

The Psychological Effects of Americanization on Chicanos

Anamaria Espinal

Ithaca College

### Abstract

The U.S. has a long and complicated history of attempting to Americanize and assimilate people of color and immigrants. Traditionally scholars have focused on the policies and programs that targeted European immigrants, but more recently scholars have begun to examine these programs relative to people of color, regardless of their citizenship. The Mexican American educational experience has been heavily influenced by Americanization and assimilation policies. The growing field of Mexican American educational studies has primarily focused on how the implementation of these policies led to Mexican Americans receiving an inferior education and how this community has historically fought for educational reform. This study specifically focuses on the psychological impact, of Americanization and assimilationist practices in U.S. public schools on Mexican American students between 1900-1975. The lingering effects of Americanization and assimilationist policies are still present today however there is not a wide range of research is available on the matter.

Through the use of primary and secondary sources, a textual analysis was conducted to analyze the policies and programs that were reinforced between 1900-1975. Through this process, a multidisciplinary search on the history and education of Mexican Americans was brought about, which set the basis behind the idea of this study. In order to get primary perspectives on the effects, the policies had, narratives of people who experienced them first hand were found.

Overall the study found that Americanization practices have had devastating consequences on Mexican Americans. For years they were told that they were inferior to Anglo-Americans. The U.S. was working towards the complete and total destruction of Mexican cultural heritage in order to ensure they would be the ultimate power. This led to a loss of

Mexican Americans knowing who they were. After going through the Americanization practices many children no longer identified with their families. Yet they were still not American enough which meant they did not fit in with Anglo-Americans either. Despite being able to find some first account narratives of some of these children as adults there should be more. Even after Americanization practices came to an end people were still being affected by the policies consequences. Therefore, more should have been done in order to ensure the well-being of Mexican Americans.

Learning more and studying the history of Latinos in this country is extremely important. Many people of color feel less than compared to their white peers. The U.S. has perpetuated an image of what the “perfect” American is. Within that definition, there is no space to keep ties with one’s heritage. Even though not every Latino group has had to endure such obvious xenophobic practices it does not mean it is not relevant today. Latinos today still struggle with trying to fit into American society. Many times, they are met with backlash over keeping ties with their heritage or native tongue. Overtime, the negative comments begin to accumulate leading to feelings of insecurity and a loss of belonging. Looking into the psychological effects that Latinos face because of these things is extremely important because it could lead to diminishing the stereotype’s used to describe them.

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