

Ideas and discussion themes: Chavez Intro, Chapter 1; Steckley Chapter 1

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- Chavez: Shadowed Lives
 - Introduction, p2: Immigrant experiences range from migrant farmworkers to an established cement and brick mason
 - What about José Antonio Vargas for an even greater span of experiences?
 - undocumented Filipino journalist, came here at age 12, only learned that he was undocumented years later
 - won a Pulitzer prize for the *Washington Post*
 - recently outed himself as undocumented in a *New York Times Magazine* article
 - to draw attention to the DREAM act, which would allow people like him who came here as children and met certain criteria like finishing high school here to gain legal immigration status
 - p3: Look at the situation not as two separate societies in contact...
 - but as a single system: one labor market and consumer market with a border running through it
 - what exactly would the two societies really be, anyway?
 - US and Mexico?
 - English-speaking and Spanish-speaking?
 - Those with good, stable jobs and with hard, low-paying, unstable jobs?
 - Educated and less educated?
 - Rich and poor?
 - how does culture relate to this complicated boundary?
 - Anthropologists used to tend to think about cultures as separate, somewhat isolated units,
 - mostly understandable in terms of what happens within each culture
 - that is, in terms of those people's own culture
 - and generally seeing interactions with other cultures as exceptions,
 - or complicated, unusual cases that don't help us understand much and are not of central importance
 - but more recently, anthropologists have been recognizing that cultures have always interacted
 - that many aspects of any given culture are crucially affected by contact with other cultures
 - cultural features may be important in
 - distinguishing one's identity as being from one group or a different one
 - a group only exists in that it marks a boundary between itself and some other group...
 - adopting desirable features of another culture
 - defining and prevailing in trade or political power relations
 - resisting domination or oppression by another group, and so on
 - understanding the interconnections between cultures is now seen as crucial, and interesting

- p4: Rites of passage: Chavez makes an analogy between the anthropological concept of a rite of passage and the experience of an immigrant moving from (say) Mexico to the US
 - This metaphor structures much of the book (see p. 12)
 - So, what exactly is a rite of passage?
 - A **rite of passage** is a ritual that marks and produces a change in an individual's identity
 - (“rite” is an old-fashioned word for “ritual”; it is not related to “right”)
 - Examples of rites of passage
 - baptism: transition from virtually pre-human infant in the natural, pre-cultural state to human infant accepted by God and Church
 - high school graduation, university graduation: transition from student to educated adult
 - military boot camp: transition from nonviolent but independent-minded civilian to violent but obedient soldier
 - marriage: transition from independent youth to married adult with responsibilities towards another person and two families
 - funeral: transition from living person to memory
 - coming of age: this is the classic, prototypical kind of rite of passage: transition from childhood to adulthood
 - quinceñera, debutante's ball, etc.
 - bar mitzvah or bat mitzvah
 - Jewish boys become responsible for following commandments at bar mitzvah at 13
 - Jewish girls at bat mitzvah, age 12
 - idealized pattern of a rite of passage
 - 1. **separation** from previous identity
 - as in boot camp, where recruits have their individual clothes, hairstyles, etc. taken away
 - and their self-identity demolished in carefully calculated abuse
 - or a bachelor's party in which a groom's male friends emphasize that he is leaving the status of an unattached young man: say goodbye to the carefree bachelor's life
 - 2. **transition**
 - **liminal state** or **liminality**: from a Latin word for a line that delimits the inside of a geometric figure from the outside
 - a liminal state is right on that line, neither outside nor inside, the state of being between states, not in any of the normal categories
 - often a difficult or uncomfortable state,
 - because the familiar cultural rules apply to people in known identities, not to those who don't fit into any identity
 - a person in a liminal state is not quite in society or this world
 - may be more able to experience the supernatural world, as in shamans
 - people in liminal states are often seen as dangerous, unclean, abnormal
 - 3. **incorporation** into the new identity
 - the reception after the wedding, when the bride and groom are treated as a married couple

- boot camp graduation ceremonies, involving marching in uniform with family and close friends present to acknowledge the recruit's new status as a soldier, sailor, marine, etc.
- different rites of passage emphasize different parts of this idealized sequence
- Rites of passage often (but not always) involve groups
 - the shared experience of liminality can create strong bonds and group solidarity
 - membership in the group that was initiated together or underwent liminal experiences together becomes part of one's identity
 - African age sets, college graduating classes, military units
- How does this parallel the experience of immigrants?
- Many immigrants remain clearly liminal for a long time, or even all the rest of their lives
 - why?
 - what does this mean to them, and to the host society?
- pp.17-18: "liminal space"
 - Spanish spoken, friends and relatives there, long history...
 - but constant threat of deportation
 - in what way(s) is this liminality?
- p5: "Imagined communities"
 - What does this mean?
 - Imagined by whom?
 - What effects do these "imagined communities" have on people in them, and outside of them?
- p6: Discussion of some classic anthropological methods
 - interviews
 - participating in service projects (participant observation)
 - structured interviews or surveys
 - "snowball sampling"
- p6: Note the difference in motivations for immigrating (and in some cases, the different legal treatment here in the US) of people from some Central American countries vs. others, and vs. those from Mexico
- p8: the *quid pro quo* that Chavez reached with the people he worked with
 - Latin: "what for what": direct exchange of one thing in return for something else
 - Chavez had to make a long-term commitment and agree to share his data with organizations working for them and in non-academic as well as academic circles
 - shows a basic respect for "the other"
 - without which he would have gotten nowhere
- pp8-12: Historical background of the case of immigrants in San Diego County
 - This is a partial model for your first presentations!
 - Lays out the basic historical story that set the stage for the current situation (well, the situation of the 1980's)
 - Modernizing policies of Mexican President Porfirio Diaz
 - especially privatizing communal farmland
 - creating a landless body of free labor, just as in your reading by Robbins

- that both needs to work (to operate the capital investments of factories, railroads, industrial farms, etc. in order to make profit for investors)
- and to buy food, clothes, housing, etc. that they no longer can produce for themselves (creating a market of consumers to buy the goods made in those factories, shipped by those railroads, etc.)
- Sequence of waves of labor immigration into the US
 - in each case, at first encouraged, then discouraged and mistreated
 - Chinese, until the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882
 - then Japanese, until the “Gentlemen’s Agreement” of 1907
 - then Mexicans
 - seen as more familiar, not as different as Asians
 - had long lived here, so seen as less of a shock or threat
 - seen by many Anglo Americans as “indolent, passive, noncompetitive, inferior... [and] satisfied with their lot in life... or fatalists”, thus not a threat or competitors, as the Chinese and Japanese had proved very able to be
 - seen as likely to return to Mexico after working, thus providing labor without long-term impact or cost
 - Southern and Eastern European immigration was restricted by laws in 1921 and 1924, making Mexicans even more desired as laborers
 - then with the Depression in the 1930’s, there was huge unemployment of US citizens
 - lots of anti-immigrant rhetoric
 - INS deported half a million Mexicans, along with their US-born citizen children
 - then with WWII, the military sucked up a lot of the US workforce, creating a need again for farm and factory labor
 - 1942: the Bracero program
 - supposedly just for the duration of the war, but it continued into 1964
 - the international social networks established largely by the Bracero program continue to shape the flow of labor to this day
- p18-19: cyclical attitudes towards immigrants
 - from Ben Franklin in 1751 on the Germans “herding together”, excluding “our” ways, “Germanizing” us rather than “Anglifying”
 - 1880 New York Times: Italians and Irish “herd together”; limits to our ability to assimilate them
 - generally worst during economic downturns
 - popularity and rhetoric of Sheriff Joe Arpaio of Maricopa County, Arizona
 - “hardening” the border
 - laws restricting hiring of undocumented immigrants, requiring ever more careful checks of work documents, etc.
- Chapter 1: The Setting: p15
 - terms: Chavez prefers “undocumented immigrant”
 - terms used by immigrants: pollos, indocumentados, ilegales, mojudos
 - terms used by Anglo Americans: illegal alien, wetback
 - why do these terms matter?
 - why does Chavez prefer “undocumented immigrant”

- some newspaper letters to the editor argue that “undocumented immigrant” condones voluntarily illegal behavior
- what do you think?
- how might the concepts of cultural relativism and ethical relativism be relevant to this?
- Chavez will cover both legal and undocumented immigrants
 - legal resident workers, some living in Mexico and crossing the border daily
 - political refugees
 - undocumented workers
- reactions by Anglo Americans to undocumented immigrants
 - p20: blamed for crime (also p21)
 - p20: compete with legal residents for seats in colleges
 - p20: daughter will be required to be bilingual (horrors!)
 - p21: cause malaria
 - p21: extort children’s lunch money
 - p21: language of war: “under siege”
 - p21: leads to assaults on immigrants
 - p22: “unkempt”, “unsanitary”, urinate in the streets, are a health risk with who knows what diseases...
 - p22: harass women, loiter, contribute to crime
- p22: **cultural hegemony** (Antonio Gramsci): the power of a set of ideas and values that are accepted throughout society so completely that they seem to be universal and common sense
 - typically, a set of ideas and values that are actually in the interest of the dominant class
 - example: if everyone believes in the validity and rightness of American capitalism, then even those who are harmed by it, consent to it
 - why do conservative lower-class people in “red” states vote for a party that consistently promotes tax and entitlement policies that favor the wealthy and harm these voters? Cultural hegemony
 - everyone identifies with the interests of the ruling class, rather than recognizing their own interests, which may differ
 - this maintains the status of the elite by general consent, rather than the elite having to use coercion
 - the ideas and values come to be accepted as universal and common sense (not entirely by accident, either)
 - but as Robbins argued in your earlier reading, the culture of capitalism is an arbitrary construct, not an absolute given of life
 - thus we see the cultural hegemony of the wealthy and powerful in the US...
- part of this “common sense” or hegemonic culture is assumptions about undocumented immigrants
 - the view that they are obviously transient, illegitimate, transgressive (“illegal”)
 - so obviously that there is no need to even think about whether or not there is any evidence to support the idea

- these beliefs then allow everyone (even the immigrants themselves) to accept the abusive conditions that immigrants encounter
 - Anglo Americans can then accept the benefits of their labor, while feeling no guilt about their treatment
 - which would be unacceptable for legitimate, legal, settled residents
 - for two reasons:
 - immigrants are assumed to contribute relatively little except their raw labor because they are transient and don't integrate into local communities
 - immigrants are unworthy of decent treatment because they violated the law in crossing into the US to work for US capitalists, and because they have many other negative traits such as poor hygiene, disease, criminality, etc.
- thus these beliefs serve a function: they allow everyone (Anglos, but also the immigrants themselves) to ignore the contradictions between
 - our ideas of fairness, compassion, and even legality
 - and our need for cheap, mobile, compliant labor in order to
 - allow capitalists to keep making profits on farm products, factory labor, etc.
 - allow consumers to have access to cheap food, clothing, etc.
- Gramsci would argue that if this cultural hegemony were somehow removed,
 - everyone would see that the system was abusive
 - it could only be maintained by force (strict laws, police, immigration raids, etc.)
 - and people would resist, eventually toppling it
- A hegemonic practice: **othering**: establishing identity by contrast to some other group
 - defining a category of "others" as different from the category of "us"
 - in order to define ourselves by what we are not
 - emphasizes the importance of the difference between "them" and "us"
 - *they* have a distinctly different identity from *us* - usually not a positive one
 - by contrast, emphasizes, even creates, homogeneity or solidarity within our own group, in opposition to the "other"
 - example: Berkeley students versus Stanford students
 - example: Falklands/Malvinas war between Argentina and England
 - 1982: Argentina was going through an economic crisis and unrest threatened to topple the military junta
 - Argentina landed troops on the Falkland/Malvinas Islands
 - also claimed by England, with British citizens living there
 - this started up a modern shooting war with England that lasted 74 days
 - both sides suffered hundreds of casualties and huge material losses
 - the British won
 - why? it stoked a wave of nationalism in both countries
 - with dehumanization and ridicule of the other side
 - created solidarity among Argentines
 - brought the Argentine public back to supporting the military government... until they lost
 - bolstered the Labor party of Margaret Thatcher, too

- this was a completely created war (mostly by the Argentines, but taken advantage of by Margaret Thatcher, too)
 - with the intentional purpose of creating internal, national solidarity by defining the nation in opposition to the “other”
 - this interpretation was obvious even at the time
 - at least to uninvolved observers, like Americans
- A 1995 border war between Peru and Ecuador
 - was also clearly intended to create national solidarity by focusing people on a threatening “other”
 - outrageous “othering” on both sides
 - the Peruvian press started referring to Ecuadorians as “monos” (monkeys)
 - I wasn’t in Ecuador at the time, but Ecuadorian soccer fans ridicule Peruvians as “indios” (indians, that is, underdeveloped, uneducated, poor...)
- example: US citizens vs. “illegal aliens”
 - lumping and describing the “others” like this is a way for the speaker to define his/her own group by contrast
 - implies that “aliens” don’t belong here, take “our” jobs, are under-educated...
 - while “we citizens” are legitimately here, we deserve those jobs, we are well-educated...”
 - “we citizens” have much in common, which contrasts with “those others”
- example from Steckley: rejection of John Rae’s report from multiple Inuit sources that some of Sir John Franklin’s doomed arctic exploration crew had resorted to cannibalism
 - British critics said that Englishmen would never do that, but savages (Inuit) would, so they must have been cannibals
 - This view not only let them avoid attributing bad behavior to members of their own culture
 - but also built up the bravery and decency of the English explorers (and thus all English people)
 - because it contrasted them with the barbaric, supposedly cannibalistic Inuit
- “othering”: they are different from us: they are worse than us, we are better than them...
 - thus “we” all have something in common
 - othering is supposedly about the characteristics of the other
 - but it is really about our solidarity and superiority in contrast to them
 - it creates broadly shared “common sense” assumptions
 - that shape and justify treatment of the “other”
 - because they are different from us, and less worthy
- Steckley: White Lies About the Inuit
 - p8: Picks up a similar idea: “the lies were so useful in teaching...”
 - p8: Repetition does not constitute truth
 - any academic who has been around for even a few years sees this:
 - Dr. A mentions an idea as a possibility, a speculation for future study
 - someone else says “Dr. A suggested that...”

- someone else says “It may be that...”, then “It seems that...”, eventually “Many people think that...”, and finally people just state the old guess as if it were fact
- p12: absurd stories told by a white Icelandic woman who claimed to be Inuit and made money in the circus and lecture circuit
 - incorporated into school textbooks...
- p9: myths are easy to believe about people you know practically nothing about... how can you judge?
- p9: the myths:
 - 52 words for snow
 - they eat only raw meat
 - they share their wives with strangers who visit
 - they rub noses rather than kiss
 - they leave their elderly out on ice floes to die (or the elderly commit suicide for the good of the family or group)
- p9: “Eskimo”: a term used by neighboring groups meaning “eaters of raw flesh”
- p11: depressing series of Inuit displayed as living collectibles or museum exhibits, mostly dying of European diseases
- p13-14: films such as *Nanook of the North*
- p14: in describing one film with a shaman, Steckley mentions that the popularity of shamans in white culture stems largely from Carlos Castaneda and his dozen books about spiritual drug trips with a Yaqui shaman, starting with *The Teachings of Don Juan*
 - Huge irony here: this, too, was a lie!
 - *Teachings* was based on Castaneda’s thesis and dissertation “research” at UCLA, where I was later a grad student..
 - several years after granting his Ph.D., his UCLA advisors were appalled to learn that parts of the dissertation were plagiarized from earlier sources, that Castaneda claimed to be in places at times when there was proof that he was elsewhere, etc. – it was clearly in part or completely fiction
 - they considered retracting his degree, but there is no way to do that
 - he has been an embarrassment to the department ever since
 - but his books were wildly popular in the late sixties and onwards
- More myths:
 - female infanticide
 - claimed to be necessary for survival
 - arguable how common or consistent
 - wife sharing (or husband sharing)
 - again: how much? who decided?
 - rubbing noses
 - pibloktuq (Arctic hysteria)
 - maybe due to extreme conditions and treatment in encounters with whites such as the explorer Robert Perry?
 - note the old assumption here: cultures are separate, independent things, and people behave according to their culture

- versus the newer view: interactions between cultures are not aberrations to ignore, but crucial aspects of peoples' situations
 - what whites observe of Inuit behavior might be partially the result of the presence and behavior of the whites, not just of Inuit culture
- igloo...?
- cannibalism... originally reported by John Rae to have been among the members of Sir John Franklin's crew
 - but that claim, based on multiple Inuit accounts, was rejected as impossible
 - the Inuit must have eaten them, instead
 - this interpretation, too, was functional: it preserved the ideal concept of the British gentleman, and simultaneously contrasted him to the barbaric, cannibalistic Inuit
- p24: the social production of truth and knowledge!
 - p24: Canadian teachers are products of Canadian schools
 - they don't learn much, so they can't teach much
 - "ignorance is as communicable as knowledge"
 - even when Steckley's article on "the Iroquois Great Law of Peace" was added to a reader, no one else would teach it, because they were not familiar with it... and it was dropped again
 - p24: "the conservative and additive nature of introductory textbooks"
 - new views are added or mentioned, rather than transforming the main material
 - textbooks are written to sell; teachers seek books that cover things as they know them; so change is risky and slow
- p26: "repetition and the hyperreal"
 - as I commented on earlier
 - "the Internet is often a place where old, discredited ideas go not to die, but to live on in a home for the intellectually aged."
 - p26-7: failings of Boas in writing on Tsimshian myths
 - sounds bad...
 - p27: Margaret Mead (*Coming of Age in Samoa*) found what she wanted to find; may have been "hoaxed" by a key informant, and had a conflict of interest in having signed to write an ethnography based on the work
 - but her results were just what people wanted at the time
 - hugely popular and influential, in public policy, teaching, academics, law, psychology, parenting...
 - p27-8: Questioning of Napoleon Chagnon's work with the Yanomamo
 - mostly by Patrick Tierney... whose work, in turn, has been seriously questioned
 - What an embarrassing litany of anthropological misrepresentation...
 - These kinds of "lies" are very hard to detect, often even for experts
 - and the best ones are so useful for supporting interesting or important claims that they get repeated over and over
 - becoming established as common knowledge and obviously true...
 - So how do we know what is true?
- p28: Colonialism

- claims that make dominated people seem primitive, inferior, needing our help, etc. conveniently support and justify colonialism
 - which also happens to be in the colonialists' material interest
- So, what knowledge should you be particularly careful or skeptical about?
 - that which is the most useful
 - which fits best with the hegemonic “common sense”
 - which services someone's self-interest
 - especially that of the dominant class
 - but also your own
 - since false ideas are always easiest to accept if they fit the common wisdom and justify or advance your interests...