

Globalization: Shadowed Lives

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- Discussion of Shadowed Lives
- What does Latin American immigration into California have to do with globalization?
- Note that this book is mostly set in the 1980s and 1990s
 - some of the specifics have changed, especially legal issues
 - and recent economic changes
 - so for some specifics, realize that this, like any ethnography, describes a period of time in the past that is not exactly like the present
 - but many of the generalities remain the same
- What is Chavez's main metaphor for framing this issue?
 - (recall our earlier discussion of framing, metaphor, political discourse, etc.)
 - he compares immigration to a rite of passage
 - with the classic three stages
 - separation
 - transition
 - incorporation
- what other metaphors might he have reasonably used to frame the issue, with what different effects on how we think about the issue?
 - considering the impact of a different metaphor (different framing) is often a good way to recognize the impact of the one currently in use or under discussion
 - war metaphor (suggested by Chavez in the Epilogue)
 - Mexicans as “invading”, “foot soldiers of liberalism”, potentially taking over, voting Spanish as the state language, and seceding to join Mexico...
 - we must “protect our borders” from this threat to our “national security” and “sovereignty”...etc.
 - casts immigrants as enemies, makes us think in terms of threats and self-defense
- metaphor of criminality
 - illegal aliens
 - intentionally violate the law, should bear the consequences
 - taking advantage of US services without deserving them
 - casts immigrants as willful violators of the law, so the only legitimate response is arrest, penalties, jail, deportation
- metaphor or framing language of group identity
 - “othering” them
 - treating immigrants as all basically the same
 - attributing negative characteristics to them, versus positive characteristics to us (positive vs. negative identity)
 - casts immigrants as illegitimately here, undesirable, second-rate compared to us
- Chavez's metaphor of a rite of passage
 - not threatening, does not call for punitive response, nor negative identity

- casts immigrants as people passing through life stages, just as everyone else does
 - leads us towards a more understanding, sympathetic approach with no element of judging, fear, or resistance
- but with some important twists
 - completing the passage is not guaranteed
 - separation and transition are not hard to achieve
 - but there are many systematic obstacles to incorporation
- experience of liminality
 - outsiders in this society, neither Mexican there nor legally here
 - a dangerous, vulnerable, uncomfortable state
 - shared by compatriots, creating social bonds
- Shadowed Lives provides examples of many concepts in this course, such as...
 - Rites of passage, liminality, othering, positive and negative identity, as above
 - Uses all three forms of explanation we started with: Adaptation, system, and meaning
 - Many of his explanations are in terms of adaptation
 - how choices of crossing, living arrangements, working, family, etc. are rational ways of handling their circumstances
 - reasons for coming
 - different domestic group compositions and structures
 - relentless living in camps
 - ways that men find work and what they do; ways that women find work, and what they do
 - Some of his explanations are in terms of culture as a system
 - long-term history of Bracero program recruitment in certain areas, Peso crisis, civil war and oppressive governments in Central America...
 - social networks that develop between source areas and places in the US
 - Sometimes Chavez focuses on meaning
 - esp. p. 88 on: focuses not on the truth of what people say about immigrants, but on the meaning (message) of what they say
 - that is, the interpretation that people put on the immigrants they see or hear about, regardless of the reality of those people
 - here, he is looking at how people frame the issue, what metaphors they use
 - aliens, others
 - criminality, threatening
 - dirty
 - disease-ridden (associate with malaria)
 - vs. hard-working, loyal, etc.
- construction of identity
 - by immigrants themselves, especially children raised here and adults who consciously acculturate and try to pass as legal residents
 - even more by people already in the US, responding to immigrants in different ways
- inequality, and naturalizing inequality
 - in what ways are immigrants in an unequal relationship with others?

- limited freedom to travel, work, live, etc.
 - vulnerable
 - low pay
- what factors tend to keep them there?
- how is this inequality naturalized in the minds of non-immigrants, and the minds of immigrants themselves?
 - language
 - living conditions
 - education
 - vulnerability to apprehension and deportation
 - need to remain hidden
- interesting glimpses of the process of ethnography
 - in what ways is this an ethnography, that is, what methods or features does it involve that are typical of ethnography?
 - in what ways is it not, that is, what typical ethnographic method(s) are not used?
 - how does Chavez find people to talk with?
- A small point for Chavez, but increasingly significant in our lives: Medicalization as a means of control
 - County Health Department was the legal force behind destroying Green Valley
 - frequent references to malaria, hygiene, fire hazard, public health
 - making something a health issue makes it hard to refute, even if little evidence that the health issue is actually serious (as in Green Valley case)
 - look at the current discourse about
 - smoking – medicalizing this issue was successful in getting laws passed and changing the culture
 - marijuana – medicalizing has made limited legalization of pot possible in California, increasingly nationwide
 - regulating fast food, fat, salt, corn syrup, sugar, etc. in food
 - once the idea of the government preventing you from eating too many hamburgers was a laughable illustration of government run amok; now people actually discuss it as a possibility...