

# Minority groups



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In quest for survival, men move from one country to another. This has become a rampant thing in our world today. Generally, there are a lot of reasons why people migrate for one their home country to another country. For instance, people who live in less developed or developing countries move to other countries in search of a better financial prospects.

This kind of migration is voluntary as it is based primarily on the decision of the immigrant. Apart from this, people are forced to seek refuge or asylum in other countries due to the political unrest in their own home countries. This might be as a result of war or some other forms of political unrest. Also, people migrate to other countries because they want to be reunited with family members that they have seen in a long time. Other reasons why people may want to migrate to other countries include among others; business, job relocation and overpopulation.

Migration has its advantages and disadvantages. Although migration may help people achieve their goals and make their dreams come true, it is laden with its adverse effects. To begin with, the immigrant has little or no power in deciding how he/she will be seen by the people of the host nation because they constituted the minority in that country. Apart from this, we should understand that the immigrant's culture will most likely be different from that of the host nation. This might lead to the loss of identity of the immigrant. Overtime, some terms have been connected with majority-minority interaction, some of which are assimilation, cultural pluralism and segregation. I will attempt a brief definition of these terms.

Assimilation is a concept that is used in reference to the situation where a person is absorbed into another community as a result of constant interaction with the people of such community. Assimilation as a concept involves the assimilator, who usually belongs to the minority group blending into another culture, which is the majority group. The effect of assimilation is soon felt as the culture of the minority group faces the risk of going into extinction.

The concept is claimed to have evolved from the notion of “melting pot” which implies that immigrants and other cultural group will naturally blend and be self-oriented into the American culture and way of life. Thus, the success of assimilation is the loss of the minority’s culture and the individual’s identity. Also, assimilation has led to individuals having a confused identity as they do not know which culture to embrace and are stuck in-between the two cultural identities.

Furthermore, another term that has evolved in majority-minority interaction is cultural pluralism. As opposed to assimilation, this concept believes that minority groups could fit into the majority community while still retaining their individual culture. As a concept, it acknowledges the possibility of a pluralistic society and holds the idea that it is possible for people with different cultural backgrounds to coexist in the same society without one culture defacing the other.

This term can be said to be built on the concept of ‘unity in diversity’. Historically, two American pragmatists namely Horace Meyer Kallen and Randolph Silliman Bourne have argued for the adoption of this concept. They

argued that this became necessary during the World War 1 where some culturally different individuals were denied some fundamental human rights and liberty in America. This thought is accounted for in the book written by Horace Meyer Kallen titled “ Democracy versus the Melting Pot”.

In addition to these, majority-minority interaction has been criticized for promoting segregation in the society. The term “ segregation” can be defined as a social situation where a particular group or race, usually minorities are discriminated in a society. For instance, for a long time, blacks were segregated in America. There were some laws that were made that showed that blacks were separated.

Another typical example of a country where there was segregation, even on their homeland, is South Africa during the apartheid period. Generally, to say that America is a perfect nation devoid of separation is to believe in a myth. This has and is still a problem faced by different races in America. Although it is claimed that America is “ God’s own country”, reality beholds us in the face as there are still cases of segregation in our nation. Terms like “ DWB”, which means “ driving while black”, depicts the fact that black people are still being discriminated against in America.

Apart from blacks, another notable minority group that has been affected by issues that surround majority-minority interaction is the Polish people living in America. I will attempt to relate the three concepts discussed above to how it relates to the Polish living in America.

Going down the memory lane, the Polish had been living in America but their number increased between 1800’s to the beginning of World War II.

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Basically, they migrated for a lot of reasons which varied from fear of recruitment to religious persecution and financial reasons. Notably, the Poles did not initially assimilate into the American culture. Because most of them are Roman Catholics, they lived together and built big churches where they could worship.

This is due to the fact that they believed that they held they believe that their identity was hinged on these churches. The church served as an avenue for them to meet and discuss their individual and societal problems. As expected, they assimilated gradually into the American culture. They made their impact on America and a notable Polish that had a significant impact in the field of entertainment is Artur Rubinstein, one of American's finest pianists. Through this time, they held on to their culture and stuck together, regardless of what Americans felt or said. Although latter generations that were born in America shelved their original culture and totally did things like the Americas.

In addition to this, early poles that migrated into America operated a system of cultural pluralism. Although they participated in the activities of Americans, they held on to their own beliefs too. They were original and they believed so much in their heritage, which they considered the center of their identity. They knew who they were and were not ready to compromise that for anything. Therefore, the society that poles lived can be said to be culturally plural.

During a campaign speech by the former US President, Ronald Reagan, he said “ Did you know that the Polish Army bought 10, 000 septic tanks? Once

they learn how to use 'em they are going to invade Russia.” Poles were stereotyped in America and were seen as dirty, unkempt and rough. In fact, there was a film where they were greatly stereotyped titled “ AStreetcar Named Desire.” This does not include the various forms of discrimination they faced as a result of TV commercials, magazine cartoons, comedy show and lots more.

In conclusion, majority-minority interaction is bound to create a problem because it is difficult to totally embrace a stranger from a different cultural background. It is also hard for immigrants to hold on to their original culture for ever because of socialization. Also, when we argue for cultural pluralism, we are allowing divisions in the society.

Reference:

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