Chapter 1

OVERVIEW OF FIELD RESEARCH AND THEORETICAL MODELS

One night my eye was caught by a familiar-looking word on the spine of a book. The title was 450 Years of Chicano History in Pictures. On the cover were black-and-Anglo photos: Padre Hidalgo exhorting Mexican peasants to revolt against the Spanish dictators; Anglo vigilantes hanging two Mexicans from a tree; a young Mexican woman with rifle and ammunition belts criss-crossing her breast; Cesar Chavez and field workers marching for fair wages; Chicanos railroad workers laying creosote ties; Chicanas laboring at machines in textile factories; Chicanas picketing and hoisting boycott signs. . . . I showed the book to friends. All of us were amazed; this book told us we were alive. We, too, had defended ourselves with our fists against hostile Anglos, gasping for breath in fights with the policemen who outnumbered us. The book reflected back to us our struggle in a way that made us proud.

--Jimmy Santiago Baca

Introduction

I undertook this research project because Mexican Americans are the largest minority in the state of Idaho, yet no major studies of Mexican Americans in Idaho exist. Also, a number of racial conflicts developed in 1989 and 1991, heightening the need for such a study.

The Boise newspaper, The Idaho Statesman, and the Idaho Commission on Mexican American Affairs reported on racial incidents which occurred in several Idaho communities. The most publicized conflict occurred when the U.S. Attorney for Idaho reported the involvement of a "Mexican American Mafia" in drug
trafficking in Idaho. Idaho Mexican American leaders sharply rebuked this view and, while not denying some Mexican American culpability, contended that Mexican Americans should not be singled-out as the primary culprits. The Idaho media reported in 1990 that Marsing, Idaho, a community of fewer than 2,000 people, had several incidents where Anglo parents attending local football games used racial epithets against the Mexican American players on the team.

The community of Idaho Falls in eastern Idaho faced a situation where a group of Mexican American youths, calling themselves “Mexican Americans with an Attitude,” and Anglo youths, calling themselves “The Posse,” had a series of encounters. The school administration expelled the Mexican American youths, and the police depicted them as “a gang.” However, the school did not expel the Anglo youths, and the police viewed them as “a social club.”

In 1991 the Glenns Ferry school received a five-year federal grant to develop a bilingual education program in its elementary school. The kindergarten class participated in an immersion bilingual class. Half the day the class spoke Spanish and half the day English. The bilingual program became controversial and this caused the school board to cancel the program.

In the spring of 1991 a racial incident occurred in Dubois, Idaho, where a monolingual Mexican American worker was arrested for allegedly stealing a roll of toilet paper from his place of employment. The authorities incarcerated the man for several days. The man not only was fired from his job but also was not able to seek other work while languishing in jail.

The Mexican American leaders of Idaho view each of these incidents as having racist implications. The Anglo authorities involved in these episodes deny that the conflicts indicate racial bias. One cannot properly evaluate these opposing views without the aid of thorough field research. Are these racial conflicts incidental or are they symptoms of an underlying racism?

I chose the name “Middlewest” for the community in which I conducted the study. Robert and Helen Lynd conducted the first and now classic community studies, *Middletown: A Study in Contemporary American Culture* (1929) and *Middletown in
Field Research and Theoretical Models 3

Transition: A Study in Cultural Conflicts (1937). They named their community "Middletown" because they thought the community to be representative of life in America. I believe this study will provide insights into race relations in American society. Chapter Eight of the book examines institutionalized racism through the use of interviews and observations of the community's social institutions. I believe the insights concerning race relations in rural Middlewest will be helpful in assisting the reader to understand race relations in the urban areas of the United States.

Research Expansion

The original research plan focused on interviewing Mexican Americans in Middlewest. However, after interviewing twenty-five Mexican American families in the community, I learned that most of them had arrived in Middlewest via the migrant trial. Consequently, I expanded the study to include Mexican American migrant workers. I also decided to interview Anglo farmers to try to understand their views of their work force. This in turn led me to interview Anglos in Middlewest to gain an appreciation of how they viewed the Mexican Americans. The result is that unintentionally I ended with a rural community/area study; however, the focus still remained the analysis of race relations in this rural community.

The study is strengthened by its examination of the entire community and its social institutions along with its assessment of community values and daily life. The reader can gain an appreciation of the fact that a community has many dimensions; few individuals devote much of their energy or thought to race relations in their community. People of all races are earning a living, caring for their families, and enjoying their leisure time. The average person in Middlewest likes his/her community and sees his/her efforts and those of others as improving the quality of life in the community. There is some concern, as is the case in many rural communities, regarding the economic viability of their community. (Community life will be reviewed in Chapters Two and Three.)
Population Data

The 1990 U. S. Census data, made available in 1992 through the Idaho Department of Commerce, reports that there were 52,927 Mexican Americans in Idaho in 1990. The Mexican American population accounts for 5.26 percent of Idaho's official population. However, Mexican American leaders believe the Mexican American population to be significantly higher, since the census undercounts lower-class minority groups.

Middlewest has the highest proportion of Mexican Americans of any town in Idaho with a population of 5,000 or more. Middlewest is the seat of a county I have named "Farm County." Farm County has the most Mexican Americans, both permanent resident and migrant, of any county in Idaho. Additionally, Farm County has the highest total output of agricultural products of any county in the state.

The population of Middlewest is approximately 18,000 according to the Idaho Department of Commerce (1992). The 1990 census reported that almost 4,000 Mexican Americans reside in this community. This means that approximately 20 percent of the permanent population is Mexican American.

Qualitative social research allows for the modification of the research design while conducting the field research. To interview Mexican American leaders and Mexican American farm workers I traveled to the labor camps and small towns of Farm County. This county had a population of 92,661 as reported by the Idaho Department of Commerce (1992). Approximately 13 percent of the county's population is Mexican American. The Migrant Health Program of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports that in 1990 some 7,691 migrant farm workers came to Farm County (Idaho Department of Employment 1991b). This means that during the farm season approximately 17 percent of the population of the county is Mexican American, not counting the undocumented workers in the county. Some Mexican nationals who have green cards that allow them to legally work the farm season in the U.S. work in Farm County.

The Idaho Migrant Council (1990) estimates that 99 percent of the field workers in Farm County are Mexican American. While
conducting the field research for this study, I never saw an Anglo field worker.

Farm County ranks as the thirty-fifth largest agricultural producer in the United States. Farming developed in Farm County because of the availability of irrigation water and a satisfactory growing season. Farmers there produce over 90 percent of the seed corn for the United States. The largest crop is sugar beets, but Farm County also produces onions, mints, hops, potatoes, apples, and additional seed crops.

Farm County consistently has one of the highest unemployment rates in the state. During the period of the field research, the county’s rate of unemployment for Mexican Americans was more than twice as high as that for Anglos. The Idaho Department of Commerce (1992) reports that 12 percent of the non-Mexican American population of Farm County lives below the poverty level. The poverty rate for Farm County Mexican Americans is 33 percent. Furthermore, most Farm County Mexican Americans work in low-income positions: agricultural worker, laborer, production worker, and service worker. The per capita income of Farm County is among the lowest in the state. Twenty-five percent of the county is economically disadvantaged, one of the highest ratios in the state. The report *Hispanics in Idaho* (Mabbutt 1990) is relevant here because Richard Mabbutt, the author of the report, found that the statistics vary from one source to another. However, regardless of which set of statistics one uses, the data reveals that high numbers of Mexican Americans live in poverty and earn low incomes.

**Qualitative Methodology**

This study required fourteen months of field research, from August 1990 to October 1991. Even after this period, I attended meetings, conducted interviews, and maintained contact with key informants.

The primary research methodology was the conducting of in-depth interviews. I conducted 335 interviews; two research assistants completed forty additional interviews. I attended seventy-five meetings of local civic groups. I observed thirty
community social events, including the Christmas parade. As I came to know Middlewest, I was able to map the social institutions and significant social groups in the community. I then arranged interviews with Mexican Americans and Anglos from a cross-section of the community. The methodology consists of a processual activity: as I learned more about the community, I also learned who were the most important groups and individuals in Middlewest, according to the community. In a short time, I obtained a thorough sense of race relations within the research area.

When conducting interviews, I taped the dialogue and took extensive notes. The tapes were valuable for two reasons: they allowed me to find exact quotes of pertinent comments by the subjects, and, when necessary, they provided a check to clarify my notes.

After completing three interviews, I would review my notes and record the interesting aspects of the interviews in a notebook. In this notebook I created a set of working hypotheses. I kept another journal of notes on community observations, which included notes from meetings that I attended. I also discussed my sociological interpretations with the key informants in order to obtain their reaction to my assessments of their community.

I may perhaps claim to know Middlewest better than any of its residents, because in many ways the Mexican Americans and Anglos, though living in the same town, have separate communities. I came to know both communities.

I did not realize, until writing the book, how many sources of data regarding the community I possessed. I developed a significant set of key informants who were in strategic places to observe their community. They shared with me their views of Middlewest. To enhance my knowledge of Middlewest, I subscribed to the local daily paper. I found the coverage to be significant and this led to a six-months content analysis of the paper, which I have named the *Daily News*.

Since much theory in minority studies focuses on the role of the economic structure in race relations, I arranged tours with most of the businesses having twenty-five or more employees. Most of the owners or managers of these businesses became
interview subjects and I received considerable cooperation from them. They frequently arranged, on company time, for me to interview some of their employees. Government agencies allowed access to their records and employees. Most of the businesses and government entities provided me with relevant documents and reports generated by their organizations.

Studying a small rural town has some advantages. I found my subjects, both Anglo and Mexican American, to be open and accessible. Almost everyone I approached agreed to be interviewed. This receptivity allowed for as many as fifteen interviews in a week. The interviews varied in length from thirty minutes to four hours. The average interview lasted two hours.

Human social attitudes and presentations of self are based on a complex web of thoughts. Anglo subjects in Middlewest wanted to influence me regarding what to think both about their community and about themselves. At the same time, small-town life makes them less sophisticated in this process. The Anglo subjects did not seem to realize or recognize that their comments concerning Mexican Americans revealed prejudicial attitudes. Anglo subjects generally avoid talking about or recognizing the existence of Mexican Americans, but their discourse has racist content when they do. Overall, I felt like the cultural anthropologist who has the good fortune to be the first to study a culture.

Emile Durkheim, a French sociologist, in his classic work, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1965), states that sociology should study the simpler forms of social life to gain an understanding of more complex societies. This research project unintentionally benefitted from studying race relations in a simpler social environment. Studying race relations in a small community allows for an examination of all of the complex dimensions of the problem. Though this study examines rural race relations, the examination of social institutions and the institutionalized racism manifested therein should enhance readers' ability to understand racism in urban America.

The reader may find it surprising that the Anglo subjects expressed on tape such harsh views toward the Mexican Americans in the community. The subjects may have been disarmed by the
fact that the researcher informed them that he was conducting a community study. The topic of Mexican Americans in the community did not arise during the first hour of most interviews. If the research project had been limited to questions of race relations or if the person conducting the research had been of a minority ethnic group, the subjects might have been less forthright in their comments regarding the Mexican American population.

Theory

An analysis of social life is meaningless without sociological theory. Theory attempts to accurately explain the data and observations of the research. However, sociological theories tend to overgeneralize and oversimplify the complexity of race relations. A descriptive account of social life is valuable in itself. This report attempts to provide a healthy dose of both descriptive analysis and sociological theory.

An initial question posited in my research attempted to determine the appropriate term for the Hispanic people of Idaho. The subjects responded with a variety of answers. Older people and those recently from Mexico prefer to be called “Mexicanos” or “Mexicans.” Those preferring the term “Hispanic” are younger or have resided longer in Midwest. The third choice of identification was “Mexican American.” Many subjects dislike the term “Chicano,” which they associate with troublemakers. The majority of the subjects preferred to be called Hispanic. This is perhaps unique to Idaho, because Hispanic originated as a bureaucratic term to refer to all people who live in the U.S. whose native tongue is Spanish. I will use the term Mexican American to refer to this population.

Social life is complex. Sociology looks for social patterns and then attempts to explain what social variables create and sustain those patterns. Social behavior generally has several causal variables that to different degrees account for a particular social phenomenon. The intent of the following section is to
simplify and clarify the theories that relate to the sociological analysis of minority groups.

An important first step in understanding race relations in America involves an appreciation of the general character and values of Americans. One recent book to examine the American national character is Habits of the Heart (1985). In this important work, Robert Bellah and his associates interviewed 200 Americans in an attempt to determine the key attributes of the American people. The researchers concluded that Americans have lost what they call the “habits of the heart,” and the researchers believed this situation has disturbing consequences for our country. Tocqueville in Democracy in America found that Americans had three fundamental sets of values: individuality, spirituality, and democracy. However, Bellah (1985) found that today these values have been reduced to one—individuality. He noted, as Tocqueville predicted, a loss of social responsibility. Bellah found that many Americans, with their abandonment of a spiritual explanation for life, have lost their sense of a meaning of life. Additionally, the loss of democratic values means that the idea of a “common good” has become an obsolete factor in American politics.

The importance of Bellah’s work is reflected in the Middenwest Anglo community’s indifference toward the problems facing the Mexican American community. For example, Anglo school administrators and civic leaders boasted of having the best schools in the state, seeming to ignore the Mexican American dropout problem.

Most sociologists define Mexican Americans as an ethnic group, a group of people with a distinctive way of life that is separate from that of the dominant culture (Schaefer 1991; Marger 1985). Some sociologists (Moore and Pachón 1985; Feagin 1991), however, define Mexican Americans as a race because of their predominantly Indian heritage. Tom Berry’s recent book (1992) on modern Mexico indicates that most Mexican Americans come from the predominantly indigenous Indian heritage of Mexico. Regardless of the difference of opinion as to whether Mexican Americans constitute a race or an ethnic group, most
sociologists agree that race is less a biological difference than a matter of social definition. Without a doubt, the majority of Anglos in Middlewest and Farm County perceive Mexican Americans as being members of a race.

Omi and Winant (1986) have comprehensively explored the issue of race as it applies to the United States. They contend that race is a central feature in American history. To them, race is the fundamental axis of social organization in America. They agree with Feagin (1989) that few academics consider the concept of race to have a legitimate biological foundation, but they maintain that the social definitions of race continue to play a major role in social relationships in this country.

These authors do not believe that race can be reduced to an element of ethnicity. They reject the whole ethnicity approach to racial minorities because they consider the underlying premise of the ethnicity school to be invalid when it is applied to racial groups. The ethnicity school contends that economic success and acceptance depends on a group’s willingness and ability to accept the norms and values of the majority. Omi and Winant assert that the evidence is overwhelming that racial groups remain outside the mainstream regardless of their acceptance of the values of the dominant society. They view the notion of race as operating through a set of “interpretative codes” which operate in daily life. They believe that notions of race pervade the social life of American society, including people’s identities, social institutions, and daily social practices.

The concept of race then can be viewed as an ideological vehicle to define racial minorities as subordinate. The Anglos in this study held a host of negative perceptions about Mexican Americans; these will be reviewed in Chapter Two. Many of the Mexican American subjects in this study claimed that darker-skinned Mexican Americans faced more discrimination than those with lighter skins. The idea that race is a significant factor in understanding the circumstances of Mexican Americans is a perspective included in the exploitive model that will be reviewed later in this chapter.

Much has been written in sociology concerning which theoretical approach would best capture the immigrant, ethnic, and
racial experiences of America's numerous minorities. Each theory has abundant research supporting its perspective. My field research leads me to support an eclectic approach that draws from many aspects of various exploitive models to explain the circumstances of rural Mexican Americans in Idaho. Therefore it is necessary to briefly review the theories and research pertaining to Mexican Americans.

The theoretical frameworks concerning Mexican Americans can be depicted as occurring on a continuum. They are: exploitive theory—pluralistic theory—assimilation theory. The last, assimilation theory, views the ethnic experience as one of gradual integration and adaptation into American society. These theorists hold that it generally requires three generations for racial and ethnic groups to integrate into the host society. Simultaneously, as the minority becomes more incorporated, the dominant society gradually reduces the level of discrimination. However, these circumstances do not result in the total loss of ethnicity. The fusion of groups occurs in the secondary institutions, so that American ethnic groups have nearly equal participation in the economic and political institutions of society. The critical variables involve the ability and opportunities that immigrants and ethnic minorities have to acquire the skills to compete economically in American society.

The current researchers following the assimilationist perspective (Stolzenberg 1990; Borjas and Tienda 1985; Portes and Truelove 1987; DeFreitas 1991; Reimers 1985) recognize that poverty rates and unemployment rates are far higher for Mexican Americans than they are for Anglos. Sociologists agree that the median income of Mexican American families is approximately 70 percent of that of Anglo families. How to explain this inequality is the critical question. The latest assimilationist theorists analyze census data using the concept of “human capital.” When these researchers compare African Americans and Mexican Americans with Anglos, they find that the low status and low paying jobs of minorities are consequences of their own deficiencies in education, recency of migration, lack of language proficiency, and inadequate occupational skills. In other words, Mexican Americans and other minorities face severe economic
inequality as a result of having not learned to speak English fluently, having not acquired job skills, and having not obtained an adequate formal education—all of which are seen as individual deficiencies.

On the surface this may seem quite plausible, but such an approach is limited. In the first place, quantitative census data leaves much to be desired. Yes, Stolzenberg and Tienda find correlations between education and income that can explain the difference between the economic positions of Mexican Americans and of Anglo Americans, but they know little about the social relationships between Mexican Americans and Anglos. They also provide no information as to how Mexican Americans fare when they enter the dominant social institutions. As a qualitative sociologist with field research experience, I find this a strange way to analyze race relations. It seems to me that without interviews and observations of both Anglos and Mexican Americans crucial questions would remain unanswered. An examination of the census data alone cannot explain the economic exploitation, discrimination, and institutionalized racism experienced by Mexican Americans.

The methodology employed becomes a key factor in the type of "facts" the researcher discovers. From my own twenty-five years of studying sociology I would conclude that, generally speaking, quantitative sociological research is the methodology of choice for structural-functionalists, assimilationists, and those sociological researchers whose theories and research lack a critique of the economic and political establishment.

What is even more interesting is that this research is often compatible with the views expressed by the Anglo leaders I interviewed. The "human capital" approach implies the need for Mexican Americans to accept conformity with Anglo society in order to become successful. The Anglo subjects of this study insisted that it is necessary for the Mexican Americans in their community to become "Americanized." These Anglos also believe that in America everyone has an equal chance to become economically successful. Thus, both assimilationist theorists and the Anglo subjects of this research agree that inequality in America is the consequence of individual deficiencies. Discrimination
and racism are discounted by both groups as salient factors in explaining the poverty of Mexican Americans. This community/area study will provide detailed empirical research to the contrary.

Keefe and Padilla's book, *Chicano Ethnicity* (1987), is the best current work using a pluralistic model. Their research on Chicanos in three California communities reveals many insights into contemporary race relations between Mexican Americans and Anglos. They found that each generation of Mexican Americans lost some of its "cultural awareness," that is, knowledge of its culture. However, they also found that one's generation was not significant when it came to "ethnic loyalty," that is, the survival of Chicano ethnicity. These authors found that because of strong family and kinship relationships in the Chicano community and the fact that most live in separate or semi-separate ethnic enclaves, the Chicanos were able to maintain a strong and viable ethnic community.

Keefe and Padilla reject both the assimilation and exploitive models, stressing the ethnic resilience of their subjects. However, they do stress the modest economic advancement of latter generations of Chicanos and they inexplicably downplay the extensive discrimination reported by their subjects.

Within the general theoretical continuum previously presented there are numerous theoretical variations, themes, and concepts. Some theorists interpret the pluralistic model to be a synthesis or middle position that can best explain the complicated nature of race and ethnic relations in the United States. They believe that ethnic groups and racial groups have an unequal socioeconomic position both because of their limited education, occupational skills, and English language deficiencies (especially for Mexican Americans) and because these groups face some minor discrimination and exploitation (Aponte 1991; Connor 1985; Marden, Meyer, and Engel 1992).

A critical point to be aware of in examining the pluralistic model and its variants is that the Mexican American literature is replete with authors such as Achor (1982), Barrera (1979), Blea (1980), Horowitz (1986), and Moore and Pachón (1985), whose research reveals that Mexican Americans are not disorganized,
as Wilson (1987) depicts the black inner city community to be, because Mexican Americans have a strong and viable ethnic community.

I believe the exploitive models best account for the poverty, inequality, and racism that exemplify the social relationships between Mexican Americans and Anglos in the present study. I use the exploitive model as a generic term for the studies of those sociologists who essentially work from a critical perspective. The essence of this model is the idea that the majority of members of racial minorities, including Mexican Americans, live in an exploited condition as a consequence of the structure of the American economy. Many of my colleagues will believe that I include too many distinct perspectives under the exploitive model, but I do this because each critiques the predominant assimilationist perspective and each recognizes the importance of the economic system as the key to understanding racial inequality.

I would like to present a progression from the more moderate to the more radical exploitive approaches, recognizing that this analysis has no time sequence. First, we have the structuralists and those who write about institutionalized racism (Schaefer 1991; Marden, Meyer, and Engel 1992; Moore and Pachón 1985; Portes and Bach 1987; Portes and Rumbaut 1990); they contend in standard sociological analyses that America’s racial minorities, including Mexican Americans, face a social environment that severely limits their opportunities. The establishment social institutions inhibit and deny full participation of minority groups in educational and political institutions. The criminal justice system is depicted as discriminating against these groups at each level of the administration of justice.

The ghetto, barrio, or reservation creates poverty conditions that result in a myriad of social problems. Generally, residents of these enclaves are denied full access to health care, city services, and the general mix of social services. To a considerable extent, the structuralists and institutionalized racism writers contend that much of the inequality and hardship faced by racial minorities is due to the way Anglo America has organized its social institutions. This approach is moderate because it downplays the
intentions of the actors in those institutions. It also denies that these institutions and their managers operate for personal benefit, maintaining that they are merely carrying out their own cultural imperatives. The advantage of this approach over the assimilationist approach is that it at least challenges the idea that an individual member of a minority group is responsible for his/her own victimization.

The Mexican American ethnographers are the next group of sociological writers I include under the exploitive heading. They include Achor (1982); Blea (1980); Horowitz (1986); and Foley (1990). Achor, Blea, and Horowitz carried out ethnographic field research in, respectively, Texas, Colorado, and Illinois. Each author found those studied to be living in rich and vibrant ethnic communities. These communities were neither disorganized nor plagued with deviance and the subjects were members of hard-working families. Crimes and gangs did exist but not to the extent perceived by the Anglo community. These writers found, as did the structuralists and institutionalized racism sociologists, that their Mexican American subjects faced systematic racism and discrimination. They had little political power and their children had exceedingly high dropout rates from school. A great problem was the relegation of Mexican American workers to the secondary job market. The excessive poverty was the consequence not of Mexican American culture but of unemployment and underemployment.

Horowitz (1986), like some of the structuralists, examines the conflicts between the two cultures. Her perspective somewhat downplays the exploitive nature of the relationship between the Mexican American and Anglo communities she studied because to her mind Mexican Americans have some cultural characteristics that inhibit their economic success.

Foley (1990), however, has a different focus and his work more nearly matches my own. He conducted ethnographic field research in a small Texas town for nearly ten years. He found the Anglo community more intentional in its attempts to maintain political power even though it represented a minority of the population. His primary focus was on the public schools. There he found a system of education that replicated the class
structure of the community. The school personnel were involved in shaping social reality and even the self-perceptions of students as well as in providing formal educational instruction. The result was that Mexican American students “learned their place,” economically and politically, in the community. Essentially they were instructed to remain in the same social class position as their parents. Foley has no doubts that the failure of Mexican American students is not due to individual deficiencies but rather to an educational system that labels them as failures. Mexican Americans are viewed by the Anglo community and schoolteachers as outsiders who are dumb, lazy, and incapable of learning English. This extremely negative stereotyping of Mexican Americans leads to a type of self-fulfilling prophecy where Mexican American males join gangs to gain self-esteem, which only further alienates them from the school.

Blauner (1972) developed the basic model of colonialism, in which he extrapolated ideas from the experience of European colonialism to examine the circumstances of black Americans. The essence of colonialism is that it provides an economic advantage to the dominant members of the society. Such a system establishes a relationship of domination and subordination. Blauner recognized many similarities between the conditions of blacks in the United States and those of colonized peoples during the period of European imperialism. These similarities include the fact that the entry of blacks into this country was not voluntary, that there was a consistent effort to destroy the African cultures, that blacks exist as a segregated work force, that they face institutional and governmental controls that maintain them in a subordinate position, and that they face systematic racism that justifies to the dominant society the legitimacy of their subordination as a people.

This approach has many critics (Feagin 1991; Moore 1970) who contend that the situations of colonized majorities are very distinct from those of internal minorities in the United States. For example, the geographic areas the latter occupy are not separate, the internal minorities do not have resources to exploit, the arrangements are not formalized, and there are no indigenous elites benefiting from the exploitation. Murguia (1975)
has the most insightful critique of the colonial model. He compares the assimilation model to the colonial model and finds five crucial variables that affect the relationship between the host and immigrant groups. These include the mode of entry, the size of the minority, the distribution of the minority, the ethnic or racial characteristics of the minority, and the degree of difference between the majority and minority cultures. Murguia contends that Mexican Americans fall between assimilation and colonialism. But he rejects the colonial model because Mexican Americans do not have separate social institutions and because many have become assimilated. He also believes that the level of economic opportunity for Mexican Americans is such that it would be incorrect to view them as being in a colonial status.

Marxists (Barrera 1979; Bonacich 1989; Reich 1981; Li 1988; Szymanski 1978) also critique the colonial model for not taking more into account social class and class relationships. For these neo-Marxists, understanding the role of economic production is crucial to understanding race relations because of the economic basis of racial exploitation. They maintain that race problems are essentially labor problems, not a result of cultural misunderstanding.

These authors recognize the importance of racism as a deliberate ideology designed to justify the treatment and exploitation of ethnic and racial minorities. Still, the critical element is the need for cheap labor in a capitalist economy. Therefore, any means that can be used to legitimate paying people less and to enable capitalists to increase profits is standard procedure. This practice is maintained for the economic benefit it provides the dominant group, although there is some disagreement about whether the economic inequality benefits all Anglos or just the elite. The capitalist class is able to control the working class by dividing the working class along ethnic, race, and gender categories. The keys to power for the capitalist class are its ownership of the means of production and its ability to influence the political sector of society. All workers are exploited; it is just that minorities are exploited to a greater degree and in greater numbers.
Barrera (1979) presents an excellent synthesis of the Marxist and the colonial models. He believes that the Marxist position is deficient because it does not take race into account as a separate factor influencing majority-minority relationships. He also recognizes that Mexican Americans achieve solidarity across class lines because they are all victims of racism and because of the strength of their ethnic community. Barerra also contends that the economic role of Mexican Americans relegates them to the worst jobs or to the reserve army of the unemployed. They experience labor repression, severe wage differentials, and intense occupational stratification. To Barerra, the key factors in the exploitation of the Mexican American population are racism and social class position.

Bonacich (1972) provides a variation on the Marxist model by developing the concept of the segmented or split labor market, where racial minorities are relegated to the worst jobs. Minorities are likely to be exploited because they lack familiarity with the economic and social structure and because of their social separation from other workers. Bonacich (1989) examines the distribution of income in the United States and concludes that racism in American society is linked to capitalism. In summary, she writes: “Stripped of all its fancy rationalizations and complexities, the capitalist system depends upon the exploitation of the poor by the rich.”

A logical conclusion of those sociologists using the exploitive model is presented in the work of Mirande (1985) and Blea (1988). They both present strong critiques of the assimilationist model and of “establishment” sociology for thinking that the inequality faced by Mexican Americans is the result of deficiencies in Mexican culture. They both think that Barrera has moved the furthest in developing a Chicano social science. For them, the key factors in the oppression of Chicanos are economic exploitation, political oppression, restriction of educational opportunities, historical oppression, negative ideology, negative images in the mass media, a biased criminal justice system, and segregated housing.

Mirande and Blea both emphasize that Chicanos have both adapted and created a culture, and they believe Chicanos have
actively resisted oppression. I agree with their view that "scientific research" that involves surveys and census data analysis leads to a blaming of the victim. They contend that Chicano culture has many positive features and that social scientists should participate in social activism to assist Chicanos to achieve social justice.

My field research on rural Mexican Americans in Idaho led me to concur with those sociologists using the exploitive model. I believe that the work of Barrera and Mirande most accurately confirms the findings of my field research.

The reader will find that this book combines several elements from the general exploitive model to explain the subordinate position of the Mexican Americans of this study. The field research findings support many of the views expounded by Barrera and Mirande. One of the significant contributions of this research project is the interviews with Anglos in the community studied and their observations from within Anglo-dominated social institutions. I have coined the term "ideological colonialism" to signify the set of negative ideas about Mexican Americans the Anglo community has created, which has then enabled it to establish a social reality that accepts as fact the idea that in America everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed and that economic failure is the consequence of individual and cultural deficiencies of the members of the Mexican American community.

The work of Omi and Winant (1986) is relevant here because of their use of the term "ideological racism" to refer to the situation where race becomes a pervasive aspect of American social life. Race is seen as the indicator of social inferiority in society. The term "ideological colonialism" is somewhat more broad and inclusive than ideological racism. Ideological colonialism also denotes the hidden and softer nature of colonialism faced by the Mexican American subjects of this research project. This ideology enables its believers to see oppressive race relations as normal. This is accomplished, in part, by ignoring the existence of the Mexican American population. The confidence and ardent belief in the correctness of the "American" Anglo way of life in Middlewest leave little room for concern
about the well-being of the Mexican Americans in the community. The ideology of Anglo Middlewest leads to what I consider indifference by Anglos toward the poverty faced by the Mexican American community. Few Anglos question the systematic relegation of Mexican Americans in Middlewest to subordinate positions.

This research (as was the case with the Mirande and Blea studies) found strength and vitality in the Mexican American ethnic community. A chapter is devoted to examining the active resistance to oppression mounted by the Mexican American leaders of southwestern Idaho. Central to the book are Chapters Eight and Nine, which explore the intensive institutionalized racism faced by Mexican Americans in Middlewest. The educational system, political institutions, criminal justice system, and mass media are all seen to sustain the subordinate position of the Mexican American community.

In the Marxist tradition, the economic position of the Mexican American community is viewed by this researcher as most crucial. The social position of the majority of Mexican Americans in Middlewest and Farm County is lower class. Farm County employs the most Mexican American migrant workers in the state of Idaho, all of whom have an income approximately one-half the official poverty level. Migrant workers are among the most exploited workers in America (Cockcroft 1986). Chapter Seven of this book will reveal details of the numerous inequitable working situations faced by Idaho's Mexican American migrant workers.

Several sections of the book examine how Mexican Americans who work as seasonal farm workers and at low paying jobs in the local factories describe the segmented nature of their work and illustrate their lack of participation in local government and Anglo society. These sections also document the unwillingness of some Anglo businessmen to employ Mexican Americans.

Ideological colonialism operates to synchronize the exploitive circumstances of the Mexican Americans in Middlewest and Farm County. The consequence is that most Anglos and some Mexican Americans accept without question the
systematic subordination of the Mexican American population.

**Summary Comments**

Some university students in this country have a difficult time understanding and appreciating exploitive theories of race relations. Many have grown up with little experience or understanding of the validity of critiques of our society. From my teaching experience in Idaho, I have found that most Idaho students have been sheltered from any serious analysis of the social problems facing American society. This is in part because of the conservative climate of the state and the jingoistic view that America is the "greatest country on the planet"; consequently, we could not have a serious race problem in this country. This view appears to have a considerable number of adherents throughout our society today. One aim of this book is to help demonstrate to students and citizens that rural Mexican Americans in Idaho are victimized by serious social injustices; my hope is that this field research might assist Americans in understanding that, as a nation, we have yet to solve or even recognize all of our race problems.

All sociological theory attempts to explain human social behavior. Sociology is an inexact science, in part because many variables are unaccounted for in any one research project. Sociology has a limited ability to influence social policy because of the complexity and inexactness of human social behavior. The recommendations of sociologists can differ significantly from the public perception of a race problem. There is a dispute between many citizens and sociologists over how well racial minorities succeed in our society. Public surveys (Schaefer 1991) consistently reveal that the majority of Anglos do not believe that racism is a serious problem in America.

Most social scientists report their findings in appropriate journals, which few people read. Some social scientists believe that their research should be made public and used to influence social policy. I hope that this book will assist in educating the
citizens and politicians of Idaho; social justice demands a set of social policies to assist the Mexican Americans of Idaho.

Sociological field research attempts to maintain the confidentiality of its subjects. The names of the community, the county, and the subjects described and quoted in this research have all been changed. However, Idaho is a rural state with a sparse population, and many people in Idaho will be able to identify the community of this study. To protect and respect the subjects’ privacy, in some cases I have changed not only the name but also the profession or occupation of the subject.