DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 438 967 RC 022 215

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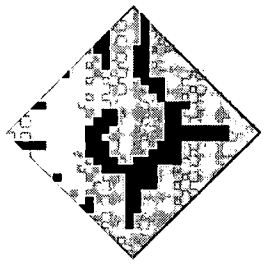
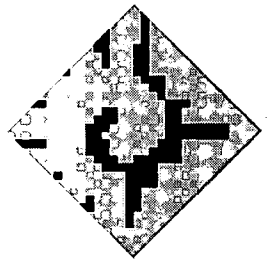
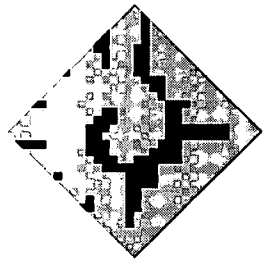
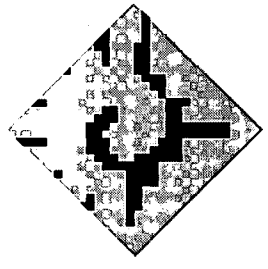
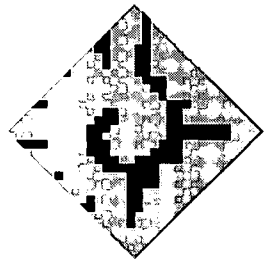
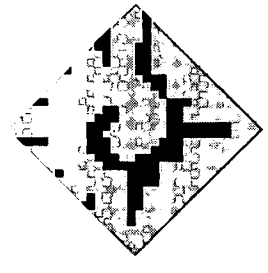
TITLE	Chicano Drivers of Ideas in Anthropology across Space and Place: Pre-Postmodern Debts to Chicano Studies and Others. JSRI Occasional Paper No. 53. Latino Studies Series.
INSTITUTION	Michigan State Univ., East Lansing. Julian Samora Research Inst.
PUB DATE	1998-07-00
NOTE	13p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Full text at Web site: http://www.jsri.msu.edu/RandS/research/ops/.
PUB TYPE	Opinion Papers (120) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Anthropology; *Criticism; Educational Experience; Higher Education; Intellectual History; Interdisciplinary Approach; Personal Narratives; *Researchers; *Scholarship; Social Science Research
IDENTIFIERS	*Chicano Studies

ABSTRACT

Current trends toward transnational and postmodern analysis in anthropology were anticipated by theoretical and methodological positions held by those involved in Chicano Studies. In addition, new institutional forms were inaugurated in anthropology as a direct and indirect result of the experience of participating in Chicano Studies programs. Many simultaneously participated in Chicano Studies and engaged in graduate programs in anthropology in the 1960s and 1970s. In fact, what is particular to all this cohort of incipient anthropologists, is their shared experiences in multinational ethnography, processes and analysis, and a "critical cultural" stance. From Chicano Studies, most who were to become anthropologists became adept, if not expert, at engaging in a variety of nomothetic, interpretive, quantitative, and qualitative discourses. Yet, by necessity and through a voracious interest, Chicano Studies professors consumed everything and filled their own "starved minds" to teach students. During this period, there were more bibliographies written by many than there were entries for their creation. Chicano Studies scholars were engaged in constant intellectual struggle to understand the realities of exploitation, racism, and repression. They challenged and critiqued the notion of a disengaged and authoritarian anthropology; deconstructed current ethnographies of Mexican Americans; laid out the theoretical and methodological deficiencies of anthropology; and insisted on a more rigid application of systematic fieldwork. This paper summarizes the contributions of Chicano Studies scholars to anthropology and provides a personal narrative of the intellectual and professional development of researcher/author of anthropology and Chicano Studies, Carlos G. Velez-Ibanez. (Contains 30 references.) (AA)

JSRI Occasional Paper No. 53
Latino Studies Series

Chicano Drivers of Ideas in Anthropology Across Space and Place: Pre-Postmodern Debts to Chicano Studies and Others

by Carlos G. Vélez-Ibáñez
University of California, Riverside

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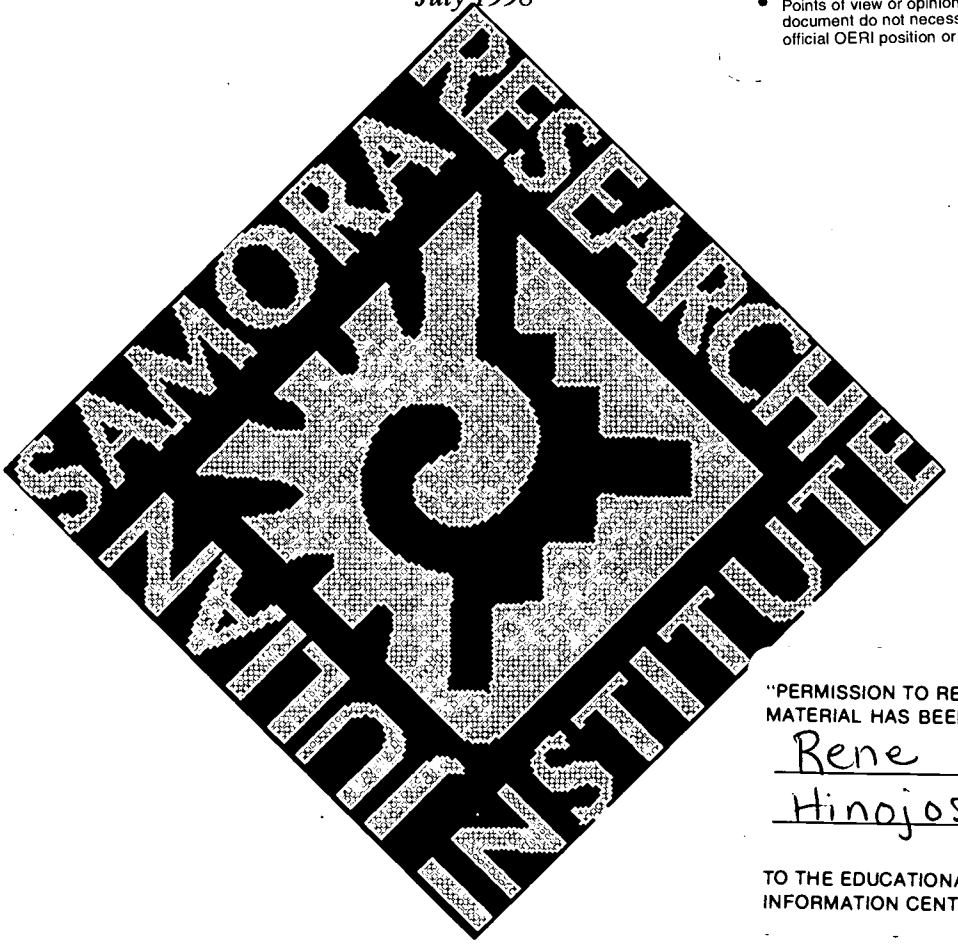

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Carlos G. Vélez-Ibáñez is Professor of Anthropology and Dean of the College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences at the University of California, Riverside. He completed his Ph.D. in Anthropology at the University of California, San Diego. Dr. Vélez-Ibáñez's fields of study and expertise include, among others, SocialCultural Anthropology, Applied Anthropology, Migration and Adaptation of Human Populations, and Culture and Education. Dean Vélez-Ibáñez has been elected Fellow of the American Anthropology Association, where he was elected Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. His most recent book, *Border Visions: The Cultures of Mexicans of the Southwest United States*, was published by the University of Arizona Press in Tucson.

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SUGGESTED CITATION

Vélez-Ibáñez C.G., (Ph.D.), "Chicano Drivers of Ideas of Anthropology Across Space and Place: Pre-Postmodern Debts to Chicano Studies and Others," *JSRI Occasional Paper #53,* The Julian Samora Research Institute, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, 1998.

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Chicano Drivers of Ideas in Anthropology Across Space and Place: Pre-Postmodern Debts to Chicano Studies and Others

A brief sojourn in the development of anthropology conducted by Chicano/a anthropologists in the United States suggests that the currents in transnational and postmodern analysis presently in vogue in anthropology were anticipated by equivalent theoretical and methodological positions held by many of us who had been involved in Chicano Studies. As well, new institutional forms have been inaugurated in anthropology as a direct and indirect result of the experience of participating in and managing Chicano Studies programs and centers. Many of us simultaneously participated in Chicano Studies departments and engaged in graduate programs in anthropology in the late 60's and early 70's. For many of us in California, including Roberto Alvarez, Jose Cuellar, Diego Vigil, Steve Arvizu, Paul Espinosa, Margarita Melville, and myself, our experience teaching the incipient courses in Chicano Studies led us to cross into then non-Chicano territory in place and theory. Cuellar and Vigil worked as ethnographers in Guatemala; Alvarez traced the emergence of Mexicans from lower California to Lemon Grove, Calif.; Arvizu and others were among the first to offer a serious theoretical critique of anthropology in *Decolonizing Anthropology* (1978), simultaneous to Melville's well recalled patterns of domination in Guatemala. All impacted our rendition of a different kind of anthropology and Chicano Studies. I initially began my work in urban Mexico seeking answers to questions initiated by Chicano Studies. In fact, what is particular to all of this cohort of incipient anthropologists is their experience and engagement in multinational ethnography, processes and analysis, and a "critical cultural" stance from which to engage theory and substantive data and ethnography.

From Chicano Studies, however, most of us who were to become anthropologists became adept, if not expert, at engaging in a variety of nomothetic, interpretive, quantitative, and qualitative discourses. We had to simply because, in many of the courses, we were – at best – inexperienced. Yet, by necessity and through a voracious interest, we consumed everything we could and filled our starved minds to teach our students. For the most part, we became strongly engaged in interdisciplinary research by integrating, sometimes well and sometimes awkwardly, in introductory Chicano courses the historical, social, political, economic, cultural, and, at times, literary and artistic materials of Mexicans on both sides of the Mexico/U.S. border. We incorporated into our curricula the newly published data from Grebler, Moore, and Guzmán's important *The Mexican American People: The Nation's Second Largest Minority* (1970), merged it with Mariano Azuela's *Los de Abajo* (1939), spiced and provided breadth with Carey McWilliam's *North From Mexico: The Spanish Speaking People of the United States* (1948), while simultaneously integrating George Sanchez' *Forgotten People: A Study of New Mexicans* (1940), and Julian Samora's *La Raza: Forgotten Americans* (1966) and his earlier *Los Mojados: The Wet Back Story* (1971). We even used lecture notes from newly emerging historical scholars like Gomez-Quiñones and Dave Weber, while graduate students like Alberto Camarillo, Victor Nelson Cisneros, and Ricardo Romo at UCLA created new insights on urban barrioization. We cemented these courses with some freshly (and some not so freshly) minted works, masters theses, and the few available doctoral studies, as well as mimeographs like Ralph Guzman's initial study of the casualty rates in Vietnam.[1] It was only in 1980 that *From Indians to Chicanos: A Sociocultural History*, a broad primer of Chicano Studies, was published by Diego Vigil.

There were in this period of time more bibliographies written by many of us than there were entries for their creation. So began the emergence of a Chicano scholarship, but more importantly, as Alvarez pointed out to me, the foundations for a broader cultural critique.[2]

Most of us combined an unflagging curiosity with political positions of challenge and resistance, and with less than clear theoretical positions. We were engaged in constant intellectual struggle to understand economic exploitation, miseducation, cultural and linguistic repression, death at an early age, and racialism and ethnocentrism. These also carried over into an anthropology that for the most part, was still characterized by anthropologists study-

ing "discrete" cultural communities, participating in "their" communities, and insisting that much of the work in anthropology required a distanced, detached, and authoritarian position from which to operate.

We especially challenged the notion that an unengaged anthropology was the normative ideal as other anthropologists had before us. But we carried with us, as well, the political experience of Chicano Studies and many other sources like the Peace Corps, military service, and community organizing, to insist on putting anthropology to work in the communities from which we emerged. As Alvarez noted, we also worked "for a greater truth we knew to be there and thus setting the record straight."[3] Thus, for the most part, many of us took a different and somewhat lonely road in anthropology, except for the cohort at Stanford consisting of Alvarez, Arvizu and company, who were incessant in their critiques.

There existed already a number of anthropological and culturally determined works that were special targets, and that had been created according to the images and likenesses of the anthropologists or social scientists themselves. They were very much concerned with "traditional" Mexican values, ideas, behaviors, the "culture of poverty," "present time orientations," inability to delay gratification, and a cultural proneness to criminal behavior.[4]

Americo Paredes (1977) was intensely engaged in deconstructing then current ethnographies of Mexicans in Texas, particularly those by Madsen and others, but largely within the confines of either the "Greater Mexican Southwest" idea or more specifically engaged in important but local ethnography. Certainly Jose Limon's early work on Mexican university students was a contribution to Paredes' criticism. In California, Juan Vicente Palerm came later in the equation, but was among the first of the Mexican anthropologists in the U.S. to develop a structural model of economy, agriculture, and community formation, and extended the study of the peasantry to the U.S. He served as Chair of Chicano Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Julian Samora, Octavio Romano-V, and Nick Vaca laid out the deficiencies of anthropology and the social sciences by pointedly underlying epistemological and logical formulaics. They directly and acerbically took up issues of conceptualization, ahistoricism, and the lack of validity and replicability in the design of many social science studies. Romano was highly critical of one shot, one year, bounded and encapsulated "community" studies in which an "as if" present of unchanging behaviors characterized the human populations.

One aspect of these early critiques which has not yet been identified as having a very strong influence on general anthropology is our insistence on a more rigid application of systematic fieldwork, including representativeness, sampling procedures, and an eye to either a grounded theory or broader theoretical frames from which to understand the specificity of what we wanted to examine. We were, in fact, not critical of the nomothetic model per se, but either its lack of appropriate application or the lack of application which resulted in timeless, synchronic, and bounded renditions of the Mexican population. We questioned the anthropological epistemology, and Deloria's *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (1969) was a very important treatise for us that examined the premises and pitfalls of a most "traditional" anthropology. Similarly, Margaret Mead's debate with James Baldwin in *A Rap on Race* (1971) crystallized aspects of African American-Anglo relations, but also defined and articulated the limits of traditional anthropological thinking, questions of cultural relativity and the field's failure to recognize the power of subordinate/superordinate relations.

For many of us in the early 70's, while engaged in our respective graduate programs, we carried a specific "Chicano" filter which sought out analytical processes rather than things, understanding relationships and connections rather than boundaries, and looking from the inside out rather than from the top down. This approach became very much part of the operating procedure within our engagement in anthropology, through it resulted in some isolation from other graduate students, thus for the most part our graduate experience was indeed a lonely one.

We, in fact, carried our prisms from non-institutionally derived sources. As Vigil and Alvarez[5] have reminded me, this array in part emerged from other aspects of our daily experience. We simply had not melted as was expected, and cross-border connections to relations in Mexico remained tattered but

present. Those without origin connectives had others, like *rancheras, musica tropical*, and Afro-American jazz music; also cohesive forces were the presence of the *viejos,* including elderly uncles and aunts some tracing lineages back 400 years, others 40, the calendric and ritual cycles – from eating tamales to greeting a death goodbye[6] – and even the churches in our neighborhoods run by either Spanish or Irish priests. These adhered us sufficiently to each other. These arrays or funds of knowledge were sufficient to provide a working template upon which would be added the formal educative ones, and in totality gave rise to form one base for a critical perspective that questioned many.

For me, Eric R. Wolf's works in Europe, Puerto Rico, and Mexico were highly influential for their breadth and scope, and their insistence on demystifying imperially derived community structures, and the imperial globalization of economy and polity. My own graduate program largely emphasized functionalistic notions and concentrated on psychological processes, but the program directed me away from these emphasized approaches as explanations, and toward others. At UCSD, the works by A.I. Hallowell and G.H. Meade gave me insight into understanding "cultures" rather than "culture," structures of commonality rather than "shared understandings," and the idea of distribution of cultures rather than replication. In addition, the tightly bound, cognitive, quasi-experimental methodology that was emphasized illustrated the unidimensional limitations of the method. This was in turn very influential in directing me towards a methodological compromise between an assumed apolitical empiricism and an approach availing itself of the emotive, processual, and "thick" descriptive qualities that gave life and breath to the humanity and creativity of the populations with which I was to become engaged.

However, Chicano Studies provided me a "position" of articulation, which has recently become fashionable in more postmodern renditions, so that I was pretty much unabashed in declaring "up front" where I stood in the perennial search for cultural place and space, and a political position that denied that as participants, observers, learners, and researchers, we were omniscient, undetached, or neutral.

Opportunities to study in Mexico, with Juan Vicente's father, Angel Palerm, Arturo Warman, and others, and to conduct incipient fieldwork in rural Acolhuacan provided invaluable materialist constructs which uncoupled many of the confusions and artifacts from my graduate program and the early experimentation in Chicano Studies. This opportunity was afforded by NEH Summer programs in Chicano Studies, which provided access to the best Mexican social scientists and historians. Yet it was Chicano Studies and its unfailing critique of many social science approaches that opened my perceptions to the analytics of the political processes in which I became engaged in Central Mexico, where I had begun my first fieldwork — Ciudad Netzahualcoyotl Izcalli.

From Chicano Studies, critiques of the psychologistic explanations of such imaginary concepts as "traditional cultures," present time orientations, "lack of delayed gratification," and the alleged passivity of Mexican women in the United States and Mexico had been both formally and informally addressed and devastated by action.[7] Therefore, in my own work in Netzahualcoyotl, I was able to understand and ask questions that either would never have been originated or that I would have simply missed had I not engaged in Chicano Studies formulations and its political activities, and in the establishment of one of these early programs.

Given the dynamics of very intense political activities in Netza, anyone not familiar was looked upon with deep suspicion; but as a person identified as a Chicano, I was given my own identity to use — "Replica de Mexicano, Imitacíon gringa." More importantly, I had been given legitimate credentials by the population itself because of my lack of canonized credentials as a Mexican in the United States. In Netza, as the progeny of a working class setting and the Chicano movement, as well as a participant in those academic structures, I was given a role as *asesor, huésped, y chofer*, as well as access to networks of political intrigue and activities that simply would not have been available if I had not had a political position from which to place the work that I needed to do. When asked if I was not a member of the CIA, I answered affirmatively: "the Chicano Intelligence Agency."

I had also learned, according to both the Mexican and American social science literature, that women in Mexico did not participate in political activities and so, therefore, they would not have been included in the sample populations that some political scientists had studied. I was suspicious of this idea, given my own introduction to the political strength of Mexican women at San Diego State (where I had worked) and their early development of incipient Chicana-Feminist ideas, ideas that were just then beginning to burst. My suspicion was certainly confirmed when Mexican women in Netza ran a large scale political protest movement during the day, and organized "shock troops" of women with sling shots, 6-foot sticks, and heavy rocks at night, who surrounded home lots when police threatened to evict families from their homes.

But it was here that for the first time, although I had looked and been part of somewhat equivalent cultural settings, I came to truly see and understand the absolutely amazing creative, inventive, developmental, and almost absurd genius of populations surviving in the worst of ecological, economic, and political circumstances. The cultural formations, social mechanisms, political bodies, economic practices, and relatively sound templates for children were in fact the part and parcel of the Mexican experience not only in Netza but also in the Southwestern United States, although at the time I had not recognized them. Alongside those formations and inventions were also the awful specters of unabashed patriarchy (which was constantly contested), of an oppressive religiosity often rationalizing dominance of men over women, and finally, a privileging of males often masking the very debilities transferred to the alleged "proper" behavior of women. As well, many of the men had been braceros in California during the 1950's, and some remembered Tracy, Calif. as a place of difficult employment in the agricultural fields, so that they had direct connections to some of the very political activities concerning farmworkers in which I had been involved prior to and during my graduate student days. These men, in fact, had been very much part of the international global economy in food production, and they well understood the economic and political issues of Chicanos.

Yet I came away with a conviction that no matter how globalization processes unfolded and obviously formed the present in that context, local level formations were not just a matter of "reproductions," but of contestations, negotiations, and adaptations not reducible to a theoretical construct – materialist, symbolic, or empirical. To use a more present phrase: this (local level niche) was an arena and field consisting of routine struggles between "prosaic state force and economic grand structures, and networked defiance" (Heyman 1994:51). The latter was represented by struggling political demonstrations, by economic practices such as *tandas*, by extended modular households, by networks of women, by the use of brokers and middlemen, by the creation of "funds of knowledge" and of alliances between the most opposite of groups. These formations were not intended to defeat the appropriation process – they were evolved to survive, and the totality of these was published in *Rituals of Marginality* (1983).

Yet this work was still located largely in one space and place. I knew from my own experience that the transnational movement of ideas, practices, and people between Mexico and the United States was a constant one, but never suspected the extensive transnational and diffused characteristics of the not too well-known *tandas* or rotating credit associations.[8] I traced the development of rotating credit associations and the accumulation of social capital by Mexicans in a broad sample of examples from the Yucatan to Sacramento. These were reported in *Bonds of Mutual Trust* (1983) which may be, in fact, one of the first broad "transnational" studies of the way in which local populations delocalize cultural practices and cross geographical, political, and social borders.

It was in this context that I began to develop various cross national interests including migration, the spread of economic associations, visitations, exchange of children across borders, the emergence of cross border households and the myriad of daily exchanges that occur in spite of state bureaucracies that transpire to prevent them. In fact as Heyman (1994) clearly states, such institutions help create cultural niches and modes of action that strengthen transnational existences, even as they appear in localized arenas and develop cultural places and spaces where they should not exist, but do. These practices are part of much larger cultural nexuses too often

subordinated as unimportant exotic behaviors, reduced to only economic survival, and not seen as forms that speak to the very basis of a human and social identity.

Yet there was one other important aspect of *Bonds* that was directly derived from Chicano studies critique: I was able to understand the fundamental implications of these rotating credit associations as savings and investment behaviors, and as economic calculations. Such behavior contradicted the "lack of delayed gratification" theory prevalent in the educational literature on the behavior of Mexican children. In addition, it negated the psychoanalytically-derived belief that Mexicans regarded each other as untrustworthy and the characterization of Mexican households in "culture of poverty" constructs. What became apparent was that these analytical borders of the mind were in direct contradiction to the behaviors emergent from these practices. Basically, observed behaviors unmasked theoretical constructs.

Bonds utilized both quantitative and qualitative techniques and very much spoke to the necessity of being attentive to issues of representativeness. The sample was far reaching, and although not amenable to statistical validation of results because it was based on a snowball sampling, it did represent a very large number of persons, activities, associations, contests, and behaviors that were representative of the general demography of the Mexican population from Yucatán, Mexico to Sacramento, California. What the work did, in fact, was to break with the anthropological tradition of bounded national community studies, and engage in an analysis of behaviors across borders, class, regions, and circumstances. Thus it was very much within the Chicano Studies criticism of "traditional cultures."

In the period between *Bonds* and the present, I experimented with making these forms and findings available for incorporation in more formal ways within educational institutions, and have developed an applied anthropology research program in order to ensure their appropriate and unappropriated use for the benefit of Mexican children who struggle in the midst of conditions sometimes worse than many of us were critiquing 25 years earlier. This experimentation, research, analysis, and development formed the basis of the Bureau of Applied Research in Anthropology (BARA) which I organized in 1983 from a largely defunct predecessor. BARA's genesis emerges directly from Chicano Studies in its political position, its struggle to create without reference to canonization, and, more importantly as a kind of intermediate step to inform and make knowledge available to the human communities with whom we worked. BARA also emerges directly and indirectly from the Centro de Estudios Chicanos which formed the basis of community interaction in many Chicano Studies complexes in the early1970's. Most recently CARA, The Center of Applied Research in Anthropology, which was modeled after BARA, was instituted at Georgia State University.

Now almost 25 years later, I have recently completed a book entitled *Border Visions: The Cultures of Mexicans of the Southwest United States* (1996), which provides a different view of the perennial search for cultural place and space, and the creativity and struggles of the Mexican population of the United States within very broad sweeps of development beginning from Pre-European periods to the present. It is a partial rendition of a human population understood through the visions of the archaeology, history, ethnography, culture, demography, society, literature, and art of Mexicans in the United States. In part, it articulates my personal struggle to say the things I have wanted to say but without the confines of the borders of disciplines – anthropology or Chicano Studies. It is likely that there will be an attempt to pigeonhole it as one or the other but it really is both, and something else as well, akin to what, we had originally envisioned as Chicano Studies – a seamless series of analytics, interpretations, presentations, and calls to action. It is at once political and makes a cultural statement, but without the emotive license about arguments of primacy or cultural mythmaking. As well, the design of the template is directly influenced by the breadth of a structural, cultural, and expressive anthropology, while attached to the interdisciplinary and broad scope of Chicano Studies. It is reminiscent in its architecture of a general anthropology text and a syllabus in Chicano Studies with which I had experimented 25 years previously.

My present research and writing project may even be broader, since it traces the development of all Hispano/Mexicano settlements between 1580 to the

present in the Southwest United States. It will still be driven by Chicano Studies engines, and an experimental anthropology of an unconventional sort, while attentive to local and regional creations within transnational economic and power relations. But beyond this project, now as a dean of the College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences at the University of California, Riverside, I have organized the Center for Advanced Study of the Americas — extending Chicano Studies to not only Chicanos, but also Native Americans, Asian Americans, African Americans, and Mexican/Latino Americans, thus beyond Chicano Centers and Bureaus of Applied Research in Anthropology.

Conclusion

At present, there are Chicana/o anthropologists who in part emerge from the Chicano Studies stream and who presently are strongly involved in transnational and postmodern projects, such as Pat Zavella at the University of California, Santa Cruz who is in the midst of examining migratory processes. She and other Chicana feminists were instrumental in introducing the analytical and critical "Chicana Feminist" position to a largely male Mexican anthropology. Her mature ethnography *Women's Work and Chicano Families* (1987) was a key formative contribution that eventually began to cut through all of our work — national or international – and she has continued this development for the benefit of us all. She, of course, followed the work of the first Chicana feminist anthropologist, Margarita Melville, and her *Twice a Minority: Mexican American Women* (1980). She is now retired. Jose Cuellar is reviving his Guatemalan interests while strongly involved in advocacy programs involving drug and alcohol abuse. Olga Najera Ramirez, following a "Greater Southwest" Paredes model, interestingly documents the transnational phenomena of expressive cultural performance, including dance, Charreadas, and fiestas, while others like Paule Cruz Takish have been working on Anglo/Mexican relations from the point of view of Anglos. Adelaida del Castillo, who worked in Central urban Mexico, continues her fine work on Mexican women in the United States from a strong feminist perspective. Diego Vigil's work has much expanded by focusing on crosscultural and transnational street gang behavior, but really represents a return to the treatment of broad issues he raised in his original work: *Indians to Chicanos: A Sociocultural History* (1980). Leo Chavez's many contributions to immigration analysis, health issues among Mexican women and Latinas, and his most recent content analysis of public communication media, are a continuation of important regional and international issues. Renato Rosaldo's community research in the San Jose area dovetails the intellectual and applied interests in Chicano Studies.

Renato Rosaldo has theoretically advanced and synthesized many of the intellectual issues we raised in the 70's and 80's in his own elegant work (1988 and *Culture & Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* 1989). He, like many of us, had first participated in non-Chicano fieldwork and carried forth a slightly different filter with fresh and original insights, and then served as the Director of the Chicano Research Center at Stanford for a number of years. Roberto Alvarez has embarked upon a creative road to push the boundaries of analysis to embrace the genre of the novel, which will enable him to extend his early empirical work on human migration, while simultaneously publishing work on regional cultural forms within the context of international trade.

Most of these interests, however, are directly associated with the influence of Chicano Studies and its insistence on an analytical focus on relations rather than things, processes rather than functions, and interdisciplinarity rather than narrow field allegiance. The focus of much of the work has, as Vigil pointed out to me, "an explicit or implicit 'action anthropology' tone and spirit." As well, there are now Mexican anthropologists influenced by Chicano Studies who are studying "north." The most recent work by Maria Angela Rodriguez Nicholls (1996) on the transnational phenomena of the production of identity and expressive culture in Los Angeles, and the work by sociologist Jorge Bustamante (1985) on ethnic creation are but two cases in point. The connectives for both have been the existence and creation of generations of us who were nurtured intellectually within Chicano Studies paradigms.

What then is the future relationship between anthropology and Chicano Studies? First, there is no doubt that between anthropology and Chicano Studies there is a very close analytical affinity which can only become more equivalent as it is influenced by

both postmodern and transnational premises, since Chicano/a anthropologists were engaged in serious critiques of anthropology before either of the two constructs were in vogue. Second, the enormous demographic increases of Mexican and other Latino populations will expand the traditional foci of Chicano/a Studies to be much more inclusive of Latino populations in general, and will more than likely take advantage of broad anthropological treatments of human migration and transhumans. Last, the almost geometric increase in the crossover process between the humanities and social sciences in Chicano/a Studies will only augment these processes within anthropology, especially for those of us who have continued our interest in both fields.

In an interesting and totally unintended manner, anthropology will probably benefit much more than Chicano/a Studies, given these trends. However, in a general sense, anthropology has already benefitted greatly from Chicano/a Studies without a real appreciation of its debt. And given its most recent disciplinary scattering, some of which is pushed by a dizzying illogic of self-indulgence and narcissism, anthropology might benefit from attention to the more holistic and action-oriented properties of Chicano/a Studies.

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Endnotes

1. See Ralph Guzmán. n.d. "Mexican American Casual - ties in Vietnam." Unpublished MS. Los Angeles: UCLA Mexican American Studies Project.

2. Personal communication, Robert Alvarez, June 23, 1997.

3. Personal communications by Robert Alvarez, June 27, 1997. Actually, for many of us, the knowledge of a lack of "record" began to be honed in our early schooling processes when there was nothing to reflect ourselves against except for Dick, Jane, and Spot. We stood out peculiarly in Davey Crockett primers expounding the defenders of the Alamo who with - stood the onslaught of the mythical thousands of Toy- land-dressed Mexicans stupidly charging brave Kentuckian rifles in Mexican Texas. The boredom of our non-presence in what was valued by the schooling process was only occasionally broken by the almost magical appearance of a rare book title like *Carlos the Centipede* – a second grade story book featuring the desert inhabitant and its curious characteristics, or the western book series on the invader Kit Carson of New Mexico fame, who simulated a pathetic closeness to ourselves. These occasional glimpses cast an almost insignificant doubt on the primary prism from which we were excluded, but sufficiently so that these doubts became arrayed to other sources of contestation and relational associations.

4. The educational literature in the 1960's and early 70' s especially took up the idea that Mexican children suf - fered from an inability to delay gratification and that Mexican culture was "present time-oriented," both constructs which dovetail nicely, since parents who can't or won't plan for the future cannot save for a rainy day, and it follows that their Mexican children will be taught to immediately gratify themselves. Emerging from the anthropological works by Clyde Kluckhohn concerning New Mexican villages and George Foster's idea of "the image of the limited good," as well as reinforcements by the Oscar Lewis "culture of poverty" approach, Mexican children in the U.S. and their parents were ensconced within a culturally deterministic framework of certain failure and miseducation. This occurred in light of the fact that American educational institutions were constructed with opposite "value orientations" in mind, that is, tasks emphasizing long term gratification and an emphasis on individual achievement. Celia Heller then took up the task of providing a unified field theory which attached some of these concepts to a cultural propensity by mexican youth to commit crimes. All in all, a tortured construct termed "culturally disadvantaged" then took root which became the mother of all culturally determined constructs that accounted for the behavior of Mexican children. It became then the responsibility of educational authorities to create a watered-down "culturally appropriate" curriculum for these "disadvantaged" students who suffered from Mexican value orientations. Mexican students found themselves in "special" education classes that, in time, made them special – especially unable to handle the simplest of composition assignments, and unfamiliar with anything more complicated than simple "con - sumer math." Without it being stated overtly, algebra would be reserved for the "culturally appropriate" stu - dents. What many of us observed even as youngsters were the behavioral consequences of structures of economic despair, racialist and ethnocentric relation - ships, miseducation and "tracking," and a type of political maneuvering of our communities in which Mayor Daley of Chicago fame would delight. Our understandings were not generated from a culturally determined base.

5. Private communications by Robert Alvarez (June 27, 1997) and Diego Vigil (December 15, 1997) reminded me that our internal dissatisfactions were motivators. I can even recall visiting one of my graduated profes- sors to-be at UCSD as I was to begin my graduate career, and stating in a rather arrogant and simple- minded manner how I intended to provide badly needed correctives to the way in which "my people" were being described. On hindsight, Professor F.G. Bailey treated my pronouncement with extraordinary kindness and with a puckish twinkle, and then pro- ceeded to test the depths of my convictions. After much training, he guided me towards developing much greater analytical force and depth to address what I felt, but did not know.

6. For a thorough discussion of Mexican ritual cycles, see Carlos G. Velez-Ibanez (1996) *Border Visions: The Cultures of Mexicans of the Southwest United States*. Tucson: University of Arizona, especially pp. 170-179.

7. Ibid. See especially 133-134.

8. Oscar Lewis (1959, 1961, 1968) first reported their existence among the vecindades of Mexico City but did little analysis, while Kurtz collected data between 1968-1969 in Tijuana, B.C. and the adjoining border community of San Ysidro, Calif., and published his important findings in 1973 and 1978. Yet RCAs, while world wide, were not associated with Mexicans in the United States, and certainly not known for their widely diffused and transnational characteristics. I initially conducted some field work collection on *tan - das* between 1971 and 1974 during the Summer of 1978, and then extensively in 1979-1980. The data collected included 90 rotating credit associations rep - resenting approximately 4,000 persons, including 60 informants in 17 cities and two countries.

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