Sociology of Chicanos or Chicano Sociology?: A Critical Assessment of Emergent Paradigms
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This article examines and critically evaluates a recent review in this journal of theoretical trends and themes in sociological writings about Chicanos. In the process it attempts to draw a critical distinction between the sociology of Chicanos and Chicano sociology. A basic thesis advanced is that if the sociology of Chicanos is to grow and develop as a distinct area of study it must eschew majority perspectives and work toward the development of a Chicano paradigm that will not only enhance understanding of Chicano experience but, hopefully, work to end the subordinate condition of Chicanos.

In a recent article, "Sociological Theory in Emergent Chicano Perspectives," Maxine Baca Zinn sought "to identify theoretical themes and trends in the range of sociological writings about Chicanos" (1981: 255). This work is significant, not only because it is the first systematic and comprehensive review of recent theoretical developments in newly emergent Chicano perspectives, but because it addresses issues that are fundamental to the development of Chicano sociology. She also critically evaluates an earlier work in which I proposed a new paradigm of Chicano sociology for the social sciences (Mirandé, 1978).

Baca Zinn raises a number of critical questions in her article that must be resolved before Chicano sociology can gain acceptance as an unique and distinctive area of study. Here I shall

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attempt to review and critically evaluate her treatment of Chicano sociology and to reexamine the paradigm of Chicano sociology I proposed. I hope that in the process our knowledge both of Chicanos and sociology will be advanced.

AN OVERVIEW OF SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY IN EMERGENT CHICANO PERSPECTIVES

The entrance of Chicanos into the discipline of sociology, according to Baca Zinn, was marked by the emergence of works in the late 1960s and early 1970s by authors such as Romano (1968), Vaca (1970a, 1970b), and Hernandez (1970). The unifying theme of this protest literature was that it "challenged the legitimacy of both existing societal practices and values and a sociology which justified those practices and values" (Baca Zinn, 1981: 256). Unfortunately, this early literature was generally found lacking alternative theoretical frameworks and reformulations. It was reactive rather than proactive.

Baca Zinn moves from reviewing this critical context to identifying the need for selective theoretical application within the sociology of Chicanos. A basic problem with the sociology of Chicanos, she argues, is that it has not adequately distinguished between social organization and culture. It has been limited and distorted not only by its failure to distinguish between these levels of analysis, but by its putting undue emphasis on culture as the primary determinant of Chicano behavior (1981: 257).

An additional problem with the sociology of Chicanos is its tendency to focus on macro-level explanations of social behavior and to ignore micro-level explanations. Earlier theories, which saw the subordination of Chicanos as resulting from deficiencies inherent in Chicano culture and lifestyles, have been challenged by structural theories. Although internal colonialism and Marxism are the two primary emergent structural theories, challenges to cultural explanations have also come from others who have used social organization or structure to explain Chicano behavior.
Another emergent theoretical trend calls into question the standard sociological assumption that for Chicanos, as for other racial/ethnic groups, "the transition from traditional to modern would take place through the process of acculturation" (Baca Zinn, 1979a: 60). Recent research suggests not only that Chicano kinship networks persist in urban areas but that Chicano families can be both modern and ethnic.

While Baca Zinn applauds the movement away from cultural deficiency and assimilationist theories toward structural explanations of social inequality, she is concerned that not enough attention has been paid to micro-level explanations. Rather than arguing for one theory or model over another, she maintains that Sociology is a pluralistic discipline characterized by numerous alternative conceptions of theory, explanations, and data; that is, by different approaches or perspectives. Different kinds of social phenomena require separate theories. Like sociology generally, the sociology of Chicanos can be carved up in many different ways, from the interpersonal to the institutional and societal levels. Analyzing these different levels and types of social phenomena calls for alternative and selected application of sociological theories [1981: 257].

Finally, her review of theoretical developments concludes with a discussion and critique of my paradigm of Chicano sociology. She identifies two basic problems with the paradigm. First, what I propose is not a paradigm. According to Ritzer:

A paradigm is a fundamental image of the subject matter within science. It serves to define what should be studied, what questions should be asked, and what rules should be followed in interpreting the answer obtained. The paradigm is the broadest unit of consensus within a science and serves to differentiate one scientific community (or sub-community) from another [1975: 157].

Second, she is critical of me for treating colonial theory as an integral part of a Chicano paradigm and ignoring "the potential contributions of other theories"; for according to her, "the study
of Chicanos will require the adoption of multiple theoretical perspectives” (1981: 268). We should work toward the development of a Chicano paradigm, but such a paradigm should “incorporate theories now being developed in the discipline” (1981: 268). She holds, moreover, that

Because Chicano social worlds exist at different levels, multiple theoretical perspectives must be brought to bear on the analysis of these social worlds. Colonial theories explain Chicano subordination and its operation at institutional and societal levels. Micro theories, on the other hand, can explain processes involved in coping with oppression on a day-to-day level. Because reality is constructed within specific structural contexts, analyses of different levels of social organization are needed if we are to achieve comprehensive understanding of the Chicano experience [1981: 268].

Baca Zinn concludes by calling for the selective application of macro and micro theories that effectively link the lives of Chicanos and historical and structural forces, or what C. Wright Mills called the sociological imagination (1961: 268).

**SOCILOGY OF CHICANOS OR CHICANO SOCIOLOGY?—A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT**

The issues and questions raised by Baca Zinn (1981) are, in fact, of such magnitude that they deserve to be more fully addressed and clarified. My response to her critique of my paradigm is intended as a first step in this process.

Baca Zinn contends that I treat colonial theory as integral to the paradigm, while ignoring other theoretical perspectives that might enhance our understanding of Chicanos. A basic flaw in her argument, however, is that she treats colonialism as a theory. Although I hold that Chicanos are an internally colonized people, I do not present colonialism as a theory but rather as a historical fact or a way of life. To assert that I treat colonial theory as integral to the paradigm and ignore other theories, is to distort
not only the paradigm but Chicano history. Its inclusion is called
for not because it is a more adequate theory but because it is
consonant with our historical experience. It is also significant that
she focuses on colonialism and ignores the other eleven com-
ponents of the paradigm. Colonialism is clearly a component but
it is neither a theory nor the paradigm. Its inclusion in the
paradigm is warranted because, in a very real sense, it is one of the
broadest units that differentiates Chicano from mainstream
sociology. I contend that any theory of Chicanos, whether on a
macro or micro level, Marxist or culturalist, must take into
account the colonization of the Chicano. To do otherwise is to
ignore history. In the same way that any theory of black
oppression must consider the legacy of slavery, so must we
consider our legacy of conquest. My inclusion of the colonization
of Chicanos and the very genesis of the paradigm were prompted
precisely by the continual misapplication to Chicanos of theories
and paradigms developed for volunteer immigrant groups.
However, because Chicanos did not assimilate, when these
theories and paradigms were applied to them, they were viewed
not only as anomalous but pathological. Chicanos, in other
words, were forced to fit into inappropriate perspectives.

We now turn to the second major issue raised by Baca Zinn: Is
my paradigm of Chicano sociology a paradigm? According to
Baca Zinn,

What most needs to be clarified is the difference between theories
and paradigms. Theories are not paradigms, but components of
far broader paradigms. . . . It is clear that we must work toward the
development of a Chicano paradigm that can incorporate theories
now being developed in the discipline [1981: 268].

The paradigm is flawed because (1) I only focus on one theory and
ignore all others, (2) what I propose is, at best, a theory and not a
paradigm, and (3) it fails to recognize that “the paradigm is the
broadest unit of consensus within a science and serves to
differentiate one scientific community (or subcommunity) from
another” (Ritzer, 1975: 157).
First, it must be noted that I proposed the paradigm as emergent or tentative and not as a full-blown paradigm of Chicano sociology and that “although it is admittedly tentative and suggestive, hopefully it will serve as a model or starting point for future research and theorizing on Chicanos” (1978: 306). I anticipated that other Chicano scholars would refine and further develop the paradigm. The paradigm did, however, emerge from dissatisfaction with social science perspectives and from the deeply held conviction that prevailing paradigms and the ethos of scientism worked to maintain Chicanos in a subordinate position. Like Kuhn (1962), I argued not only that paradigm choice was polemical and beyond the scope of science but that Chicano sociology and similar approaches would be resisted by establishment science.

Despite its tentativeness, acceptance of a Chicano paradigm could potentially signal the onset of a scientific revolution that would seriously call into question and challenge prevailing paradigms and world views. Ritzer maintains that sociology is a multiple-paradigm science and identifies three basic sociological paradigms: social facts, social definitions, and social behavior. These qualify as paradigms in that they are much broader than theories and serve to organize, integrate, and guide theories. “It subsumes, defines, and interrelates the exemplars, theories, methods, and instruments that exist within it” (Ritzer, 1975: 157). The exemplar for the social facts paradigm, for instance, is Emile Durkheim, especially his *Rules of Sociological Method*, in which he introduced and expanded on the concept of a social fact.

Durkheim argued that social facts were to be treated as things external to the individual and coercive on him. He did not argue that they were things. They were only to be treated as things for purposes of sociological analysis [1975: 158].

The two most important theories to be included within this paradigm are structural functionalism and conflict theory. The exemplar for the social definition paradigm is Max Weber, and the dominant theories are action theory, symbolic interactionism,
and phenomenology. The contemporary exemplar of the social behavior paradigm is B. F. Skinner, and the dominant theories are behavioral sociology and exchange theory. Ritzer holds that

The three paradigms discussed in this paper explain much of contemporary sociology, but it is important to point out that there are things that do not fit. Two good examples of this are critical theory and biologism. Both of these perspectives may well form the bases of new sociological paradigms in the future. . . . However they lack, at least now, the political clout needed to rally a large number of adherents [1975: 164].

The implications of Ritzer's position for the development of a Chicano paradigm are profound. First, if political clout, rather than logic or theoretical parsimony, is the ultimate criterion for gaining paradigmatic acceptance and legitimation, minority perspectives are, almost by definition, doomed to failure. Second, since sociology is a multiple-paradigm science, there is no logical or theoretical reason to preclude the emergence of minority paradigms. Finally, and most significantly, none of the paradigms identified by Ritzer, even the would-be paradigms, reflect a minority perspective or world view. Despite their avowed differences, all are based on Euro-American world views and subscribe to the basic tenets of scientism. Thus, although Ritzer's and Baca Zinn's conceptions of sociology as a multiple-paradigm science makes Chicano paradigms at least theoretically possible, the recognition that political clout rather than logic is the ultimate condition for acceptance makes their emergence highly improbable. The problem with such conceptualization is that it fails to recognize that the fundamental cleavage between the dominant society and oppressed groups virtually precludes the acceptance of minority paradigms. Their acceptance would mean, after all, rejection not only of prevailing paradigms but of the dominant order.

A basic tenet of the paradigm of Chicano sociology that I proposed was that the ethos of scientism works to perpetuate the subordination of Chicanos and other socially disadvantaged groups through its undue emphasis on objectivity, value neutrali-
ty, and universalism. I argued, in effect, that these norms “discourage the emergence and incorporation of minority paradigms and neutralize attempts by minority scholars to modify prevailing world views” (1978: 302). I further contended that if sociology is to be a vehicle for liberation and for eliminating rather than perpetuating oppression, it must take the side of the oppressed. I called, in other words, for a partisan sociology, while at the same time recognizing that its acceptance would be resisted by establishment sociology for being “political, partisan, and otherwise incongruous with the norms of science” (1978: 307).

My intent in advocating a new paradigm of Chicano sociology was to reject prevailing conceptions of Chicanos that emerged from the field of study which I termed the sociology of Mexican Americans and saw as being in direct opposition to Chicano sociology. The sociology of Mexican-Americans simply took existing perspectives and applied them to Chicanos, and failed to “develop new paradigms or theoretical frameworks consistent with a Chicano world view or responsive to the nuances of Chicano culture” (1978: 295). Recent works by Baca Zinn, Moore (1978), and other contemporary sociologists are less pejorative, more insightful and sophisticated analyses of Chicanos. Although these works tend to refer to us as Chicanos rather than Mexican-Americans, as in the past, they are still exercises in the sociology of Chicanos rather than in Chicano sociology. The distinction is not simply semantic but fundamental to the development of a Chicano paradigm.

Baca Zinn fails to distinguish between the sociology of Chicanos and Chicano sociology. Except when referring to my paradigm, she eschews the term Chicano sociology in favor of the “sociology of Chicanos,” “sociological writing about Chicanos,” “sociological treatments of Chicanos,” and “the study of Chicanos.” For Baca Zinn, “what most needs to be clarified is the difference between theories and paradigms” (1981: 268); for me, the distinction between Chicano sociology and the sociology of Chicanos is even more critical. Baca Zinn’s ultimate frame of reference is sociology, not Chicanos. She sees sociology as “a pluralistic discipline characterized by numerous alternative conceptions of
theory, explanations, and data—that is, by different approaches or perspectives” (1981: 257). The study of Chicanos, thus, “will require the adoption of multiple theoretical perspectives” (1981: 268). Her intent clearly is to apply existing sociological theories and paradigms to Chicanos. My intent, on the other hand, is to develop a Chicano sociology with its own distinctive theories, methods, exemplars, and paradigms; that is, a Chicano perspective not only on Chicanos but on sociology and science. The first approach sees sociology as the center of the universe and seeks to make Chicanos fit its theories and paradigms; the second sees Chicanos as the center and seeks to make sociology conform to a Chicano world view.

**CONCLUSION**

Despite recent trends and theoretical developments, and the growing sophistication of the sociology of Chicanos, the need for Chicano sociology seems as great today as ever. The fundamental issue for Chicano sociologists is whether to make the study of Chicanos fit into prevailing social science paradigms or to develop new paradigms that emanate from within Chicano culture and the Chicano experience.

Some would argue that the call for a Chicano paradigm is premature, given that Chicano sociology is in a nascent state. Even if one acknowledges that we are not in a position either to offer or to identify a definitive paradigm, an essential first step in its development is demonstrating the need for a Chicano paradigm. According to Ritzer, the four basic components of a paradigm are an exemplar, image of the subject matter, theories, and methods. Let us examine each of the four components to see if a tentative Chicano paradigm can be identified.

**EXEMPLAR**

Although a number of proponents of the protest literature could be seen as exemplars (e.g., Vaca, 1970; Hernandez, 1970;
and Montiel, 1970), the primary exemplar of the Chicano paradigm is clearly Octavio Romano, not only in his writing but in his journal, El Grito, which sought to expound and develop a Chicano world view. In “Anthropology and Sociology of the Mexican-American” Romano (1968) argued that social scientists have distorted Chicano history in their depictions of Mexican-Americans as passive and controlled by a monolithic traditional culture. Rather than being objective, social science accounts have been “pernicious, vicious, misleading, degrading, and brain-washing in that they obliterate history and then rewrite it in such a way as to eliminate the historical significance of Mexican-Americans . . . .” (1968: 24). Romano (1970) further develops the implications of the cult of objectivity for Chicanos in “Social Science, Objectivity, and the Chicanos.” According to him, that objectivity is an essential component of the scientific enterprise is a central tenet of scientism. Emphasis on objectivity is based on a dualistic conception of man; a belief in the separation of mind and body. This dualism can be traced to Greek Orphic mysticism. “Western man . . . in his quest for a pure objective reality (that is, to be objective) began to consider events, phenomena, and ideas as apart from personal self-consciousness, to be dealt with ideally in a detached, impersonal, and unprejudiced manner” (1970: 5). Although social science continues to be guided by the cult of objectivity, a belief in the necessity of separating oneself and one's beliefs from external objective reality, this belief has gradually been called into question by Chicano social scientists. Romano therefore felt that social science was entering a new revolutionary era and observed:

This situation is unique in the annals of American social science. It is unique because a population heretofore studied is now studying the studiers. The final outcome of this venture is yet to be revealed. Nevertheless, it promises to introduce perspectives that are unique in social science, perspectives which have their origin within a previously studied population (Mexican-Americans) whose objectifications in the past have not been an accepted, explicit, and integral part of traditional social science thought [1970: 12].
The basic image of the subject matter is one where the Chicano is viewed as creator of culture and actively resisting oppression, rather than as passive and dependent. The yardstick for evaluating Chicanos is not Anglo culture and values but Chicanos themselves. Chicano culture and family are not pathological but adaptive coping mechanisms that provide warmth and succor in an otherwise hostile environment. Whereas Western culture is based on objectivity and the separation of truth and feeling, Chicano culture is based on subjectivity, particularism, and the merging of truth and feeling. We must therefore look within our Indio-Mestizo cultural heritage for truth and knowledge.

Internal colonialism and Marxism are generally recognized as the two dominant theories of Chicano sociology today, although colonialism should be more properly viewed as a description of a historical process than as a theory. Also, a number of contemporary social scientists have attempted to integrate and synthesize the two perspectives (see, Blauner, 1972; Almaguer, 1975; Barrera, 1979). They have sought, in other words, to identify both the racial and class basis of Chicano oppression. Although these works are significant contributions, and they have advanced our knowledge of Chicanos far beyond cultural deficiency theories, they are still based on Western models of truth and reality. Both are structural theories and fit well within what Ritzer terms the Social Facts Paradigm. Theories organic to Chicano culture and world views have yet to be developed. It will not do, however, as the sociology of Chicanos has done, simply to “select from the present array of sociological and anthropological theories, dress them up in up-to-date Space Age terminology, apply them to Chicanos and thus assume the mantle of contemporaneity before the uninitiated in social science theory” (Romano, 1970: 11).
METHODS

Chicano methodology is even less well developed than Chicano theory. To date there has not been a systematic statement on Chicano methodology. Yet, some of the early protest literature did point the way toward possible future methodological developments. Certainly any method that separates the individual from his social milieu is unacceptable from a Chicano perspective. Field research and participant observation appear most consonant with a Chicano paradigm, but it must be a methodology that does not draw a dichotomy between participation and observation or between truth and feeling. It must be a methodology, in other words, that permits the Chicano sociologist to advance our understanding of the Chicano experience without in any way neutralizing or compromising his or her position as an advocate for Chicano issues; a methodology that permits one to be both researcher and Chicano.

One of the most provocative statements on Chicano methodology has come from Baca Zinn (1979b) in her article, "Field Research in Minority Communities: Ethical, Methodological and Political Observations by an Insider." She extends the insider-outsider controversy by applying it to minority researchers and showing that while they hold certain advantages in carrying out field research in minority communities, they face ethical, methodological, and personal concerns that are unique. Baca Zinn concludes that

The creation of a social science which has liberating rather than oppressive ramifications will require fundamental alterations in the relationships between minority peoples and conditions of research. Gestures of reciprocity do not, by themselves, alter the unequal nature of research relationships. Nor is having research conducted by insiders sufficient to alter the inequality that has characterized past research. Field research conducted by committed minority scholars may provide a corrective to past empirical distortions in that we are better able to get at some truths. However, our minority identity and commitment to be accountable to the people we study may also pose unique problems. These problems should serve to remind us of our
political responsibility and compel us to carry out our research with ethical and intellectual integrity [1979b: 217-218].

I concur with Baca Zinn and hold that part of our ethical, moral, and political responsibility as minority scholars is to develop paradigms that are not only organic to our culture and values, but that can serve as vehicles for ending our oppressive and subordinate condition. It is to this end that I proposed the paradigm of Chicano sociology. Unlike Black sociology, which has a long and rich intellectual history and prominent exemplars such as W.E.B. Du Bois and E. Franklin Frazier, Chicano sociology has only recently emerged. It is precisely for this reason that we must recognize that the bulk of our sociological legacy is alien and European, and begin to forge our own unique brand of sociological imagination; an imagination drawn not from a foreign ethos, but from our rich cultural heritage, firmly grounded in the reality of our contemporary experience.

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