

Seminar: The Baby Bust: Who Will Do the Work? Who Will Pay the Taxes?

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Latino Immigrants, National Identity and the National Interest*

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Immigration has been a contentious issue on the national political agenda for over a century, and the contours of the debate it has raised have remained virtually unchanged. Surprisingly, although occasionally this has included protests over the number of immigrants the nation can absorb as was the case in recent decades when groups such as Zero Population Growth and the Sierra Club opposed immigration, the core issues of the debate have centered on whether the new immigrants could be absorbed into the nation. Would they abandon the “old ways” in favor of core American values?

These questions were first raised when the initial wave of non-Western, non-Nordic protestant European immigrants such as those from Italy and Ireland began outnumbering those from Northern Europe and England. This concern expanded to include Asians who were not only denied the right to immigrate, but those already in the United States lost many of the rights and privileges native born citizens and legal immigrants normally enjoy.

While these same concerns now target the “new immigrants.”, i.e., Asians, Africans and Hispanics, they focus on Hispanics because they are so numerous, making up approximately 50 percent of contemporary immigration, and share significant cultural traits (religion and language) that enhances their ability to remain outside mainstream society. Additionally, as Samuel Huntington has recently argued (Huntington 2004), given that Mexicans make up approximately half of this group and that a significant proportion of them are undocumented, the contemporary debate specifically asks how Mexican immigration will affect the nation.

The objective of this essay is to address this issue. Specifically, it will examine the impact Latino immigrants in general and Mexican immigrants in particular are having on the nation. While it will address the cultural and economic aspects of their role, it will particularly

emphasize its political dimensions because the relationship immigrants develop with the polity will shape their overall impact on the nation. Also, because Huntington’s recent argument places Mexicans at the center of the current controversy, the essay will focus on key elements of his argument. I would note, however, that while Huntington is the a most forceful advocate of anti-Mexican views, his perspective is not unique but rather represents the views of anti-immigrant spokesmen such as Patrick Buchanan, Congress ---Tancredo of Colorado and Arthur Schlesinger (Schlesinger 1992).

Immigrants and U.S. Popular Culture

Huntington is critical of Latino immigration because he argues that Latinos refuse to incorporate into mainstream culture and therefore they threaten the nation’s historical identity which is reflective of a unifying cultural experience rooted in Protestantism and the English language. Ironically, Latinos are twice as likely as all Americans to agree with that statement (Table 1).

Table 1: National Perspectives of American Cultural Make-Up

	All Latinos	All Americans
US is made up of many cultures	83%	92%
US has a single core Anglo-Protestant culture	10%	5%

Source: Pew Hispanic Center 2004

Nonetheless, two thirds of Latinos agree that it is very or somewhat important to “change so that they blend into the larger society” but two thirds also agree that it is very important “for Latinos to maintain their cultures (Pew Hispanic Center 2004).” Together these attitudes suggest that Hispanics see no incompatibility between having a combined cultural identity, one located within mainstream America and one built on home country sentiments and practices.

At the societal level, the impact Latin immigration has had on the nation’s popular cultural impact is ubiquitous and multifaceted. Indeed the changes it brings to our daily lives have so changed the cultural landscape that they are key to explaining the current rise in anti-Latino immigrant sentiment. Among the most significant of these is that since the 1980s Latinos have become a national minority, that is, rather than being regionally isolated they now constitute substantial communities in virtually every state (Table 2).

Table 2: States with Largest Latino Populations, 2000

	State Population	Latino Population	% of U.S. Latino Population	Cumulative %
California	32,666,550	10,112,986	28.6%	28.6%
Texas	19,759,614	5,862,835	16.6%	45.3%
New York	18,175,301	2,624,928	7.4%	52.7%
Florida	14,915,980	2,243,441	6.4%	59.0%
Illinois	12,045,326	1,224,309	3.5%	62.5%
New Jersey	8,115,011	1,004,011	2.8%	65.4%
Arizona	4,668,631	1,033,822	2.9%	68.3%
New Mexico	1,736,931	700,289	2.0%	70.3%
Colorado	3,970,971	577,516	1.6%	71.9%
Massachusetts	6,147,132	377,016	1.1%	73.0%
Total Latino	122,201,447	35,300,000		

Further illustrating this change is the number and distribution of states in which Latinos are the largest minority (Chart 1). This national presence is particularly noteworthy among Mexicans who historically were concentrated in the Southwest but now have substantial and growing settlements across the country.

**Chart 1: 23 States Where Latinos are the Largest Minority Group
2000 Census**



Source: Tomas Rivera Policy Institute Report, February 2002

They also have established major settlements in the South, the Midwest and Northwest (Table 3). In New York, 32 percent of the city’s immigrants came from Latin America in 2000 (New York City Department of City Planning Population Division 2005) easily outnumbering Europeans who historically were the most numerous. Mexicans total 122,600, outnumbered only by Dominicans with 369,200. Given that Mexico is much more distant than numerous other

Table 3: Top 10 Counties of Latino Population Growth

County	State	2000 Latino	Numeric Change	% Change	% Latino
Benton	AR	13,469	12,100	891.1%	8.8%
Forsyth	NC	19,577	17,475	831.4%	6.4%
Washington	AR	12,932	11,406	747.4%	8.2%
Durham	NC	17,039	14,986	729.6%	7.6%
Whitfield	GA	18,419	16,098	693.6%	22.1%
Gwinnett	GA	64,137	55,667	657.2%	10.9%
Mecklenburg	NC	44,871	38,178	570.4%	6.5%
Wake	NC	33,985	28,589	529.8%	5.4%
Hall	GA	27,242	22,684	529.8%	19.6%
Elkhart	IN	16,300	13,368	529.8%	8.9%

Latin American nations and has no historical relationship with the region, the size of this population is especially noteworthy.

The impact of these immigrants on the nation's popular culture is obvious and powerful. The most widely accepted and universal consequence is culinary. For almost a decade, Latino marketers have boasted that salsa outsells catsup. A drive across the country attests to the validity of this claim: tacos, fajitas and jalapeños are available in every town and city in the nation. Like pasta and pizzas, Mexican food has become an integral part of the American diet, and its addition to the nation's menu has improved the nation's table just as Italian food did previously. More headline grabbing has been the rise to preeminence of Latinos in the national pastime such as Pedro Martinez, Alex Rodriguez and Sammy Sosa. There is no doubt Latinos have raised the level at which American baseball is played.

Latinos have similarly impacted the nation's entertainment industries. Hispanics have their own situation comedy on a major network (The George Lopez Show), their own Broadway shows (John Leguzamo), and substantial roles in TV shows such as CSI Miami. They also are in the ranks of the nation's most popular contemporary film and television stars (Jimmy Smits and Jennifer Lopez) and include prominent musical artists such as Gloria Estefan and Ricky Martin.

Even though Latino cultural production is altering the face and style of the nation, these changes have been welcomed by mainstream society. There are at least three possible explanations for why even the most vitriolic anti-immigrant nativists are quiet in the face of these developments. First, no one associates them with any threat (other than heartburn). Second, mainstream society so welcomes these contributions that they are beyond criticism even though there can be little doubt that the cultural practices Hispanics are introducing into the nation are changing the very core of mainstream culture. Third, immigration critics save their

energies for specific cultural practices that influences they claim undermine core American values.

Immigrants, Core American Values and Political Incorporation

Contemporary anti-Hispanic immigration sentiments nonetheless also include cultural arguments. The most important of these is linguistic, i.e., Latino immigrants insist on maintaining Spanish to the exclusion of English. This leads to the allegation that because they remain linguistically separate, they are never socialized into mainstream culture but rather retain home country values. Consequently, Mexican Hispanics in general whether they are immigrants or native born, not only will not integrate into the polity but will instead remain politically faithful to their countries of origin to the detriment of the “national interest.”

Numerous sources conclusively vitiate charges that Latinos are linguistically isolated from mainstream America. The Latino National Political Survey reported that those who do not describe themselves as equally competent in both languages, 67% of native born Mexican Americans, 68% of Puerto Ricans and 68% of Cuban Americans rate themselves as better in English than Spanish, compared to 8%, 5% and 4% of Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans and Cuban Americans, respectively, who rate their Spanish better than their English. The foreign born, predictably, rate their Spanish much higher, but even they include few Spanish monolinguals. Indeed, 81% of Mexican immigrants report some English competence, as do 88% of island-born Puerto Ricans and 75% of Cubans (de la Garza et.al., 42, 1992). The 2002 Pew Hispanic Center survey reports similar findings. While it is not surprising that 94% of the native born reported they could carry on a conversation in English very or pretty well, that 44% of the foreign born reported this level of competence is unexpected (Pew Hispanic Center 2002). In 2004, Pew found 96% of the native born indicated that they could carry on a conversation in

English very or pretty well, while 38% of immigrants ranked themselves similarly ((Pew Hispanic Center 2004). Buttressing this finding is the importance Latinos, especially the foreign born, attach to learning English. While 86% of non-Hispanic whites and native born Latinos agree that individuals need to learn English to succeed, 91% of the foreign born voice this view (Pew Hispanic Center 2002).

These patterns illustrate that English is the dominant language of native born Mexican Americans and other Latinos, and that Hispanic immigrants of all nationalities learn English. Indeed, Latin American immigrants “become proficient in English at a more rapid pace than immigrants from other non-English-language countries (Stevens 1994).

Even more noteworthy is how immigrants evaluate the importance of English. In 1990, approximately 40% of Mexican American, Cuban American and Puerto Rican citizens agreed that English should be the nation’s official language (de la Garza 1992, 97), and over 90% of each group also agreed that citizens and residents should learn English (de la Garza et. al., 1992,98). Similar results are evident from the Pew 2002 survey which found that 91% of Latino immigrants agreed that immigrants need to learn English to succeed compared to 86% of native born Latinos and non-Hispanic whites who shared this perspective (Pew Hispanic Center 2002). Also, over 50% of Hispanics believe that immigrants must learn English to say they are part of American society (Pew Hispanic Center 2004). Their commitment to English notwithstanding, Latinos also support knowing and maintaining Spanish. Almost 95% say future generations of Hispanics should speak Spanish.

Clearly, allegations regarding anti-English attitudes and behavior among Hispanics in general and the Mexican origin native born and immigrant population in particular are not empirically grounded. Rather than threaten a core value American value, their linguistic

patterns are more easily seen as supporting the centrality of English to American life. Their knowledge of and commitment to Spanish thus should be seen as a resource that could serve the nation's security and foreign policy goals as well as its economic well being. As economic and political relations with Latin America expand, the presence of Latino bilinguals will insure that the U.S. government not only will never confront in Latin America the absence of linguistically competent officials it faced during the Iranian crisis. Also, Hispanic bilinguals constitute a pool of linguistically and culturally competent individuals who uniquely situated to advance private and public U.S. interests. In other words, Latino bilinguals seem more likely to enhance rather than undermine the national interest.

Claims Latino social values undercut other aspects of today's socio-political mainstream are equally unsupported. Latinos, especially immigrants, voice stronger support than Anglos for "family values" such as opposition to divorce, homosexuality, illegitimate children and abortion (Pew Hispanic Center 2002). They also are committed to economic individualism (de la Garza et. al 1992). Indicative of this attitude is that in California less than 2% of native born and naturalized Hispanic citizens, most of whom are Mexican, receive any public assistance even though all of them are eligible to receive such benefits (Cortina et. al. 2004).

Hispanics also are more religious than Anglos. Compared to 61% of Anglos who indicate that religion is very important to their lives, 64% of the Latino native born and 71% of immigrants describe themselves this way (Pew Hispanic Center 2002) and 30 percent of all Hispanics identify as "born Again Christians (Washington Post/Univision/TRPI 2004 Survey, October). However, almost three quarters (74.3%) are Catholic while only 16.7% are Protestant (Washington Post/Univision/TRPI 2004 Survey, October). Clearly, these patterns challenge claims that Latinos threaten the nation's core linguistic and religious culture.

Also refuting such claims is the extent to which they support the nation's core political values. There is, for example, no statistical evidence that ethnic attachments alienate Latinos from mainstream society (Dowley & Silver 2000). More noteworthy is that regardless of whether they are native or foreign born, speak English or have an intense ethnic consciousness, Mexican American citizens, including the naturalized, were at least as patriotic and supportive of core political values such as political tolerance and economic individualism as Anglos (de la Garza et al. 1996).

An additional measure of the linkage between Latino values and the "national interest" is the difference between Latino perspectives of Latin America vs. the United States. A test of two hypotheses, one explaining Hispanic perspectives as a function of cultural ties and the other arguing that Latino perspectives are shaped by socialization in the United States, found strong support for the latter and no support for the former (de la Garza et. al. 1997). The study's most noteworthy finding is that, regardless of national origin, Mexican, Cuban and Puerto Rican origin citizens all were much more positively oriented toward the United States than to the region in its entirety or to any specific nation including their country of origin.

This pro-American perspective notwithstanding, there are notable differences between Latino and Anglo foreign policy views. For example, Latino elites have voiced more concern about the environment and world hunger than about military power and the security of our allies (Pachon et. al. 2000). More noteworthy is that Hispanics were more likely than Anglos by 56% to 49% to agree the U. S. was responsible for the hatred that motivated the 9/11 attacks (Davis & Silver 2003). This attitude may reflect the historical Latin American view of U. S. foreign policy as arrogant and unsupportive of Latin American well being. Despite this perspective, given that

75% of Latin American immigrants agree there was no justification for the attack (TRPI 2002), it can not be argued that immigrants support anti-American terrorism.

There are fewer differences regarding Latin America. They support the government's goals of strengthening democracy and promoting international trade and investment. It is also noteworthy that the foreign policy preferences of Latino elites run counter to the preferences of Latin American states. A majority support unilateral U. S. responses to problems related to drug trafficking and massive immigration resulting from political turmoil in Mexico, and more than 40% support similar responses to human rights violations in the hemisphere (Pachon et al. 2000). Such American initiatives are anathema to Latin American states.

What is perhaps most noteworthy about Hispanic foreign policy involvement is how little there is (Dominguez 2004). Except for the Cuban American National Foundation, no Latino organization has targeted foreign policy issues (Hakim and Rosales 2000). Although this is slowly changing as is evident in the institutionalization of the Hispanic Council on International Relations, Latinos are unlikely to engage foreign policy as home country advocates in the foreseeable future. To the contrary, these patterns suggest Latinos:

“may not form a political community with the people of their homeland. They have limited political interest in their homelands. They often think badly of those who govern the countries that they or their ancestors left. They hold different political values from the people in the homeland and do not even favor easier immigration rules for Latin Americans seeking to enter the United States. They typically lack the resources to influence U.S. foreign policy” (Dominguez 2004).

Critics like Huntington also argue that trans-nationalism encourages immigrants to retain home county ties rather than incorporate into American society. By slowing the acquisition of

English and the learning of mainstream social and political values, maintaining these ties stimulates the willingness of Latino immigrants to become home-country lobbyists.

Central to this process are home town associations (HTAs) which immigrants initially established to create social spaces for others from the same community of origin to come together to reinforce old country ties. This quickly led to HTA sponsored projects such as improving local water systems or building sports arenas which were intended to improve conditions in communities of origin. Home country governments quickly moved to assist in the establishment of HTAs and by creating matching funds programs to help HTAs finance more and bigger projects (de la Garza and Hazam 2003). Perhaps the major reason officials promote these ties is that they expect stronger relations will insure emigrants will continue to remit funds to the families they left behind (Leiken 2000, 16). This flow of dollars is essential to the economic stability of Mexico, El Salvador and other countries (Cortina and de la Garza 2004).

Mexican officials, and to a lesser degree officials from Central American and Caribbean countries, are also pursuing this relationship because of the strongly held view that HTAs may be used to mobilize emigrants into pro-country of origin lobbyists. Mexican officials are circumspect about articulating this goal, but they have voiced it clearly in meetings with me personally and at meetings with Mexican American leaders (de la Garza 1997, 74). Such outreach, according to one analyst, should be seen as a part of the broader *acercamiento* characterizing contemporary U. S.-Mexico relations that includes NAFTA, increased trade and investment and expanded intergovernmental cooperation on a wide variety of issues, (Leiken 2000).

To date, however, HTAs have not developed into home country lobbyists, and there is no sign they will. To the contrary, HTAs and other types of immigrant associations “are primarily

concerned with facilitating immigrants’ incorporation into the United States political system” (de la Garza and Hazan 2003:iii). Thus, HTAs promote naturalization, offer English courses and seminars on topics such as small business development and college counseling. The president of an HTA federation¹ explained:

We have to say to people, “become citizens, you’re not betraying your nation, you keep your roots inside of yourselves and nobody can take your roots away, no one can change our love for where we were born. But think about your kin and your grandchildren, they are the ones who need you to pave the way so that they don’t have so many problems in the future, especially the ones who were born here, they’re not going to live in Mexico.” (Leiken, 2000: 22).

Illustrative of the pattern of HTA activities is the extent to which Latino immigrants in general are linked to the home country. Despite highly publicized celebrations on Mexican Independence Day (September 15), and the festivities associated with *Cinco de Mayo*, and New York City’s October 12 Dia de la Raza parade in which Latino communities of all nationalities participate, as Table 4 illustrates, few Latino immigrants regularly participate in social or cultural activities linking them to the home country.

Table 4: Hispanic Immigrant Participation in Home Country Focused

	Social and Cultural Activities since Immigration		
	Mexicans	Salvadorans	Dominicans
Attended cultural or educational event related to home country	26.60%	23.10%	43.90%
Been a member of organization promoting cultural ties between US and home country	6.70%	5.60%	12.80%
Been a member of organization of people from community of origin	8.50%	7.80%	22.60%
Sought assistance from country of origin embassy or consulate	6%	5%	3%

Source: DeSipio, 2003

¹ Federations are state or national level associations of local HTAs.

Additionally, immigrants are not remitting in accord with governmental objectives. Specifically, they have essentially rejected governmental efforts to remit in support of economic development projects. Instead, approximately 80 percent remit exclusively to support their families. Another 31 percent send money for familial purposes and community projects such as improving local parks, athletic fields and water systems (Cortina and de la Garza 2004). Virtually none send money explicitly to support government sponsored economic development projects.

While money sent for familial purposes are examples of transnational ties, they are not indicative of the kinds of linkages with home country governments that trouble Huntington or that those governments are pursuing. That is, such remittances target or contribute to the benefit of society per se. Their societal impact is indirect in that these monies alleviate extreme poverty among remitters' family members. Society also benefits when remittance recipients use these funds to acquire private medical attention. However valuable they are to specific families, thus, these funds do not qualify as indicators of immigrant political ties to the home country.

Immigrants are also disdainful of involvement with home country political issues, as Table 5 illustrates.

Table 5: Hispanic Immigrant Participation in Home Country Focused Political Activities since Immigration

	Mexico	Salvadorans	Dominicans
Followed home county politics in Spanish media	63.60%	48%	67.10%
Voted in home country	9.50%	8.50%	15.00%
Contributed money to political candidate	2.00%	2.80%	6.30%
Attended rally in U.S. for home country candidate or party	2.70%	2.30%	17.30%
Contacted by home country to participate in home country affairs	3.00%	1.80%	11.60%

Source: DeSipio, 2003

Further illustrating low levels of involvement with home country politics is that immigrants are substantially more likely to be concerned about U.S. issues than about issues in their country of origin (Table 6).

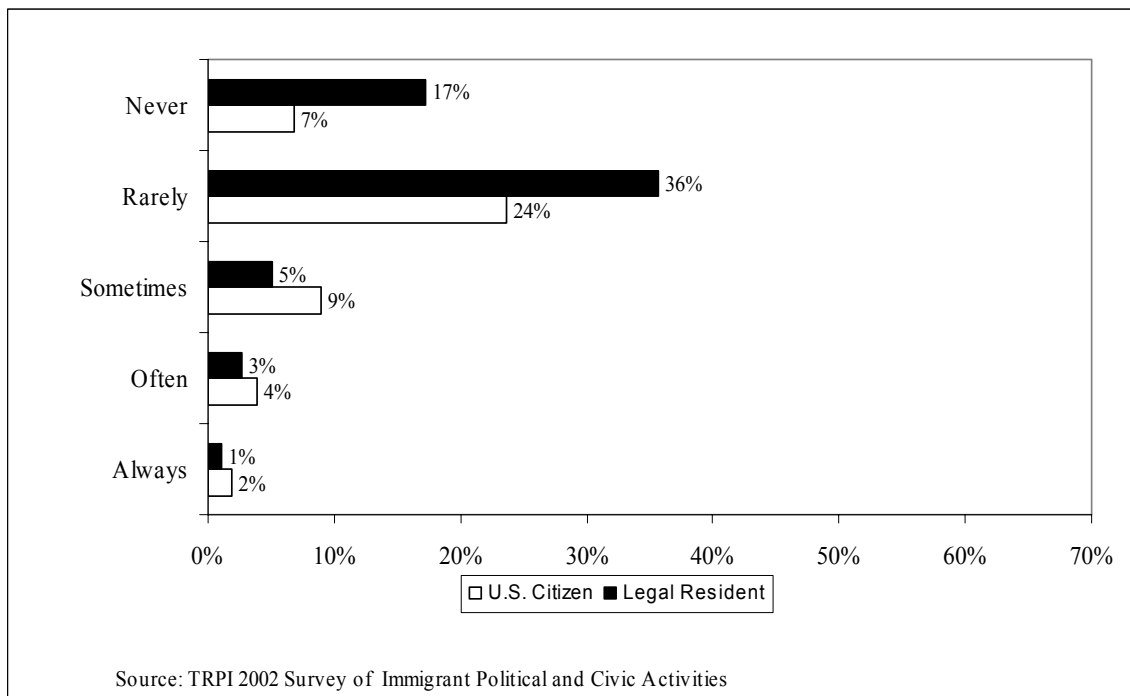
Table 6: Focus of Political Concern: US or Home Country

	Register Citizens	Not Registered Citizens	Non-Citizens
More concerned with US	79.00%	76.00%	57.00%
Equally concerned with both	11.00%	8.00%	20.00%
More concerned with home country	6.00%	6.00%	14.00%

Source: Pew Hispanic Center, 2004

The type of activities which HTAs emphasize combined with the limited extent to which immigrants involve themselves with home country affairs suggests that accusations claiming Latinos remain apart from U. S. society because they remain committed to their countries of origin are groundless. It is true, however, that few immigrants actively engage U.S. society (Chart 2).

Chart 2: U.S. Political Participation, Citizens and Legal Residents



This could be explained by factors such as low socioeconomic status, being undocumented and a general fear of discrimination, all of which could be ameliorated by changes in governmental policies. Thus, there is no basis for viewing immigrants as political threats because of their home country ties. Instead, it is more useful to view them as potential citizens who, under improved circumstances, would be an asset to society and the polity.

Another charge implicitly leveled by Huntington and others is that Hispanics will unite into a cohesive voting bloc that will advance its own interests at the expenses of the nation's. As was true in 1990 (de la Garza et. al. 1992) in 2004 Latinos do not behave as a political group united by ethnicity. Latinos do not see themselves as united politically (Pew Hispanic Center 2004) and they report that they will not vote for a candidate because of shared ethnicity unless the Latino and non-Latino candidate are similarly qualified (Pew Hispanic Center 2004; de la Garza et. al. 1992). Analyses of their voting behavior confirm these claims (Michelson 2002).

Immigrants and the Economy

The positive economic impact of immigration is well established. Public perceptions to the contrary notwithstanding, the National Research Council reports that immigrants do not displace American workers, nor do they lower wages, and that overall they contribute between \$1-10 billion dollars to economy annually (Smith and Edmonston, 1997). From an economic perspective, therefore, if the nation accepted more immigrants, it would enjoy even greater benefits (Chang 2005).

Immigration provides workers for low level jobs that the native born are unwilling to take at wages that fall well below what native workers demand. They are such a vital part of the service sector that the nation's major cities would screech to a halt as parents rearrange work schedules to care of their children, restaurants can not open because of the absence of waiters, cooks and dishwashers, and cities forego garbage collection. The general disruption that the absence of immigrants would cause is well illustrated in the recently released satirical film "A Day without Mexicans."

So much attention is given to lower end workers that the economic value Latino immigrants contribute through their roles in high end professions such as medicine is usually overlooked. Indeed, personal experience and observations suggest that the quality, cost and availability of medical services in Houston, Miami and New York would change substantially but for the presence of Latin American doctors. Furthermore many of these professionals enrich the nation's medical services at extremely low cost because they come with medical degrees.

Latino immigrants also contribute to the economy in conventional ways. Unless employers keep them off the books, they pay taxes and contribute to social security, and there is

wide spread agreement that their contributions are essential to the maintenance of the social security system. (Rosenbaum and Toner 2005; Greenspan, 2004)

Thanks to their cultural knowledge, immigrants also benefit the nation by providing an advantage in gaining access to foreign financial and commercial markets. A key segment of this arena is the fees generated by the multi-billion remittance industry. In California alone, fees generated by remittances to Mexico total \$338 million (Cortina et al 2004). These fees generate jobs and provide profits to stockholders which could be used for additional investments.

Relatedly, in addition to the role they play as domestic consumers, Hispanic immigrants enhance the nation's commercial sector by developing export markets for U.S. retailers with outlets in immigrants' countries of origin. The appliances purchased from these firms are paid for in the U.S. and picked up by relatives from outlets in the home country. Cultural knowledge also contributes to the development of ubiquitous ethnic markets that provide jobs as well as group-specific products for ethnic and non-ethnic clients.

It is argued, nonetheless, that immigrants drain resources because they consume more in social services than they pay in taxes. This claim is based on the cost of educating immigrant children or the U.S. born children of immigrants. Even if the latter are included in the analysis, which is not normally the case, this claim is static rather than dynamic. That is, it does not take the long term tax benefits that result from educating these children. As the National Research Council reports show, when these are considered, immigrant contributions to the economy exceed the value of services they utilize.

Conclusion

Latino immigrants have inserted themselves into the fabric of the nation. They are influencing every facet of popular culture from music, to food, to art to sports. These influences

are so ubiquitous and so established that it is no exaggeration to suggest that they have Latinized American culture in the same way that Italians and Irish, to name but two groups, did historically.

Like those immigrants, Latinos are enriching the nation as they embrace and alter its cultural core.

Latinos, however, have the potential to shape the cultural future more profoundly than did the Italians and Irish. Unlike either of those, large and growing Latino communities are nationally dispersed. This means that while St. Patrick's Day celebrations have long been concentrated in the Northeast, *Cinco de Mayo* is celebrated from Seattle to New York. Also, because of continuous immigration, Spanish will become the nation's second language. This will influence how we speak, our literature, and the legitimacy of being bilingual, an attribute the nation has historically shunned. No other immigrant group has so expanded the nation's cultural horizon.

There is also a consensus regarding Hispanic immigration's positive impact on the economy. Not only do they fill the service jobs that keep the nation running, they do so at rates that make our economy relatively competitive. Additionally, they are tax payers, real estate investors and consumers. Less recognized is their substantial contribution to the financial world via the fees they pay for remittances. Their development of ethnic enclaves enables them to contribute significantly to job creation. Finally, as highly trained professionals in medicine and other fields, they add valuable resources to the economy at bargain prices. In short, Latino immigrants are an essential part of the nation's economy.

Politically, the Latino contribution is less tangible. Like previous immigrants, the values they bring with are not transformative of the polity. Nonetheless, they so believe in the core political values of the nation that they invigorate our faith in the American dream. Nothing

about their values or attitudes supports claims that they undermine the polity's foundation. To the contrary, they believe in political tolerance, democracy and the common good at levels at least as high as those of Anglos. While they differ regarding aspects of foreign policies, their disagreements are no more noteworthy than those of numerous interest groups including non-Hispanic ethnic lobbies.

Regrettably, as recent elections have shown, not all Americans cherish democratic values. To the extent that they help renew the nation's faith in itself and the values on which the nation was founded, Latinos will improve the polity.

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