

## **Acculturation of the Hispanic: A Multidimensional Perspective**

**Atilano A. Valencia**

Acculturation is not a novel concept in the social sciences; however, the concept has been the subject of different interpretations over the years. Some of the definitions and descriptions of the concept are basically brief and simple; some are more elaborate and complex, while others are, in varying degrees, controversial. Invariably, the interpretation of the concept reflects the philosophical orientation of an author in respect to the theme, issue, cultural group, or historical period being addressed. For example, the interpretation given by an author describing the mainstreaming of ethnolinguistic minority children will very likely vary from the perspective of the concept presented by

---

Atilano A. Valencia, PhD, is a professor of education at California State University, Fresno, California.

another author depicting the salient characteristics of biculturalism.

The purpose of this essay is to provide a more explicit and comprehensive interpretation and description of acculturation, particularly as it applies to the Hispanic population in the United States. In this essay, acculturation is viewed as changes in value orientations and behavioral patterns that gradually occur among members of a particular culture due to their contacts and interactions with people of another culture in the same geographical area (Brameld, 1965). An interpretation of culture is also included in the essay for the purpose of making a distinction between transformations that emerge within a culture per se as compared to changes in the behavioral characteristics of people that occur due to acculturation.

The cultural characteristics described in this paper pertain specifically to the Hispanic population in the United States, particularly the Mexican American. However, the descriptions of behavioral characteristics associated with acculturation among Mexican Americans are, in varying degrees, applicable to persons from other ethnolinguistic groups who are experiencing this phenomenon in American society.

The dynamic changes that occur within a culture over time are illustrated according to the interaction of four impinging forces and nine cultural elements. The four impinging forces are geographical environment, cross-cultural interactions, predominant belief system, and political ideology. Particular emphasis is given to the malleability or resistance of cultural patterns in reference to the interactive forces that impinge upon them, for it is conceivable that these two variables have a significant influence on the rapidity and relative degree of acculturation that occurs among people from minority cultures in American society.

Since the acculturation process that ethnolinguistic groups experience in American Society is directly related to the interactive forces that impede or accelerate it over time, this phenomenon can be more explicitly interpreted through a historical study of selected cultural characteristics of one particular cultural group over several generations. In this regard, this essay presents a historical description of the relative degree of acculturation attained by six generations of Mexican Americans. I hope the essay will serve as a viable reference for students, teachers, and researchers in education and the social sciences who are pursuing cross-cultural studies or who are interested in examining the educational implications of acculturation regarding young people from diverse ethnolinguistic groups in the nation.

## **Culture—A Dynamic and Evolutionary Entity**

Culture is frequently viewed as a dynamic and evolutionary entity, which includes cultural elements and behavioral patterns that are subject to change over time (Hunt, 1975; Ornstein & Levin, 1974; and Weinreich, 1974). Other contemporary social scientists interpret it as a process which includes behaviors, values, and substances cherished and shared by a group of people (Andrade, 1984; Arvizu et al., 1980; and Spindler, 1977). For the purpose of this essay, culture is defined as a representation of behavioral patterns of a group of people in a geographical area in a discrete period of time. Furthermore, it is viewed as a representation of meanings and values given to products, symbols, and processes that a group of people share and cherish (Andrade, 1984; Erikson, 1986).

At any given time a culture may be perceived as a holistic representation of related and interactive components, which include both dynamic and relatively resilient characteristics. In a holistic sense, then, the culture that the Spanish conquistadores and settlers brought to the New World over four-hundred years ago is non-existent today. Conceivably, the changes that occurred in the Hispanic culture through four and one-half centuries were largely attributed to a number of impinging forces. Yet remnants of the most cherished elements of the sixteenth century Hispanic culture are still evident in Spain, as well as in other parts of the world where Spanish-speaking people reside. For example, while variations in word usage and orthography that evolved over time in the Spanish language have been subject to review and acceptance by the Spanish Royal Academy, many of the basic features (lexicon, semantics, and structural features) of the language have been perpetuated by educational systems in different countries and by the Academy. In a similar sense, many of the basic fundamental features of the Catholic faith, as well as other core cultural (moral and ethical) values are furthered from generation to generation. These cultural elements, including earlier aesthetic features reflected in the literature, paintings, artifacts, and architecture, are among the traditional and cherished representations of the Hispanic culture (Ruesh, 1962).

Table 1 illustrates how nine cultural patterns of people in a given ethnic group are influenced by four impinging forces. The checkmarks adjacent to each of the nine cultural patterns indicate that all are influenced, in one way or another, by the four impinging forces. The four forces — geographical environment, cross-cultural interactions, belief system, and political ideology — are invariably found in societies across the world and, therefore, serve as primary references

in this essay. Moreover, in this paper the relationships between the four impinging forces and nine cultural patterns are explained according to the underlying theme, "The Acculturation of the Hispanic: A Multidimensional Perspective."

*Table 1: The Effects of Four Impinging Forces on Nine Cultural Elements*

Cultural or Behavioral Patterns	Geographical Environment (resources, etc.)	Cross-Cultural Interactions	Predominant Belief System	Political Ideology
Language and Dialect	x	x	x	x
Nonverbal Communication (gestures, expressions and greetings)	x	x	x	x
Family Structure (nuclear or extended)	x	x	x	x
Parental Roles	x	x	x	x
Childrearing (permissive, authoritative or authoritarian)	x	x	x	x
Livelihood	x	x	x	x
Educational Orientation (formal & informal)	x	x	x	x
Protocols	x	x	x	x
Festivities (weddings, baptisms, national holidays, etc.)	x	x	x	x

The impinging forces illustrated in Figure 1 are viewed in dynamic terms, for it is conceivable that any type of interaction among them will, in effect, influence the nature and intensity of any one of the others. As an example, the natural resources of a geographical region stimulate communications and contacts between cultural groups and nations. In turn, these interactions tend to facilitate cultural exchanges among people for the respective cultural groups. Furthermore, the economic potential of a geographical area represents a magnetic force in attracting people from other cultures or nations. The migration of the early Hispanic families from central New Spain to the northern territories in the closing years of the sixteenth century and through the seventeenth century was primarily attributed to the people's quest for land and the possibility of making a living through farming and ranching. The settlements in New Mexico headed by Juan Onate in 1598 and Diego de Vargas in 1692, followed by other settlements in Texas and California, are examples of these types of aspirations found among early Hispanic families (Perrigo, 1960).

The interactive features of the four impinging forces illustrated in Figure 1 appeared in the relentless efforts by Hispanic missionaries to indoctrinate the native tribes (American Indians) in the northern territories. The interactive elements were also apparent when the provincial governmental system, based on the Hispanic political ideology of that era, extended its military arm to encourage and protect the Roman Catholic missions, Hispanic settlements, and institutions (Beck, 1974). Moreover, the interactive features were evident in the cross-cultural communications that occurred between Hispanic provincial authorities and native cultural groups, which were essentially concerned with extending the government's political and economic jurisdiction in the same geographical area.

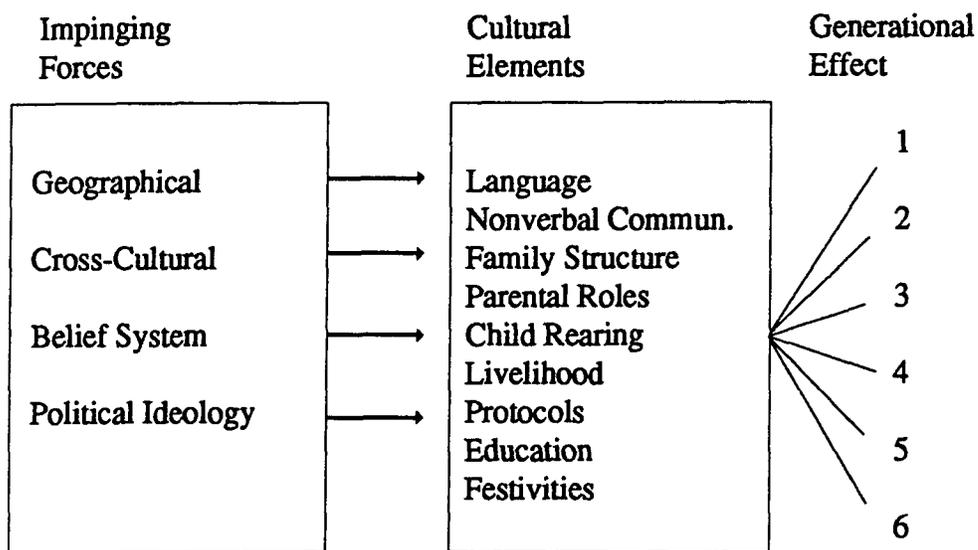
The early immigration of the Anglo Americans into the northern territories of New Spain (or Mexico between 1821-1848) occurred within the second and fifth decades of the nineteenth century. In reviewing this historical phenomenon in reference to the four impinging forces, one finds that the Anglo American migration gained impetus through the interaction of the Anglo American political ideology and belief system of that era which carried the banner of "Manifest Destiny." These interactive elements, including the Anglo American judicial and military components, facilitated the development of the new settlements and related institutional practices.

The foregoing analysis simply illustrates how the interactive characteristics of the four impinging forces affect the migration, lifestyle, and cultural patterns of people within a culture. Since this type of phenomenon also occurs in cross-

cultural dimensions, the interactive forces that emanate from two or more distinctive cultural groups either facilitate or impede cross-cultural exchanges.

The effects of the four impinging forces on nine cultural elements of a respective ethnolinguistic group are illustrated in Table 1. A similar relationship between the four impinging forces and cultural patterns is depicted in Figure 1, but this illustration also implies the possibility of progressive effects (or changes) through successive generations of descendants. These progressive effects are specifically described in the following paragraphs and in two subsequent subtopics: "Behavioral Patterns Related to Acculturation" and "Progression Toward Acculturation or Biculturalism: A Mexican American Historical Perspective."

*Figure 1. Influence of Four Impinging Forces on Nine Representative Cultural Elements*



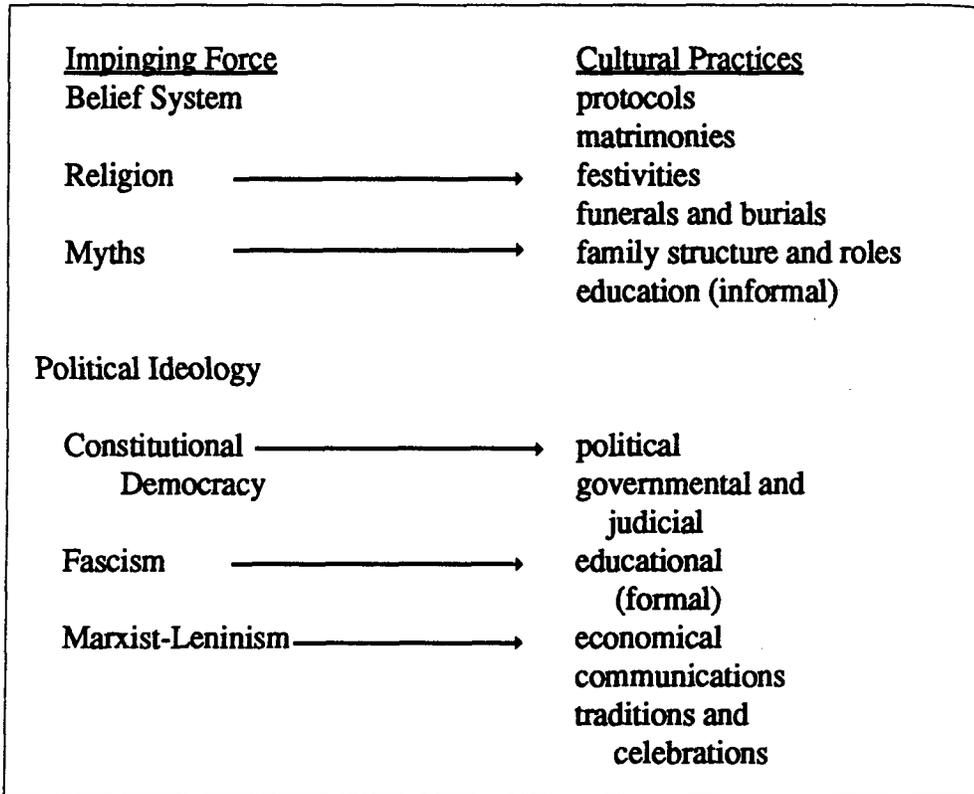
It follows that climate and natural resources, which represent components of the geographical environment, have a direct relationship to the lexicon and semantics found in the language of a group of people. The communication system of a cultural group is also influenced through cross-cultural intractions with people from other cultures and through its involvement in the belief system and political-governmental institutions of a second culture (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984).

Moreover, the climate and topography in a geographical area determine the type of food products and recipes of the inhabitants. Yet other types of food and menus are adopted by a cultural group through cross-cultural communications with people from other cultures. Nevertheless, certain types of food and ways of preparing them generally emerge as distinctive traditional dishes within a cultural group. In the same regard, other natural resources which are abundant in a given geographical area tend to affect the lifestyle and educational and vocational pursuits of many of the inhabitants.

Cross-cultural interactions and the belief system directly influence the family structure, parental roles, and child-rearing practices of a group of people. Family size and the degree of authority that different members of the immediate and extended family have in decision making, guiding, and disciplining children are specifically related to the inherent values of the belief system. Protocols, festivities, and holidays also have a relationship to the belief system and political allegiance followed by members of the culture. Additionally, through cross-cultural interactions with people from other cultures, modified or new folk tales, proverbs, myths, symbols, religious images, gestures, and other salient expressions evolve within a cultural group.

Conceivably, political ideology may be interpreted as part of the belief system. However, for the purpose of this paper, political ideology and the belief system are viewed as interactive forces with distinctive differences. While the belief system constitutes behavioral patterns related to myths, religion, and related activities, political ideology includes facets that are most specifically concerned with political parties and governmental functions. For example, political ideologies expounded by eighteenth century and nineteenth century scholars, e.g., Charles Montesquieu and Jean Rousseau, directly influenced the essence of the political-governmental institutions in Mexico and South America (Torres-Riosceco, 1965). Furthermore, the political-governmental processes in twentieth century Hispanic America were significantly affected by the emergence of at least three political ideologies: Constitutional Democracy, Fascism, and Marxist-Leninism (see Figure 2). Today one will find particular types of interactive and expressionistic modes among people in the Hispanic countries that are principally attributed to the influence of the aforementioned ideologies. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to include examples from Hispanic countries across the globe, several examples of how governmental agencies and political ideologies influence the interactive and expressionistic modes of Hispanic people in the United States are presented in the two subsequent sections of this essay.

*Figure 2. The Influence of the Belief System and Political Ideology on Particular Cultural Practices*



**Behavioral Patterns Related to Acculturation**

The foregoing examples illustrate how impinging forces in a society affect the cultural (behavioral) patterns of people in a given geographical area. While the cultural transformations described in the preceding section of the essay constitute dynamic phenomena or changes within a particular culture, the same types of impinging forces can influence changes in the cultural patterns of people from minority groups living in a society dominated by people representing a different culture.

The acculturation process, which some social scientists interpret as a transformation of cultural values and behavioral patterns that persons from a minority culture undergo in favor of the values and cultural practices found in

the mainstream culture (Van Scotter et al., 1991; Taba, 1962), generally occurs through their formal and informal involvement and interactions with persons from the dominant culture. Due to the impact of impinging forces that emanate from people and institutions in the mainstream society, the communication system and other native cultural references of American youngsters from different ethnolinguistic groups are continuously and significantly affected.

Some anthropologists (Shweder & Bourne, 1988; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984) refer to the acculturation process as a journey from one cultural system to another, which includes the internalization of values, language, and other cultural practices of the second culture. However, since the transitional process takes place in both a conscious and an unconscious manner, the progression from one cultural system to another is essentially a nonlinear and, in many instances, a traumatic phenomenon (Delgado-Gaitan, 1987; Macias, 1987).

Camilleri (1985) suggests that behavioral patterns that children acquire through interactions in their home environment represent a spontaneous and an unconscious human characteristic. In this perspective, the acquisition of mainstream cultural values and practices by the children through this medium is viewed as an unconscious phenomenon, especially if the transmission of new cultural characteristics by the parents occurs naturally and unpretentiously. However, parents from minority groups, who desire to emulate and enhance selected practices from the mainstream culture, will usually transmit them either consciously or unconsciously to their children (Hall & Lindzey, 1957). Similarly, the gradual changes in value orientations and behavioral patterns that emerge among minority persons through their formal and informal interactions with people in the mainstream culture essentially reflect both conscious and unconscious mental dispositions (Spiro, 1984). Furthermore, the new cultural orientations acquired by the minority person are often reinforced through interactions with minority persons who subtly and spontaneously exhibit similar behavioral patterns.

The values associated with the family structure, parental roles, and child-rearing practices of the Hispanic family are gradually transformed as the family makes adaptations from a rural to an urban lifestyle; consequently, the importance of maintaining communications and relationships with more distant members of the extended family gradually diminishes (Burma, 1984). Moreover, as both parents gain different types of employment in urban areas, further adaptations are made in parental roles and child-rearing practices (Ruesh, 1962).

The American educational system and governmental agencies are especially influential in furthering the minority person's value orientations and behavioral patterns in terms of those emphasized by people in the mainstream culture,

which include the second language, socialization modes, protocols, traditional festivities, national holidays, and cognitive styles (Holmes, 1982; Delgado-Gaitan, 1987). Furthermore, the ideas expressed by political leaders through the media also affect the ideological orientations of minority persons.

A minority person's tolerance toward mainstream cultural values and practices does not actually represent a new cultural trait, yet a favorable attitude toward the characteristics of the second culture certainly serves as an impetus in furthering the acculturation of the person (Ruesh, 1962). Moreover, certain types of transitional patterns invariably emerge at different stages of the acculturation process. Five characteristics that I have conceptualized and consider pertinent to this subject are described below:

1. Adoption of the second language as the principal medium of communication (formal and informal), while the native language is used occasionally and only when absolutely necessary, e.g., with grandparents.

2. Adoption of the second language as the principal medium of communication (formal and informal), while maintaining only an oral understanding of the native language. In this case, the person either prefers to use only the second language, or the person has minimal or no ability in using the native language of his forebearers.

3. Adoption of selected cultural patterns in the mainstream culture, while maintaining those of the native culture (i.e., the person exhibits a bicultural behavioral mode). The new cultural references may include festivities, greetings, gestures, jokes, myths, proverbs, food recipes, apparel, protocols, ideological orientations, aesthetic and recreational preferences (e.g., music, dance, fine arts, and sports).

4. Adoption of cultural patterns in the mainstream culture, with selected (minimal) references to the native culture, e.g., occasional native dishes, festivities, music, and religion. At this stage, the religious denomination of native culture is generally maintained; however, the person usually attends services conducted in the second language.

5. Complete adoption of cultural patterns in the mainstream culture. This may include, in some instances, changes in the religious denomination—including the types of ceremonies or services associated with baptisms, matrimones, funerals, and burials.

The English pronunciation of a minority person's first name generally evolves through interactions with English-speaking people in informal and formal situations. Anglo American first names appear among minority children at any stage of the acculturation process; however, minority children are more likely to be baptized with Anglo American first names in the more advanced

stages of acculturation (Demetrulias, 1984; Valencia, 1981).

The English pronunciation of Hispanic students' surnames also appears in the interaction with English-speaking Americans in formal and informal situations—especially in the school environment where English-monolingual peers and teachers have difficulty enunciating the Spanish phonetic elements (Demetrulias, 1984; Valencia, 1981). Furthermore, the minority person's acceptance and adoption of the English pronunciation of his surname occurs in any one of the acculturation stages.

Surname changes also occur through intermarriage. This occurrence does not necessarily imply that a minority person has completely abandoned his native cultural references, for there are numerous cases in which the person has elected to maintain a bicultural lifestyle.

In another example, one will find persons with non-Hispanic surnames who are, in a practical sense, members of the Hispanic culture. Intermarriage between Hispanics and persons from other cultures, e.g., Anglo Americans, French, Germans, Italians, and American Indians, occurred in the New World throughout the centuries. In the earlier centuries of the Hispanic Southwest, acculturation frequently occurred in reference to the Hispanic culture. Consequently, today one finds descendants of these families (with non-Hispanic surnames) who continue to maintain value orientations and behavioral characteristics related to the Hispanic culture.

Estimates on the percentage of intermarriages between Mexican Americans and Anglo Americans are difficult to ascertain due to the continuous influx of immigrants. Twenty-two years ago Nava (1969) gave a numerical estimate of 25 percent, and it is conceivable that the percentage has increased during the past two decades. While the effects of intermarriages on the acculturation of the offspring is a subject of another study, scholars on this topic suggest that these occurrences significantly enhance the internalization of mainstream cultural values among the descendants (Nava, 1969; Griwold Del Casillo, 1984; Blea, 1988).

### **Contemporary Dimensions in the Acculturation Process**

Cross-cultural communications that occur through the media, peer group relationships, and educational activities represent the most influential forces in the acculturation of minority youngsters in the United States (Burma, 1954; Kimball, 1987). Through today's media young people have frequent opportunities to observe celebrities from the mainstream society. They also find many

occasions to observe sports, celebrations, and other events that are specifically related to the mainstream culture.

By their very nature, young people have a strong desire to identify with the peer group culture (Cannan, 1987). In their quest to belong and to be accepted, they will strive to emulate the speech style, body language, greetings, values, and other behavioral patterns exhibited by their peers. To the extent that these behavioral patterns are representations of the mainstream peer group, one can certainly deduce that minority youth who readily adopt them are, in fact, undergoing acculturation into the mainstream culture.

In comparative terms, the media and peer group represent the most attractive and informal dimensions in the acculturation process, but they fail to fully prepare minority youngsters to function at higher career levels in the mainstream society. Therefore, education represents the most important dimension in furthering the upward mobility of minority students (Burma, 1954; Kimball, 1987). While education does not necessarily guarantee that minority youngsters will become completely acculturated into the mainstream culture, it enables them to acquire a larger repertoire of concepts and a greater array of skills that will, in turn, prepare them to function with increased effectiveness in different contextual situations and circumstances in the mainstream society.

Yet the rapidity by which a minority group is acculturated in terms of mainstream cultural values and practices is partly dependent on the resistive factors within the native culture. Minority group resistance toward full acculturation is manifested in at least three significant ways. One type of resistance occurs when the values related to a cultural factor in the mainstream culture are relatively incongruent with the inherent values of a cultural factor in the native culture (Ogbu, 1987; Ruesh, 1962). Therefore, the degree of resistance is dependent on the strength of the values that the two cultural factors carry and on the extent that the minority person is subjected to pressures (rewards or punishment) from the dynamic forces found in both cultures. Another type of resistance appears when people from a minority group become conscious that particular values of the native culture are being lost through the acculturation process, and they make a concerted effort to recover and reemphasize certain native cultural characteristics (Murguia, 1975). This phenomenon was especially apparent in the fourth generation of Mexican Americans. The revival and promotion of bilingual instruction in the public schools is partly attributed to this orientation. A third type of resistance emerges when people from a minority group discover that adopting and practicing the behavioral patterns of the second culture does not necessarily ensure them access to higher level positions valued by members of the mainstream culture. When the progression toward

acculturation falters because of the imperfections of the socialization process in the American society (Slavin, 1986), there is a greater probability that minority people affected by this phenomenon will continue to practice selected elements of the native culture through some other type of cultural adaptation, e.g., a bicultural lifestyle. A bicultural lifestyle refers to the ability of a minority person to function, in varying degrees of effectiveness, in terms of selected cultural references found in at least two distinct cultures. It may or may not represent a phase in the minority person's journey from one cultural system to another.

A bicultural lifestyle is not likely to become extinct in this country in the coming years. In addition to being partly associated with the concept of cultural identity, this type of lifestyle is furthered by the inflow of new immigrants—especially from Mexico and other Latin American countries. Viewing it from this perspective, full acculturation of minority people need not be a prerequisite for their advancement to higher positions in this country, for it is conceivable that bilingual-bicultural types who, otherwise, have developed the same professional or vocational expertise as their mainstream counterparts, can offer a unique human dimension for American institutions involved in serving people from diverse ethnolinguistic backgrounds. In the final analysis, however, the upward mobility of bicultural persons can only be facilitated and realized through the general recognition, acceptance, and accommodation of this type of lifestyle by people and institutions in the mainstream culture.

### **Progression Toward Acculturation or Biculturalism: A Mexican American Historical Perspective**

A description of the progression toward acculturation of the entire Hispanic population of this country is beyond the scope of this paper. Such a study would entail the effects that different social forces have had on the behavioral patterns of people from at least four groups in the Hispanic population over given time periods, e.g., Cubans, Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and other Latin Americans. To examine the rapidity of the acculturation process and the degree of acculturation among these groups over time, one would have to take into account certain historical dynamics that are unique to each respective group: the length of time that families from each group have lived in the American society; the general attitude that people in each group have toward the language and culture of the mainstream society; the general attitude that people in the mainstream society have toward people in each respective group; and the impact that media, education, and other social forces (past and present) have had on the

behavioral patterns of people in each particular group.

However, through a review of the changes in cultural (behavioral) patterns that have emerged among the people in one minority group over several generations, one is able to discern particular patterns that can be logically interpreted as characteristics associated with a progression toward acculturation or toward a bicultural lifestyle. Conceivably, some of these patterns can be generalized, in varying degrees, to other minority groups—especially in reference to other groups in the Hispanic population. In this respect, this section of the essay presents a historical perspective of changes in cultural (behavioral) patterns that emerged in reference to six generations of one particular minority group in the American society—the Mexican American between 1848 and 1990.

One can also study the relative impact the four impinging forces (Geographical, cross-cultural communications, belief system, and political ideology) have had on the language, family structure, parental roles, child-rearing practices, livelihood, protocols, education, festivities, and other cultural mores of the Mexican American. In a historical perspective these forces have either impeded or enhanced the acculturation of Mexican Americans. Analyzing the impinging forces from a native cultural perspective is important in considering the acculturation process of the Mexican American, because people from the second culture migrated into a geographical area in which Hispanic-Mexican institutions and other cultural elements were already well established and maintained. Under these circumstances, the interaction of impinging forces (geographical, cross-cultural communications, belief systems, and political ideologies) emanating from two distinct cultural orientations tend to generate a push-and-pull phenomenon.

Over the past one-hundred and forty-two years (1848-1990), at least six generations of Mexican Americans have resided as American citizens in the United States. Using an estimate of 20-25 years for each generation since 1848, one can ascertain the relative degree that Mexican Americans, on the average, have acquired Anglo American cultural practices over the years. The descriptions presented in this paper are in general terms, for it is certain that some individual cases do not reflect the characteristics described in the respective generations.

In a historical perspective, the acculturation process among first and second generation Mexican Americans was relatively nil. However, a small degree of acculturation occurred among third generation Mexican Americans, with further increases appearing among the fourth, fifth, and sixth generations.

The first communications and negotiations between the nineteenth century Hispanic people and English-speaking Americans in the New World appeared

about one-hundred and seventy years ago (Beck, 1974). These early commercial interactions did not spur a spontaneous acculturation process among the Hispanic people, for the Anglo American explorers and traders of this early period were regarded as foreigners. There is also no historical evidence that the Hispanic people experienced a rapid acculturation process after 1848, when the United States established an Anglo American governmental structure and judicial system in the occupied territories (Valencia, 1977; Weber, 1978).

The first generation of Mexican Americans in the United States, who were born between 1835-1860, included persons of Hispanic-Mexican descent who were residing in Mexico's northern territories when the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was negotiated in 1848. These territories included the present states of Arizona, California, New Mexico, and parts of Colorado, Nevada, and Utah. Also included were persons of Hispanic-Mexican descent who were residing in the Texas Republic prior to the annexation of that territory by the United States. For all practical purposes, this generation continued to follow the Spanish language and other related cultural mores. Literacy in the native language was found among a few members of the community who occupied different types of leadership positions in the community. Written documents from this early period reveal that persons who had held church positions and governmental positions under the Mexican government were well versed in the standard Spanish of that period (Beck, 1974). A few other persons gained literacy through limited attendance at Spanish-language parochial schools and catechism classes provided by the Catholic Church. Otherwise, the Spanish language spoken by the common people in this generation was principally based on the sixteenth and seventeenth century version. Remnants of this version are still apparent in the Spanish spoken by descendants of that era (Espinoza, 1909; Dominguez, 1974; Valencia & Coca, 1981).

Among the first institutions introduced by Anglo Americans in these territories were the territorial governorship, the Anglo American judicial system, the English-monolingual school, and one or more Protestant churches. In the majority of the cases, two different communities evolved in each town—one Hispanic and the other Anglo American. Consequently, there was little or no progression toward acculturation among this generation of Mexican Americans (Weber, 1978).

The second generation of Mexican Americans in the United States (1861-1866) was essentially Spanish monolingual speaking, for few if any attended the Anglo American public schools. Literacy in Spanish was perpetuated among a few members of the community who attended parochial schools or catechism classes usually conducted in Spanish by nuns or lay persons appointed by the

Catholic Church (Weber, 1978). To a large extent, the livelihood of the people was through farming and ranching, with a few finding employment as unskilled workers in Anglo American farms, ranches, and other business enterprises. Consequently, there was little or no progression toward acculturation in this generation of Mexican Americans.

The third generation of Mexican Americans (1887-1912) was predominantly one of Spanish speakers. However, a greater number of persons in this generation were employed as unskilled workers in Anglo American ranches, farms, and business enterprises. Many of them also began to attend Anglo American public schools, but few continued their schooling beyond the third or fifth grade. The few who completed eight years of schooling often served as translators for monolingual Spanish speakers in the community. They also served as tutors for some of the children in the community; moreover, they were frequently asked by the local parish priest to teach catechism classes to Spanish-speaking children in the parish. Since these classes were usually conducted in Spanish, many of the children gained some degree of literacy in their native language.

Many Mexican Americans from this generation served in World War I, and this interaction with Anglo American soldiers furthered their English speaking ability. The advent of the radio and motion pictures provided other media for advancing their English-speaking capability. To the extent that a few persons in this generation gained proficiency in English, this generation of Mexican Americans represents the first Spanish-English bilinguals in the country. However, since only a few of them had any advanced schooling in English or in the modern Spanish version, the majority of persons in this generation maintained a communication system principally based on their vernacular version, with the addition of some English words and anglicismos (Espinoza, 1909). The anglicismos, which emerged as words with Spanish-English blendings, pertain to things, phenomena, or concepts which were relatively new to this generation of Mexican Americans (radio, car, baseball, movie, bus, etc.).

The Spanish vernacular of the third generation, including English-based words and anglicismos, was acquired by the fourth generation (1913-1938) of Mexican Americans (Dominguez, 1974; Valencia & Coca, 1981). Moreover, this generation continued to extend its communication system with additional English terms and anglicismos derived from twentieth century inventions and concepts (radar, rocket, computers, labor strikes, etc.). For the majority of youngsters in this generation, completion of the eighth grade was expected, with a few electing to continue their education through high school.

However, World War II and the Korean War most significantly affected the cultural patterns of Mexican Americans in this generation. In the military, many

Mexican Americans discovered that, given an equal opportunity, they could advance just like mainstream Anglo American military personnel. Additionally, the GI Bill of Rights offered opportunities for a college education which, heretofore, had been only a remote possibility for many Mexican Americans. These two phenomena did more to accelerate the acculturation of Mexican Americans than any other event in the history of the country. These experiences enhanced Mexican Americans' career possibilities and spurred their mobility toward higher socioeconomic levels in the mainstream society (Burma, 1954).

For most fourth generation Mexican Americans, their initial language was the Spanish vernacular spoken by their parents. Moreover, their cultural values include the humanistic features of the Hispanic-Mexican culture, which represent some of the most resilient features of the culture. Because of the historical circumstances of that era, the fourth generation emerged as a bicultural type—a characteristic rarely found in previous generations, and which is also relatively limited or absent among fifth and sixth generation Mexican Americans. Although their initial language was the Spanish vernacular of the geographical area, English emerged as the dominant language among this generation of bilingual speakers. Moreover, third generation Mexican Americans use the Spanish vernacular in talking with their offspring, and the fourth generation Mexican Americans use English in communicating with their children.

Fourth generation Mexican Americans use a code-switching bilingual mode when interacting with peers from their own native culture, but they usually use the vernacular language when talking with their parents or with other monolingual Spanish speakers. Because of this bilingual phenomenon, the English spoken by many fourth generation Mexican Americans reflects a phonetic residue of their native language. This linguistic characteristic, which appears in the accentuation of some English terms and in the rhythmic flow of the English speech, is viewed by Anglo American monolingual speakers as a Spanish accent—depending on the degree of residue. Yet, the absence of this linguistic characteristic in the English of some Mexican Americans does not necessarily indicate that they surpass the former in English vocabulary, grammar, composition, or in generating and expressing ideas in English. More specifically, the foregoing abilities in the English language have a greater relationship to individuals' educational level, frequency in using the English language in formal and informal situations, and, in some instances, to their natural ability in languages.

The fifth generation Mexican Americans (1939-1964) represent a segment of the war and post-war babies in the American society. The degree of reference given to Hispanic cultural values by this generation is dependent on the emphasis transmitted by the parents. Many Mexican Americans in this generation

still maintain the concept of the extended family (e.g., grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins—including godparents). They also attend activities conducted in the Spanish vernacular, such as cultural and family celebrations (fiestas), vigils (velorios), and special church services during funerals and burials. Otherwise, this generation of Mexican Americans gives increased reference to mainstream cultural practices. English is their principal language, with some anglicismos and Spanish expressions used when talking with parents and grandparents.

Many fifth generation Mexican Americans also served in the military during the Vietnam War. This experience extended their interactions with Anglo Americans of the same age group; moreover, some veterans of this war pursued higher educational and career goals, which also enhanced their upward mobility in the mainstream society.

The sixth generation of Mexican Americans (1965-1990) exhibit behavioral patterns principally associated with the Anglo American mainstream. Although they give reference to some selected Hispanic cultural values and practices, e.g., baptisms, family and cultural celebrations, their communication system is essentially English with some anglicismos and Spanish terms found in their communication system when talking with parents or grandparents. In a historical perspective, this generation has progressed further in the acculturation process than any other generation of Mexican Americans. Thus, the lifestyle for this generation of Mexican Americans will certainly vary from that of their ancestors. But the opportunity for them to reach higher career goals and socioeconomic levels is dependent on the success that parents, teachers, and social agencies have in encouraging them to continue their education, as well as to the extent that higher positions become accessible to them in agencies, businesses, and institutions managed or endorsed by people in the mainstream culture.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

In this paper, culture is described as a dynamic and evolutionary entity. It is seen as a representation of behavioral patterns of a group of people in a geographical area which tend to be relatively unique to the group. Furthermore, it is viewed as a representation of meanings and values given to products, symbols, and processes that members of the group have created and modified over time.

For the purpose of this essay, acculturation is referred to as the transformation of cultural values and behavioral patterns that persons from minority cultures

undergo in favor of the values and cultural practices found in the mainstream culture. The changes in behavioral patterns that emerge among minority persons through this formal and informal interaction with persons in the mainstream culture represent both conscious and unconscious dispositions associated with the acculturation process.

Four dynamic and impinging forces are illustrated in the paper which directly influence nine cultural characteristics found among people in a cultural group. Over time the four impinging forces, i.e., geographical environment, cross-cultural interactions, belief system, and political ideology, affect the cultural (behavioral) patterns of people in a cultural group. The changes that occur within a culture constitute the natural dynamics of culture. However, the same type of impinging forces which exist in cross-cultural dimensions, either impede or enhance the acculturation process of minority people relative to the values and practices advocated by the dominant cultural group in the same geographical area.

Cross-cultural interactions occurring through the media, peer group relationships, and educational activities represent the most influential forces in the acculturation of minority youngsters in the United States. However, resistance toward acculturation is manifested in at least three significant ways. One is dependent on the degree of pressures (rewards or punishment) felt by minority persons, which emanate from impinging forces in both cultures. Another pertains to the loss of identity experienced by minority persons as they become increasingly acculturated, which motivates them to reemphasize traditional values and practices of the native culture. Still another form of resistance occurs when minority persons discover that adopting and practicing the behavioral patterns of the second culture does not necessarily ensure them access to higher positions valued by members of the mainstream culture.

The impinging forces viewed from a native-cultural perspective are important in studying the acculturation process of the Mexican American, because people from the second culture migrated into a geographical area in which Hispanic-Mexican institutions and other cultural practices were already established. In this regard, the interaction of impinging forces emanating from the two distinct cultural orientations tend to generate a push-and-pull phenomenon. Consequently, today the Mexican American people represent one of the minority groups in the United States which is not yet fully acculturated into the mainstream culture.

The push-and-pull phenomenon affects the cultural orientation of minority people in at least three different ways. Some minority persons choose to adhere to the values and practices in the native culture, others continue to strive toward an acculturation lifestyle in reference to the values and practices of the

mainstream culture, while others prefer to follow selected values and cultural practices found in both cultures.

The historical description of the cultural characteristics of the Mexican American over six generations reveals a gradual progression from one cultural system into another. It also indicates how impinging forces have impeded or enhanced this transitional process. Therefore, in today's society the Mexican American people can be most appropriately described as a minority population whose cultural orientations are, in varying degrees, representations of both the native culture and the mainstream culture. In the final analysis, Mexican Americans today continue to maintain a bicultural lifestyle.

Due to the aforementioned impinging forces and the continuous inflow of immigrants, a bicultural lifestyle is not likely to become extinct in this country in the near future. Yet from a positive perspective, it is highly conceivable that bilingual-bicultural persons, who otherwise have developed the same expertise as their mainstream counterparts, can serve as a unique and viable human resource for cross-cultural communications in this country and abroad.

## References

- Andrade, R. G. (1984). Cultural meaning systems. In R. A. Shweder & R. A. Levine (Eds.), *Culture theory*, 88-119, Cambridge University Press.
- Arvizu, S. F., Snyder, W. A., & Espinosa, P. T. (1980). Demystifying the concept of culture: Theoretical and conceptual tools. *Bilingual education paper series*. National Dissemination Assessment Center, California State University, Los Angeles, CA, June 1980, 3, 11.
- Beck, W. (1970). *New Mexico: A history of four centuries*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Blea, I. I. (1988). *Toward a chicano social science*. New York: Praeger.
- Burma, H. D. (1959). *Spanish-speaking groups in the United States*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Brameld, T. (1965). *The use of explosive ideas in education: Culture, class, and evolution*. Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press.
- Camilleri, C. (1985). *Cultural anthropology and education* (Kogan Page in Association with UNESCO).
- Cannan, J. (1987). A comparative analysis of American suburban middle class, middle school, and high school teenage cliques. In George & Louise Spindler (Eds.), *Interpretive ethnography of education at home and abroad*. (pp. 385-406). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
- Delgado-Gaitan, C. (1987). Traditions and transitions in the learning process of Mexican children: An ethnographic view. In George & Louise Spindler (Eds.), *Interpretive ethnography of education at home and abroad*. (pp. 336-380). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
- Demetrulias, D. M. (1989). Stereotyping of ethnic surnames. *The Journal of the Association of Mexican American Educators*, 1988-89 issue, 6-12.
- Dominguez, D. (1974). A theoretical model for classifying dialectal variations

of oral New Mexican Spanish. Paper presented at the VII World Congress of Sociology Sessions in Chicano Socio-Linguistics, Toronto, Canada.

Erikson, F. (1986). Qualitative methods in research teaching. In M. C. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of Research in Teaching* 3rd ed. (pp. 119-161). New York: MacMillan Publishing Co.

Espinoza, A. M. (1909). Studies of New Mexico Spanish. *University of New Mexico Bulletin, Language Series*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Bulletin, Language Series. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1 (2).

Griwold Del Casillo, R. (1989). *La familia*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.

Hall, S. H., & Gardner, L. (1954). *Theories of personality*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Hunt, M. P. (1975). *Foundations of education: Social and cultural perspectives*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Holmes, J. E. (1982). Success and failure: The limits of New Mexico's Hispanic Politics. In R. Rosaldo et al. *Chicano: The evolution of a people*. (pp. 238-248). Malabar: Robert K. Krieger Publishing Co.

Kimball, S. T. (1987). The method of natural history and educational methods. In George & Louise Spindler (Eds.), *Interpretive ethnography of education at home and abroad*. (pp. 11-14). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Macias, J. (1987). The hidden curriculum of Papago teachers: American Indian strategies for mitigating cultural discontinuity in early schooling. In George & Louise Spindler (Eds.), *Interpretive ethnography of education at home and abroad*. (pp. 363-380). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Murguia, E. (1975). Assimilation, colonialism and the Mexican American people. Austin: The University of Texas at Austin.

Nava, J. (1969). *Mexican Americans: Past, present, and future*. New York:

American Book Company.

- Ochs, E., & Schieffelin, B. B. (1984). Language acquisition and socialization: Three developmental stories and their implications. In R. A. Shweder & R. A. Levine (Eds.), *Culture theory*. (pp. 276-320). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ogbu, J. U. (1987). Variability in minority responses to schooling: Nonimmigrants vs. immigrants. In George & Louise Spindler (Eds.), *Interpretive ethnography of education at home and abroad*. (pp. 255-278). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
- Ornstein, A. C., & Levin, D. U. (1984). *An introduction to the foundations of education* (3rd ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.
- Perrigo, L. (1960). *Our Spanish southwest*. Dallas: Banks, Upshaw and Company.
- Ruesh, J. (1962). Social technique, social status, and social change in illness. In C. Kluckhohn & H. A. Murray, (Eds.), *Personality in nature, society and culture*. (pp. 123-136). New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Slavin, R. E. (1986). *Educational Psychology: Theory and practice*. Englewood: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Shweder, R. A., & Bourne, E. J. (1984). Does the concept of the person vary cross-culturally? In Richard A. Shweder & Robert A. Levine (Eds.), *Culture theory*. (pp. 158-199). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Spindler, G. D. (1987). *Education and cultural process*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.
- Taba, H. (1962). *Curriculum development: Theory and practices*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.
- Torres-Riosceco, A. (1965). *Historia de la literatura Iberoamericana*. New York: Las Americas Publishing Co.
- Valencia, A. A. (1978). *Bilingual-bicultural education for the Spanish-English bilingual*. Berkeley: Bilingual Media Productions, Inc.

Valencia, A. A., & Coca, B. (1981). *Linguistic variations of the lexicon of Spanish-speaking New Mexicans*. Las Vegas: Montezuma Publishers.

Van Scotter, R., HD., Kraft, R. K., & Schott, J. D. (1991). *Social foundations of education* (3rd ed.). Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Inc.

Weber, D. J. (Ed.) (1978). *Foreigners in the native land: Historical roots of the Mexican American*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Weinreich, U. (1974). *Language in contact: Findings and problems*. Paris: Morton & Co.