Socialization, Assimilation, and Social Control:
The Exercise of Power

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A critical understanding of power is central to the study of politics. There are a variety of perspectives, each with its own explanation of how the study of power should be conducted. [Refer to the article in this volume, "What is Politics?"] For instance, the concept has been associated most often with <u>overt</u> use of power as when a newspaper reporter traces an issue involving the mayor and city council to its ultimate outcome. Newspaper reporting of this type points to the formal aspects of politics, and to overt use of power that is visible to the observer. The *pluralist* perspective is well-suited for this type of study. However, what about that side of power that distinguishes it as a more hidden and less evident aspect of politics?

The intent of this essay is to focus on the <u>covert</u> side of power in hope of explaining an often neglected feature of that concept. The distinction of this subtle, less evident side of power is illustrated by giving attention to socialization and assimilation, and how those processes are utilized to shape individual thinking and behavior. It is argued that the exercise of covert power has both formal and informal aspects that allow for mechanisms of social control. Social control can be viewed both a means and an end. Certain processes (means) are used to shape thinking and behavior in an attempt to produce conformity, obedience, and compliance (ends).

Social control theory, borrowed from sociology, informs this analysis. Accordingly, an important unit of analysis is the institution: How do social, political, and economic institutions teach "proper" behavior and why? Because social control is all-encompassing, the approach is necessarily eclectic; references to ideological, procedural, and individual levels of analyses will be made.

This essay is more than an overview of socialization and assimilation. John Gaventa has stated the major focus of this essay:

This is a study of quiescence and rebellion in a situation of glaring inequality. Why, in a social relationship involving the domination of a non-elite by an elite, does challenge to that domination not occur? What is there in certain situations of social deprivation that prevents issues from arising, grievances from being voiced, or interests from being recognized? Why, in an oppressed community where one might intuitively expect upheaval, does one instead find, or appear to find, quiescence?[1]

Gaventa points out that the issue of quiescence is significant for democratic theorists because they predict that action will occur under conditions of glaring inequalities. According to democratic theorists, action by the dispossessed will serve to counter social inequities and thus improve democracy. However, they find that action is not often taken by some of the most needy groups and individuals in society. Democratic theorists have had to evaluate and consider reasons for the absence of participation and rebellion.

One of the central questions of this essay is whether the popular acceptance of and support for government and its officials should be interpreted as <u>spontaneous consensus</u> or <u>socialized conformity</u>.[2] As G. David Garson has observed, can it be reasonably argued that the economic success of advanced capitalism has bred political consent of a spontaneous and genuine nature? Or, is consent orchestrated by a subtle definition of what is politically legitimate and possible and by the unspoken neglect of alternatives which would challenge the social arrangements of dominant groups in the United States?[3]

The question of spontaneous consensus or socialized conformity is not an either-or issue, especially in advanced U.S. capitalist society. David Easton's definition of politics as "the authoritative allocation of values for society,"[4] demonstrates the complexity and ambiguity of the issue. By definition, groups inside a political system hold the values of that system and perceive its interest to some extent as their own. It follows then that interaction within the system involves disagreement within the bounds of a basic consensus, or, an agreement to disagree. May one then fairly assume that groups outside a political system

presumably will not share certain basic values with the groups and authorities inside the system? If so, this suggests two possible relationships between the "insiders" and "outsiders." First, values may simply serve to differentiate the "ins" from the "outs." Their relationship may be one of mutual respect for the other's values, where a peaceful coexistence is maintained. The second relationship is strikingly different from the first. The basic values held by "insiders" and "outsiders" could be so fundamentally different that a peaceful coexistence is impossible. The interaction between the outside group and the system would involve conflict to the extent that the relationship would revolve around a clash of values. How then might the "insiders," responsible for the mainte-nance of the social order through the authoritative allocation of values for society, attempt to manage this conflict? One would expect "insiders" to strive toward a consensus of values among all social groups. Yet, in striving for spontaneous consensus, "insiders" must resort to socialized conformity as one means of managing conflict.

In a relationship characterized by conflict over values, is that relationship being maintained by spontaneous consensus, socialized conformity, or an interplay between the two?

To make the issue more complex realize that the impact of the socialization process on groups and individuals is not uniform; there invariably will be "variations in legitimacy." That is, individuals place different degrees of trust and truth on what is taught. These variations in legitimacy are determined by two related factors: 1) *selective percept/on-the* meaning given by individuals to the concepts being taught—which is based on 2) one's life experience. Consider, first of all, the concept of "democracy." What democracy is to one group or individual could well be different for another group or individual: Is democracy defined in the same terms in the United States as it is in Cuba? Or, ask a roomful of students to define democracy and inevitably one gets various definitions of the concept because each individual student has his or her own meaning for that term. "In the end, democracy is always a matter of degree, and judgements about the degree of democracy are inherently controversial."[5]

As for the second cause for variations in legitimacy, <u>real</u> life experiences often influence whether theory or rhetoric will correspond to

reality. The term *real* is stressed here because there is clearly a difference between what one is told to be <u>real,</u> or true, and what one finds out to be the <u>truth</u> for himself or herself. Consider the following statement: The U.S. is a land of opportunity where freedom and equality are enjoyed by all, and anybody can become president so long as he "pulls himself up by the bootstraps." Now consider the differences between the white, upper-class child living in suburbia versus the low-income Chicano child living in the *barrios* of any of our major urban centers. Schools generally teach the uniform theme of "the land of opportunity," but which of these children is more likely to accept that theme? <u>Real</u> life experiences, or how groups and individuals perceive society to treat them, are a reflection of the degree of legitimacy these groups and individuals give to the socialization process.

This line of reasoning suggests that those who govern may benefit at one and the same time from the apparent contradictory strategies of (1) encouraging universal acceptance of symbols and ideologies that legitimate the goals of those who rule, and (2) encouraging religious, racial, ethnic, and other social and cultural differences among the masses of citizens. The apparent contradictory strategies point to a major theme of this essay: overt and covert powers are intertwined in the art of governance. Even though socialization will never eradicate conflicting ideas, governing has more to do with covert power based on the preconceptions of those who comply than it has to do with overt forms of power-compliance transactions. The power to control might have more to do with dividing and differentiating than with gaining consensus. In this vein of thought, "deviance" plays an important role in the social control of a group or individual. The "structuring of difference" must have its corollary, the "structuring of sameness." How can government control deviant or "different" behavior without having as its point of comparison a normative standard of "sameness"? These questions will be taken up below.

In this line of argument, power is seen as relational: there are the powerful and there are the powerless. Viewed in this manner, *power* suggests that in situations of inequality, the political response (or lack thereof) of the deprived group or class is a function of power relationships, such that power serves for the development and maintenance

of the quiescence of the powerless. The emergence of challenge to dominant social arrangements, as a corollary, may be understood as the process by which the relationships of power are altered.[6] Important, then, is an understanding of the nature of power. [This essay adds to the discussion of "What is Power?" in this volume.] This essay will give particular attention to how power and powerlessness affect the precon-ceptions and behavior of a non-elite.

Approach of the Essay

The objective of this essay is not to provide a clear, definitive explanation of power. Previous essays found in this reader have concentrated on that difficult task. Instead, because citizens are socialized to acquire certain values, beliefs, attitudes, and norms, this discussion will focus on the role power plays in advancing a *dominant ideology amony* the citizenry. Borrowing from social control theory, the perspective of *cultural hegemony* informs our analysis of power. When asked how A gets B to do what B would not otherwise do, the cultural hegemonist would answer that "B is taught to obey A."

A major concern of the essay is to gain some understanding of how socialization constructs "reality." The process of assimilation, in turn, will be evaluated according to how it forces individuals to accept certain economic, social, and political conditions. The view of this essay is that "reality" is determined by the implicit definition of what is legitimate and possible. "Reality" is a *conditioned or structured response.*

The position taken is that for democracy to prosper, groups and individuals must have a genuine opportunity to challenge social and political arrangements of dominant groups in society. Until power is more equally distributed, certain groups and individuals will lack the fundamental condition for a democratic society: *human dignity.* Human dignity means the ability and capacity to live according to one's own values and beliefs rather than by the dictates of "authoritative values" imposed by those with political power. A greater sharing of power is necessary for a more democratic U.S. society. Until human dignity is realized, a fundamental value of democracy-freedom of choice-will itself

not be realized. Where there is no choice, there is no justice nor equality of opportunity.

On the other hand, there is a paradox to consider as well. For democracy to advance and prosper, a stable and ordered society is required. Everybody "doing their own thing" suggests chaos, confusion, and disorder. The issue, then, is how the complexity and diversity of public opinion and self-expression in U.S. society are balanced. [The essays by John Gardner at the end of this textbook reveal some possible ways of dealing with this paradox.]

Socialization

It is noteworthy to point out that individuals are not born with an understanding of government, political processes, or culture; they are born into an ongoing, complex system of values, beliefs, attitudes, and norms. Instead, as members of a community, individuals come to accept the basic institutions of the system as well as the norms and patterns of behavior which make up the community's "culture." Within the context of politics, this acceptance is the culmination of a long "developmental process through which the citizen acquires a complex set of beliefs, feelings, and information which helps him comprehend, evaluate, and relate to the political world around him."[7] Through this process of *political socialization,* the individual acquires knowledge, information, values, beliefs, and attitudes about the political system which serve as "political eyeglasses" through which the individual perceives and makes meaningful the world of politics.

These political lenses are imprinted onto a person's mental and emotional makeup as he or she goes through a variety of experiences related to politics. By responding to or acting upon these imprints, values and beliefs come about slowly partly through the deliberate and reinforcing efforts of other members of the political community (especially those who act in some official capacity as agents of the system), and more subtly through the cumulative effect of events and developments in a person's life. Schooling, especially the teaching of history or civics, is one form of deliberate reinforcement or indoctrination. Political

events, rituals, and celebrations, as well as conversations with family members and friends add to an individual's political socialization largely without deliberate design or conscious effort. Family, schools, churches, the media as well as peer groups, coworkers, neighbors, friends, and numerous other political, social, and economic factors are among the channels through which political views are passed from one generation to the next. This is to say, political socialization is a lifelong process, and is both covert and overt.

Socialization correctly implies the manipulation and "conditioning" of the human mind, and thus suggests a negative aspect of power. However, when considering alternatives, socialization is perhaps the most efficient and democratic means by which the social order is maintained and is preferable to, for example, putting everyone in prison in order to control their day-to-day activities. Socialization allows for a less restrictive means of developing legitimacy, enforcing the law, and managing human affairs. Take the role of parenting as an analogy. A child cannot be imprisoned in a home just so a parent can watch that child's every move and action. Nor can a parent be with a child every minute of the day in order to scrutinize that child's every move and action. The parent is responsible for teaching that child behavior that will secure safety and assurance for the child while at the same time giving the child freedom of movement and liberty to use judgment. A parent could easily lose the trust of the child with too much overprotection.

It should be noted that schools have always been regarded as a tool to indoctrinate and socialize individuals. Indeed, public education was conceived with the major purpose of assimilating the newly-arrived European immigrant into dominant, Anglo-Saxon society. "Manipulation of the mind" is an historical phenomenon.

Understand, too, that socialization is a universal process that all political regimes employ in the governance of the social order. The United States is not the only political regime engaged in the socialization of its citizenry.

Socialization: Conclusion

Of what significance is this discourse on socialization? The following questions are posed to begin our inquiry: Can an individual's political consciousness, or self, be shaped in a manner that prevents a critical understanding or awareness of how a political system—its structures and processes—works against his or her position or condition in the political arena? What kind of and how much information is available to an individual in his or her assessment of the political environment? Who provides the information for the person's assessment? Is it reasonable to assume that incomplete information leads to incomplete knowledge, and that structured information leads to a particular political "reality?"

Cultural Hegemony

Antonio Gramsci captured the essence "shaped reality" with his conception of cultural hegemony.[8] Gramsci explains how a particular political and socioeconomic system (and that system's elite) maintains its hold on power and retains its support. His analysis of the subtle exercise of power stresses intellectual and cultural influences as mechanisms of social control.

Gramsci applied *hegemony* to relationships between groups, especially social classes. He felt that one social class could be thought of as exercising hegemony over other subordinate classes. It might be argued, for example, that in a capitalist society the corporate elite is hegemonic in relation to the working class. In a communist state, the communist ruling-elite is hegemonic in relation to non-members of the Communist Party.

Gramsci suggests that the rule of one class over another depends on persuading the ruled to accept the system of beliefs of the ruling class and to share their social, cultural, and moral values. Rule by physical coercion which the notion of oppression commonly entails is mostly absent. Resort to force in the modern, complex industrial society is exceeding what is needed. In fact, erosion of active consent to the

existing socio-cultural order, to a degree that the ruling class is driven to force, would be an indication of collapse of its hegemony.

Hegemonic control is by moral and intellectual persuasion rather than by means of force by the police, the military, or the coercive power of the state. This is not to say that brute force cannot sometimes complement moral and intellectual persuasion, but to argue, instead, that the bulk of hegemonic direction is by persuasion. .Control of subordinate classes is more often subtly exercised, operating persuasively rather than coercively through cultural institutions-schools, the media, churches, and the like. The ruled are persuaded, or come to the general view, that maintenance of the status quo could not but be in their own best interest. Moreover, it is possible for the existing hegemony to accommodate alternative and counter-hegemonic cultural forces by neutralizing, changing, or actually incorporating them into the dominant perspective of the socio-cultural and political systems.

It is time to revisit a central question at issue here: is the popular acceptance of and support for government given by citizens to their leaders spontaneous consensus or socialized conformity? One case study is evaluated in the next section.

Hegemony and Social Control: The Case of *La Raza*

In this section, a transition from socialization to assimilation is made. These two processes are complementary. The intent is to make clear how assimilation, like socialization, influences individual thinking and behavior, and how that process leads to the acceptance of the dominant ideology. Like socialization, assimilation is treated as a mechanism of social control. *Alienation* and *ideology are* given special attention. It will be shown that hegemonic forces help explain, in part, political quiescence under conditions of inequality. The exercise of hegemonic forces is illustrated by an evaluation of the case of U.S. citizens of Mexican descent, or *La Raza.*

Social Control: Assimilation

I'm sitting in my history class,
The instructor commences rapping,
I'm in my U.S. history class,
And I'm on the verge of napping.

The Mayflower landed on Plymouth Rock.
Tell me more! Tell me more!
Thirteen colonies were settled.
I've heard it all before.

What did he say?
Dare I ask him to reiterate?
Oh why bother
It sounded like he said,
George Washington's my father.

I'm reluctant to believe it,
I suddenly raise my *mano.*
If George Washington's my father,
Why wasn't he Chicano?[9]

Educational policy in the United States works against the interests of people of color, here illustrated by the experience of *La Raza.* The educational process is a means of social control, and social control can be understood according to the goal of education: to assimilate individuals into a "dominant" or "host" culture. By *assimilation* is meant the change of cultural patterns to those of the dominant society and culture, and this change is most effectively accomplished through the socialization process, which teaches <u>what</u> "proper behavior" is and <u>how</u> to "property*[1] behave. The dominant culture can be characterized as white, patriarchal, English-speaking, and Protestant. In the end, social control theory "is a story of the battle to control the ways people think, feel, and behave. It is a story of winners and losers and of the strategies people

use in struggles with one another.*[110] This story can be understood by examining the power relationships that determine the winners and losers in this struggle.

From the perspective of cultural hegemony, social control can be total in the sense that the exercise of power is found in all arenas of human conduct. The effects of social control are felt in all arenas of human conduct: economic, political, cultural, and ideological. The task of controlling and managing human behavior may take physical, institutional, and symbolic forms.[11] Physical coercion-outright force and intimidation—is the most vivid, open, and brutal means of control. The institutional form of social control formalizes power relations in an attempt to confirm the hierarchy of existing power relations. In other words, this type of coercion requires groups and individuals wanting access into an institution to acquiesce to the rules of the institution. Symbolic control seeks to affect behavior by control of people's minds. All-in-all, these forms attempt to prevent the emergence of resistance while at the same time legitimating the nature of the power structure. It is important to again note that these forms of social control do not stand independent from one another, but work interdependently in managing and shaping human behavior.

The analysis to follow centers on how institutional and symbolic forms of control complement each other. The poem opening this section illustrates the process that *La Raza* undergoes in the ruling-elite's attempt to "culturally annihilate" members of this group. The goal is to persuade *Raza* that maintenance of the status quo could not but be in their own best interest; as such, hegemonic forces help explain, in part, *La Raza's* quiescence in a situation of relative deprivation.

La Raza are commonly referred to as Hispanics. *La Raza* means "the race," and is basically ethnic in reference. The term identifies a people with a common history, shared hardships, and a common language. A plurality of interests, needs, attitudes, beliefs, and norms make up the group. A crucial point to make is that the group is an extremely heterogeneous one. The considerable ethnic diversity of *La Raza* is apparent when taking into account such factors as language, religion, income and education levels, occupation, gender, age, region, food, and so forth.

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Generalizations about *La Raza* must be made. But in order to deal with and perhaps dispel negative stereotypes, an analysis of *La Raza* should utilize a multidisciplinary approach. Historical, anthropological, sociological, and economic interpretations should complement the political factor at the center of the examination of the group. Nevertheless, *La Raza* is herein viewed as a collectivity of people with a common heritage that makes up a unique racial group in U.S. society. In general, it refers to the various ethnic groups comprising *La Raza,* including Mexicans, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and individuals of every Central and South American country. As used here, *La Raza* refers specifically to U.S. citizens of Mexican descent that comprise about 65% of this heterogeneous group.

Henceforth, *La Raza* (or *Raza* in abbreviated, usually plural form) will be used instead of Hispanic or Spanish origin.

La Razai A People of Conquest

A profile of *La Raza* in light of their historical experience suggests that the group can best be viewed as a conquered people.[12] History shows that *La Raza* were conquered first by the Spanish in the 1500s, conquered a second time by U.S. military intervention in the mid-1800s. The significance of examining *La Raza* as conquered people is that it places the group in a position of being dominated by an "alien" system. Members of *La Raza* generally perceive themselves as conquered, or at the least, subject to an alien, dominating system. One need only read novels, short stories, and poetry written by the literary intelligentsia of *La Raza* to sense their feelings toward a system of domination. Those feelings are typically ones of confusion, frustration and non-acceptance even while trying to reach some level of accommodation with a system that is not one's own.[13] Moreover, much of this literature can be described as "political" to the extent that it voices concern about the unequal treatment of and perceptions leveled against some members of *La Raza.*

There is, then, a strong consensus among experts of *La Raza* that the group can best be viewed as a conquered people. Carey McWilliams

in *North From Mexico* has captured *La Raza* experience in an historical perspective:

> Above all it is important to remember that Mexicans are a "conquered" people in the Southwest, a people whose culture has been under incessant attack for many years and whose character and achievements, as a people, have been consistently disparaged. Apart from physical violence, conquered and conqueror have continued to be competitors for land and jobs and power, parties to a constant economic conflict which has found expression in litigation, dispossessions, hotly contested elections, and the mutual disparagement which inevitably accompanies a situation of this kind. Throughout this struggle, the Anglo-Americans have possessed every advantage: in numbers and wealth, arms and machines. Having been subjected, first to a brutal physical attack, and then to a long process of economic attrition, it is not surprising that so many Mexicans should show evidences of the spiritual defeatism which so often arises when a cultural minority is annexed to an alien culture and way of life. More is involved, in situations of this kind, than the defeat of individual ambitions, for the victims also suffer from the defeat of their culture and of the society of which they are a part.[14]

An extremely important insight suggested by the passage above is that *Raza* have had to adapt to historical circumstances; that is, *Raza* always have had to <u>react</u> to political, economic, and social stimuli rather than themselves ever having been able to create or initiate that stimuli. As a "powerless" group, *La Raza* have had to cope with and adapt to Anglo perceptions of it as a group.[15] One result of adopting a reactive posture is that *Raza are* subjected to assimilative processes.

The *Raza* experience demonstrates that assimilation is a multidimensional phenomenon: cultural, economic, and political assimilation explain the group's experience. In the final analysis, as will be argued below, there is a strong tendency for many members of the group to

assimilate. The group's propensity to assimilate indicates the effective exercise of power and its by-product: social control.

Symbolic Control: Alienation

Consider the *Raza* child who has lived in a home where Spanish is spoken and certain foods are eaten. Now the child goes into a classroom where a different language is suddenly the only one he or she is allowed to use. The mother of the child has packed a lunch with tortillas, beans, and chile in a brown paper bag, but the child must eat that lunch among all those ham and cheese sandwiches accompanied with pickles and protected by shiny, elaborately decorated, new lunch boxes. Then more confusion sets in. The *Raza* child literally loses his or her identity when the teacher calls out names. Petra becomes Connie; Rodolfo becomes Rudy; Elias becomes Ellis; Sara becomes Sarah; Pedro becomes Pete; Diego becomes James; Guillermo becomes William.

The pattern of responses described above affect an individual's personality. The point is that personality is conditioned by society and it is the foundation for social order. "Conditioning** is a necessary social function in so far as it provides people with the psychological guideposts for behavior which relieve them of evaluating every act and moment of their day. That is to say, assimilation (as well as socialization) simplify complexity. There is also the emotional need to be accepted by peers. Taken together, these psychological and emotional needs of the individual help explain how custom and tradition are built and enforced. The formal rules and procedures of mainstream social institutions are based on these fundamental controls of personality. One may infer that this personality control, because it reaches nearly everything one does, is, in the long run, far more powerful than those the government can impose by physical force.

This discussion suggests that an individual can be culturally alienated.[16] Cultural alienation, from the social-psychological approach, refers to the inability of a group to participate in decisions affecting its social life. The view of social control theory suggests that, in general, *Raza* have experienced cultural alienation by their inability to make the

basic decisions that affect their lives. Instead, these decisions are made through elite institutions over which *Raza* have little or no control; *Raza* do not have a majority in the U.S. Congress, they do not "own the means of production" in their *barrios,* and therefore are dependent upon values and interests that are not of their own choosing. As a consequence, as Paula Gunn Allen has suggested in her studies of Native Americans, an individual may not be able to identify with the natural aspects of his or her "soul;" he or she loses the quality of being a person of color.[17] In becoming culturally alienated, that member of *La Raza* has undergone a soul-destroying experience since he or she has not had the opportunity to experience a close relation with what is more purely *"Raza."* In the end, this subjective feeling of alienation transcends into the social. *Raza* are alienated objectively from "community;" they lack control over basic community decisions. *Raza* do not have the power to determine for themselves what patterns of political, social, or economic activities their communities will take.

Alienation can also become internalized and a formidable obstacle to the development and realization of independence. That is, *Raza* can experience a sense of meaninglessness and powerlessness; indeed, alienation is a rational response to a realistic understanding of the lack of control over decision-making.

From this social-psychological perspective, then, symbolic control refers to attempts to control the personality of an entire group through the control of its members' personality. The attempt at assimilation need not be uniform. The objective is to create differences within the group.

Symbolic Control: Ideology

This section discusses how the self-perpetuating nature of mainstream institutions is manifested through the system of education, where the values, beliefs, and attitudes which maintain dominant ideology are taught to individuals. This ideology is taught through the process of socialization. Generally, groups are taught that the mainte- nance of the status quo would be in their own best interests.

How can alienation, the educational process that nurtures aliena-
tion, and the "proper" behavior that is the quintessential product of
socialization be tied to the *Raza* condition? The work of Gramsci lends
some insight into this question. Gramsci captured the essence of "mind
control" with his conception of cultural hegemony. As pointed out, the
arenas of social control—economic, political, and cultural—are mutually
reinforcing, interrelated, and interdependent. Gramsci was less con-
cerned with economic and political conflict than with suppression of
human expression through social conditioning. He explained how power
could be better understood only by first asking the question of where
people's ideas of reality and their interests come from. Only then can one
analyze social and political demands and assess them accordingly. He
finds that individual thought and action are predetermined to the extent
that challenges to the dominant system are not only accommodated but
people are incapable of realizing that they should want to change the
system. The Gramscian view is relevant to the *Raza* experience. For
example, in politics, *Raza* do not challenge the "politics of cultural
literacy."[18] Indeed, some *Raza* scholars suggest that *Raza* should be
willing participants in the process of assimilation. They attempt to
identify factors that inhibit the total assimilation of members of *La Raza*
in order to correct the limits of that process.[19] In politics, *Raza* mobiliza-
tion efforts have not challenged the fundamental tenets of mainstream
political ideas, or the predominate values of U.S. society. Although they
have mobilized against exploitation and oppression and demanded
equality through full democratic and political rights, it has done so under
the presumption that these "problems" can be remedied according to the
existing problem-solving framework. This suggests that *Raza* generally
accept the tenets of mainstream politics. This further suggests that they
are not so much disappointed with the theory of democracy as it is with
the application of that theory. Stated differently, *Raza* are not so much
disappointed with the prevailing ideology as it is with its application.
Here, too, *Raza* political leaders unwittingly call for assimilation into the
dominant society.[20]

In the end, according to social control theory, the *cultural hegemony*
of a class society is made complete through the intellectual influence of
self-serving ideologies of the ruling class. Assimilation manifests the

exercise of power. In the United States, the effort to socialize *La Raza* into the prevailing, dominant ideology has been an on-going activity since the end of the Mexican-American War. Those who accept the dominant ideology are destined to act for governing elites at the ideological level and against their own interests at the empirical and material level.

Gramsci's observations are provocative and insightful. He says that power relations need not be conflictual in nature. The most powerful actors could be those who do not have to engage in conflict but who obtain what they want because the masses, lacking consciousness, believe that the powerful should benefit. In fact, there need not be a concerted effort to preserve the prevailing ideology, for that ideology is a self-perpetuating enigma: covert power takes on a life of its own. For example, the assumptions that drive strategies behind the improvement of the economic and social conditions of *La Raza* sore based on the virtues of mainstream ideas. Therefore, even among some of the most oppressed of U.S. society, there is no substantive challenge to the merits of mainstream ideas or values, no questioning of the foundation of that framework.   The general attitude is that mainstream institutional arrangements are not perfect but they are the best thing around! According to the perspective of cultural hegemony, one must be mindful of the religious-like hold of ideology over the masses and the state's orchestration of the "inevitability" of their economic, political, and social status. Social control can be total in the sense that individuals never understand their "real," interests. Domination and social control are achieved through a complex process of coercion and consent. This clearly has been the case of *La Raza's* social-historical experience.

Assimilation and La Raza: The Empirical Evidence

Let's turn our attention away from theoretical reflections to the application of theory. Let's consider the more precise application of assimilation.

Edward Murguia offers an appraisal of assimilation.[21] Assimilation is a process where people find it necessary because of economic, social, or political reasons to adjust their cultural ways of living to take into

account the customs of a "host society." Assimilation entails the acquisition of the values of the host society. Borrowing from Milton Gordon, Murguia breaks down the concept of assimilation into seven constituent elements and suggests that when these elements of assimilation occur, they do so in the order outlined below.

1) Cultural assimilation: change of cultural patterns to those of the host society.
2) Structural assimilation: large-scale entrance into cliques, clubs and institutions of the host society.
3) Marital assimilation: large-scale intermarriage.
4) Identificational assimilation: development of a sense of people hood based exclusively on the host society.
5) Attitude receptional assimilation: absence of prejudice.
6) Behavior receptional assimilation: absence of discrimination.
7) Civic assimilation: absence of value and power conflict.

For Murguia, the first three stages of assimilation are the most fundamental features of the assimilative process, and the key to total assimilation is structural assimilation.

Murguia believes that the history of assimilation in the United States can best be explained by the Anglo-conformity model. He describes the host society as white, English-speaking and Protestant, or WASP. In brief, as prescribed by the Anglo-conformity model, new immigrant groups culturally assimilate into the WASP host group almost automatically. White ethnic immigrant groups structurally and maritally assimilate into the core or parent group much more easily than the non-whites. Non-whites can nonetheless take on the behavior and values of the host group. Because ethnic cultures have been easily "homogenized" into white Anglo-Saxon conformity, Murguia feels that there is a single direction of conformity with the host society.

Murguia gives considerable attention to cultural assimilation. He points out that as a consequence of differences in the degree of cultural assimilation, structural and marital assimilation of ethnic groups into the host society may not occur. A possible outcome of not reaching the stage of structural assimilation may be the absence of socio-economic

advancement. Furthermore, social acceptance of immigrants by the host society may not be forthcoming: since the key to total assimilation is lacking, the notion of accommodation of all ethnic groups into the host society is a precarious one. For Murguia, the expected disparities in the relative socio-economic positions of ethnic groups and Anglos and the probability of prejudice and discrimination against ethnic groups make the notion of an egalitarian society a problematic one at best.[22] The ideas of success, opportunity, and self-determination may not be empirically defensible as the assimilationist viewpoint maintains. This is perhaps especially true for the non-white ethnic who cannot easily disguise his or her color.

Murguia's attention to culture reveals that the assimilation model does not totally "fit*[1] the reality of *La Raza.* There is some evidence of structural assimilation among *Raza,* but Murguia views the group as a "minority," or a racial or ethnic sub-population in socio-economic and political subordination within an Anglo-dominated society. Conversely, he views Anglos as the "majority," or the group which enjoys the most benefits and privileges in U.S. society. He concludes his discussion of the assimilationist perspective by stating that the major determinant of whether non-Anglos will follow the path of assimilation is whether or not:

> ... large-scale primary relations between the minority and the majority will develop. If they do develop, then the minority will follow a path of assimilation.[23]

Murguia's conclusion serves as a point of departure for evaluating *Raza* assimilation. He believes that a considerable amount of cultural change in the direction of the majority society will continue to take place among *La Raza.* At the very least, *Raza* are destined to a future of cultural assimilation because of economic considerations. He further suggests that light-skinned members of *La Raza* will tend to be accepted more readily by the host society, and it is in this subgroup of *La Raza* that structural and marital assimilation is more likely. Structural assimilation, it should be noted, does not guarantee economic advancement. And while the level of marital assimilation may be reached by some members of *La Raza,* this marriage may be class-based.

Assimilation and *La Razar.* A Quantitative Assessment

The intent of this section is to present quantitative evidence to complement the qualitative assessment offered by Murguia. The methodological and statistical intricacies are not discussed at length, rather, the findings of the study serve to support Murguia's observations. The terminology used below-Mexican American, Latin American, and the like-is the terminology off the study.

Philip E. Lampe undertook a study to examine the following questions: 1) can one find a high degree of assimilation among Mexican Americans, and 2) are Mexican Americans in the public schools more assimilated than their counterparts in church-related private schools?[24] The study was undertaken in San Antonio, Texas, among eighth graders.

Lampe's objective was to measure assimilation according to Gordon's (cited in Murguia) developmental scheme leading to total assimilation, or structural assimilation. Lampe designed a questionnaire that was reviewed by consultants, all of which had earned the Ph.D. degree—four sociologists, two psychologists, one educator, one philosopher, and one political scientist; the questionnaire was pretested; the revised questionnaire was then administered to over 500 eighth-grade students in 20 different schools—half of these schools were public schools randomly selected and the other half were parochial schools specifically chosen because of their close physical proximity to each of the public schools. A "control group" was chosen among 60 teenage Latin Americans residing in Baton Rouge and New Orleans which responded to a Spanish-translation of the questionnaire. Each of the item responses were then compared and those items which did not meet a level of statistical significance were eliminated from the final instrument. After the final item selection was made, which resulted in the adoption of 64 items relating to assimilation, 14 additional questions were added to obtain personal information about the respondent—including gender, ethnic background, religion, socio-economic status. All items were then scored according to Likert-scaling, and the Mann-Whitney U test compared these items.

Some of Lampe's major findings are as follows:

1) students in parochial schools are significantly more assimilated than those in public schools,
2) females are more assimilated than males,
3) non-Catholics are more assimilated than Catholics,
4) middle class are more assimilated than working class,
5) the greater percentage of Anglos in a school class, the greater the degree of assimilation among Mexican Americans,
6) Mexican Americans with an Anglo parent are more assimilated than those whose parents are both Mexican American.

It is not so important to understand Lampe's complicated and sophisticated quantitative approach. For purposes of this discussion, it is safe to say that Lampe's findings confirm in an empirical fashion those findings proposed by Murguia. Both find a great deal of "cultural assimilation" and lesser degrees of "structural assimilation" for the same reasons. An interesting comparison with Murguia is Lampe's finding that marital assimilation (finding #6) leads to perhaps the greatest degree of assimilation, especially among the children of an interracial marriage. The class and religious factors are better documented by Lampe, but each factor still points to the tendency to assimilate among Mexican Americans, or *La Raza.*

Assimilation and *La Raza* Political Development and Behavior

The complexity resulting from uneven degrees of assimilation of *La Raza* is reflected in the group's development and behavior. *Raza* do not fit neatly into a single "cell" of human development. In politics, it is impossible to point to a single type of *"Raza* politics" that distinguishes the whole of the *Raza* political experience. However, present-day *Raza* politics can be understood generally in terms of "mainstream" politics. There is nothing revolutionary about the politics of *La Raza.* The political behavior of some *Raza* during the 1960s and 1970s could be viewed as "unconventional politics," but demonstrations, sit-ins, boycotts, and the

like, are no longer the norm. This is not to say that such political activities do not still occur, but rather, unconventional politics is simply not the norm. The most significant political outcome of cultural assimilation is that *La Raza* participate according to the rules of the political game. Political development-integration into mainstream politics—for those *Raza* that have structurally assimilated has been generally successful. On the other hand, the least assimilated of *La Raza* are the least successful in their political efforts. Indeed, the segment of *La Raza* that has been unable to structurally assimilate generates perhaps the most significant questions for inquiry. Since a great many (if not most) *Raza* do not choose to politically participate in mainstream politics, perhaps a more significant point of inquiry is to ask about the non-participants.

Assimilation and *La Raza:* Conclusion

The intent of the discussion above was to explain the assimilative tendencies of *La Raza* within the framework of social control theory. *La Raza* is a heterogenous group with a considerable amount of social, economic, and political diversity. There are varying degrees of assimilation among members of this group.

There is one element that is common to the whole of the *Raza* experience in U.S. society: *Raza are* a people of conquest. It was argued that the basis for the Anglo-*Raza* relationship was domination and subordination. Accordingly, *Raza* historically have reacted to forces beyond their control. The *Raza*-Anglo relationship has been a dynamic one. As *Raza* have better organized against forces that sustain their subordination, new barriers to their demands for change are erected. For example, while *Raza* and other people of color have won the battle for "affirmative action,** now the counter-mobilization to overcome is "reverse discrimination." It is debatable if affirmative action constitutes a victory when considering the "stigma" individuals carry when identified as an "affirmative action case!"[25]

It was argued that educational policy is fundamentally concerned with teaching <u>what</u> proper behavior is and then <u>how</u> to properly behave.

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Schooling is a major tool utilized in the exercise of power. Education is a political act. There is nothing neutral about schooling. What kind of and how much information is available for an individual in his or her critical assessment of economic, political, and social environments illustrate these points. The sources of this information are good indicators of the political nature of education.

Additionally, is it fair to say that the structurally and maritally assimilated *Raza* lose all cultural aspects of being *Razafi* The definition of total assimilation suggests this as a possible outcome. This outcome becomes especially true for the children born from an interracial marriage. But more basic than considering total assimilation, can culturally assimilated *Raza* identify with the <u>real</u> *"Raza* experience?" Language is the key to transmitting culture, and cultural assimilation involves losing one's language. The inability to speak their indigenous language means that culturally assimilated/Kaza have lost a fundamental element of their culture. They lose, in the long run, the ability to identify with other *Raza as Raza.* Arguably, the culturally assimilated *Raza* are culturally alienated. They cannot exist totally within either the *Raza* or Anglo community.

Assimilation, then, signifies the schizophrenic condition of some *Raza.* Some are neither completely *"Raza"* nor Anglo. The dominant society has attempted through its strategies of socialization and assimilation to undermine and disintegrate *Raza* culture, and has superimposed an alien lifestyle. Indeed, one wonders what constitutes being *"Raza."* At one extreme, some *Raza* can conceivably function in a "pure" *Raza* lifestyle, having neither primary nor secondary contacts with Anglos. But the notion of conquest suggests that this "pure" *Raza* lifestyle is itself constructed by forces beyond the control of *La Raza.* At the other extreme, some *Raza* can perhaps function in an Anglo lifestyle, having neither primary nor secondary contacts with other *Raza.* Is this existence any more "total" than living in a *barrio* Have not the totally assimilated *Raza* lost what is most fundamental to the *Raza* experience: cultural and individual identity? In the middle of these two extremes one finds the true schizophrenic: *Raza* that speak their indigenous language while they think in English. *Raza* development and behavior are characterized by this "marginalized" condition.

Conclusion; Assessing Democracy

The attempt of this essay was to provide insight into the concept of power through an assessment of social control theory. Social control theory, in turn, was assessed by giving particular attention to the socialization process. The socialization process was further evaluated by giving particular attention to the concept of assimilation. It was suggested that social control theory helps explain why some groups and individuals in society do not challenge or rebel against oppressive and dominating conditions. From the perspective of cultural hegemony, the mutually reinforcing and interrelated practices of institutional and symbolic forms of coercion were evaluated. The intent was to show how rebellion is responded to and its corollary is achieved: compliance and obedience. The *Raza* experience was chosen to illustrate this exercise of power.

Now, the central question to ponder is: Why is it necessary to assimilate people of different cultural backgrounds and experiences into the dominant, host society? It was proposed that assimilation in particular and socialization in general are necessary for social control. Assimilation is especially necessary for those that have been placed in conditions of glaring inequalities as a result of conquest, institutional discrimination, racism, sexism, or classism. In the final analysis, the "deviant" and those viewed as "different" suffer the consequences of not accepting the views of dominant ideology. The "costs" of deviant behavior direct people of color towards assimilation, and thus, to the choices to conform, comply, and obey. By one view, this is a rational response to the extent that the individual realizes the benefits-economic opportunities, social acceptance, political integration, etc.-of his or her actions.

Although there are benefits associated with assimilating, there are costs that democratic theory concerns itself with. What are the costs of the loss of cultural and individual identity? How free is the individual when thoughts and actions are foreordained? How free is society?

Within the framework of democratic theory, it was hypothesized that active political participation is "structured" by the implicit definition

of what is politically legitimate and possible. The lack of political participation, too, is a "conditioned" or "shaped" response. The view of this essay was that for democracy to prosper, groups and individuals must have a genuine opportunity to challenge social arrangements of dominant groups In political society. Until power is more equally distributed in the United States, certain groups and individuals will lack the fundamental condition for a democratic society: human dignity. By human dignity is meant the ability to live according to the dictates of one's own values rather than according to the dictates of "authoritative values" imposed by those in political control. A greater sharing of power is necessary for a more democratic United States society.

Endnotes

l.John Gaventa, <u>Power and Powerlessness; Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Vailev</u> (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1980), p. 3.

2.These are terms borrowed form G. David Garson, <u>Power and Politics in the United States; A Political Economy Approach</u> (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1977), p. 24.

S.Ibid.

4.David Easton, <u>A Systems Analysis of Political Life</u> (New York: Wiley, 1965).

S.Lewis Lipsitz and David M. Speak, <u>American Democracy.</u> 3rd Edition, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), p. 45.

G.Gaventa, pp. 20-25.

T.Richard E. Dawson and Kenneth Prewitt, <u>Political Socialization</u> (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1969), p. 17.

S.Antonio Gramsci, <u>Selections From the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci,</u> translated and edited by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971).

9.Richard Olivas, in Octavio Ignacio Romano-V. and Herntinio Rios C. (eds.), <u>El Espeio-The Mirror; Selected Chicano Literature.</u> 5th Edition (Berkeley, CA: Quinto Sol Publications, Inc., 1972), cover page.

10.Stephen Pfohl, <u>Images of Deviance and Social Control; A Sociological History.</u> (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985), p. 3.

11.Ira Katznelson, "The Crisis of the Capitalist City: Urban Politics and Social Control," in Willis D. Hawley, Michael Lipskey, et. al., (eds.), <u>Theoretical Perspectives on Urban Politics</u> (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1976), p. 20.

12.To name a few classic sources, consider the works of Carey McWilliams, <u>North From Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States</u> (New York: Greenwood Press, 1960); Rodolfo Acuna, <u>Occupied America: The Chicano's Struggle Toward Liberation</u> (San Francisco, CA: Canfield Press, 1972); Armando Morales, <u>*Ando Sangrando, i am bleeding: A Study of Mexican American-Police Conflict*</u> (La Puenta, CA: Perspectiva Publications, 1972); Mario Barrera, <u>Race and Class in the Southwest: A Theory of Racial Inequality</u> (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979).

13.Classic pieces are again chosen. See, for example, Octavio Ignacio Romano-V. And Hermino Rios C. (eds.), <u>*El Espejo*-The Mirror: Selected CHICANO Literature</u>, 5th Edition (Berkeley, CA: Quinto Sol Publications, Inc., 1972); Rudolfo A. Anaya and Antonio Marquez (eds.), <u>*Cuentos Chicanos*: A Short Story Anthology</u> (Albuquerque, NM: The University of New Mexico Press, 1984); Gloria Anzaldua, <u>Borderland, *La Frontera*: The New Mestiza</u> (San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Book Company, 1987).

14.Carey McWilliams, <u>North From Mexico</u>, p. 132.

15.On strategies of accommodation see Michael C. LeMay, <u>The Perennial Struggle: Race, Ethnicity, and Minority Group Politics in the United States</u> (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2000).

16.LeMay, pp. 30-36.

17.Paula Gunn Allen, <u>The Sacred Hoop: Recovering The Feminine American Indian Traditions</u> (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), pp. 1-50.

18. David E. Camacho, "The Politics of Cultural Literacy and *La Raza*," in the proceedings of Social Science Association, San Antonio, Texas, March 28, 1991.

19.Marco A. Martinez, "Toward a Model of Socialization for Hispanic Identity: The Case of the Mexican-American," pp. 63-86, and Pastora San Juan Cafferty, "Language and Social Assimilation," pp. 87-112, in Pastora San Juan Cafferty and William C. Mcready (eds.), <u>Hispanics in the United States: A New Social Agenda</u> (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1985).

20.Benjamin Marquez, "The Politics of Race and Class: The League of United Latin American Citizens in the Post-World War II Period," <u>Social Science Quarterly</u> Vol. 68, Number 1 (March 1987), pp. 84-101.

21.Edward Murguia, <u>Assimilation, Colonialism, and the Mexican American People</u> (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1975).

22.On this point see Adalberto Aguirre, Jr. and Jonathan H. Turner, <u>American Ethnicity: The Dynamics and Consequences of Discrimination,</u> 3rd Edition (New York: McGraw Hill, 2001).

23.Ibid, p. 24.

24.Philip Lampe, <u>Comparative Study of the Assimilation of Mexican Americans</u> (San Francisco, CA: R and E Research Associates, 1975).

25.See the discussion by Stephen Pfohl, Chapter 9, pp. 283-330.