

Latino culture



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Latino Culture Please write your First middle initial(s), and of the Introduction

The term “ Latino” is generally used for those people living in America, whose origins are from numerous countries including Mexico, Spain, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Puerto Rico, Cuba and others. On the other hand, the term “ Hispanic” refers only to the people from Spain. The largest number of Latinos in the United States come from Latin America in central and south America, with their numbers increasing rapidly from 1990 to 2000. The ongoing immigration of large numbers of Latinos into the United States is during an era dominated by multiculturalism. Further, Latinos have considerably different histories, cultural approaches and contemporary social problems (Suarez-Orozco & Paez, 2008).

Thesis Statement: The purpose of this paper is to investigate the various aspects of Latino culture in the United States.

The Latinos, their Culture and Values

“ Latinos are not a simple racial or ethnic group, but they are the product of a distinctive civil society” (Hayes-Bautista, 2005, p. 5). Latinos are generally described by governmental policy models as: a racial group, a language group, a group with strong affiliation to their traditional culture, a dysfunctional minority group, or an urban underclass. However, the core element of Latinos is the continued presence of a Latino civil society, which provides Latino children with their initial experiences in the social world, teaches them right and wrong, duty, early concepts of civic responsibility, and first notions of personal identity.

There is a great heterogeneity among the different groups of Latinos, their experiences depending on various factors such as “ race, color, gender, socio-economic status, language, immigrant status, and mode of

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incorporation into the United States” (Suarez-Orozco & Paez, 2008, p. 4). The social practices and cultural models of multiculturalism contribute to the experiences, perceptions and the range of behaviors of both immigrant and native-born Latinos in ways unprecedented during earlier large-scale immigration. The racial and ethnic categorization of Latinos has high stakes political and economic implications such as civil rights, equal opportunities, and affirmative action.

Mainland Puerto Ricans and immigrant Dominicans indicate a high level of transnationalism, evident in the economic, political and cultural strategies adopted by diasporic people. They lead double lives with double loyalties, living alternately between their island and the mainland; remitting large sums of money to their homeland, continue to participate in political processes there, and periodically visit their homeland to maintain their social and cultural ties. Transnational behavior, and alternately moving between the mainland and Mexico has been practised by Mexican also. This was based on the completion of seasonal work. In the last two decades, however, there is a shift towards permanent settlement in the United States by Mexicans. However, Latinos base their identities on family origins, socialization and personal feelings regarding issues. Several Latinos feel that they are “ neither American nor real members of their ancestral culture” (Suarez-Orozco & Paez, 2008, p. 332), but others are overcoming this dilemma by embracing both cultures.

Latinos generally emphasize the significance of family, the progress of their community, respect to elders, loyalty, honor and pride in their cultural heritage and have a strong desire to succeed. Moreover, their goals are not limited for themselves, but encompass their community on the whole. Thus,

some values of Latino culture impacts their approach, perception, attitude and behavioral patterns in connection with ambition, leadership and success. Further, “ the spiritual and sentimental aspects of life such as the family” (Chong & Baez, 2005, p. 130) are considered to be more important by Latinos, in relation to material wealth. They often emphasize the importance of “ being” rather than “ doing” or “ having”, and of enjoying every moment to the fullest. Providing for the security and comfort of the family, rather than aiming for material possessions or great financial success is inherent in Latino culture, and overly ambitious people are generally avoided for fear of being used by them. Latinos adapt to the western culture when outside their home, but maintain the cultural practices of their country of origin, within their homes. The predominant Latino language is Spanish, while other languages are also in use. Latin-American art such as Chicano art, traditional dances from the different regions, modern dance, music, literature, film, theatre, sports, and the varied cuisine have further contributed to the multiculturalism of America.

Conclusion

This paper has highlighted Latino culture in the United States. The evidence indicates that although Latinos originate from several countries with diverse languages and customs, there is a similarity among their traditional values, perspectives and approaches. Latino culture has drawn from western culture in its social manifestation, while at the same time, contributing to the diversity of American culture. Significantly, Latino culture is distinctive in that it continues to prevail in the homes, daily customs, and goals of the Latino people as a group.

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