attempt to increase mutual understanding and cooperation between different groups. At the indirect community level, the findings can help them to be more effective in their efforts of lobbying for social justice for immigrants in their communities (Schram & Mandell, 2009).

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