

# 12/Culture Change and Cultural Reproduction

## Lessons from Research on Transnational Migration

In, Globalization and Change in Fifteen Cultures: Born in one World and Living in Another. Janice Stockard and George Spindler, editors. Belmont, CA: Thomson-Wadsworth, 2006.

*Fieldwork Biography*

### **Leo R. Chavez**

**Leo A.** Chavez conducted his first fieldwork in Otavalo, Ecuador, a small town high in the Andes that was experiencing rural-to-town migration by its indigenous population, the Otavalos, who mostly lived in many small villages in the surrounding countryside. Since 1980, however Professor Chavez has focused on transnational migration, beginning in San Diego, California. The ethnography *Shadowed Lives: Undocumented Immigrants in American Society* [1992/1998] was the result of over 10 years interviewing Mexican and Central American Immigrants about their lives, integration into U.S. society, and access to medical services. In many ways finding people to interview was easier in the small town of Otavalo or in one of the surrounding villages where all one had to do was walk around and meet people. Immigrants in San Diego on the other hand live in a wide range of places, from rural encampments in canyons near farms to apartments and houses in urban centers and suburban neighborhoods. They were not so easy to find. More recently, Professor Chavez has examined cultural, economic, and political issues related to breast and cervical cancer and the use of cancer-screening exams among immigrant women from Latin America in Orange County, California. His current fieldwork is among the adult children of immigrants and how well they are integrating into U.S. society, focusing on the greater Los Angeles area. It has now been about 25 years that Professor Chavez has been working to understand the immigrant experience, which he likens to a large jigsaw puzzle. Each research project helps to fill in one small piece of the puzzle.

Vignette 1: In San Diego, California, a number of men, recent immigrants from Mexico, stand on a street corner waiting for offers for work from the passing cars. Although they often find work cleaning up construction sites, at flower ranches, or gardening and landscaping, many people find their presence a problem. Complaints about the men's presence are often heard at city council meetings. Sometimes hiring sites are made available for the men and their employers. The men live in makeshift encampments hidden in the bushes and trees



*Young Mexican migrant  
worker in his makeshift  
next to the fields campsite  
where he works.*

not too far from where they look for work. Sometimes their homes are demolished, forcing them to pack up their few belongings and move to another site. What keeps them there is the work and the pay, often seven to ten times what they could make back in Mexico. Women also sometimes live in the campsites. They typically work in homes, as maids or taking care of children. As one woman told me: "I came here because there is no work over there. Oaxaca has no factories, no large businesses to employ people. When you do find work, it's very difficult. You work from nine in the morning to nine at night for little pay and it's hard to find another job. I was told that there were good wages here and that there was plenty of work for women. Right now I do housekeeping, but sometimes I do that and sometimes I don't. It's not stable [work]" (Chavez 1998). Many of these men and women will return to Mexico after a few months to a couple of years working in the United States. Some will stay longer, eventually forming families and settling in the United States. Although they may stay years, they often continue to maintain contacts with family and friends back home, even sending them some of the money they have earned. One of the things that impressed me most about this situation was the level of interdependence between Mexico and the United States, despite the often strong anti-Mexican attitudes expressed in public forums, especially on local talk radio programs.

Vignette 2: In Flushing, New York, Tony Sala, the owner of T.J.s Pizzeria & Restaurant watched as his neighborhood changed from mainly European immigrants and their children to predominantly Korean and Chinese immigrants and their children (Baum 2004). Seeing opportunity, the owner decided to innovate by putting kimchee, (hot spicy pickled cabbage favored by Koreans) on his pizzas. The Italian-Korean merger has been quite successful.

Vignette 3: In France, immigrants from the African countries of Senegal, Mali, and Mauritania bring with them the Muslim tradition of polygamy (Simons 1996). However, many of the immigrant's wives have rebelled at continuing this tradition in France, where they find the living conditions no longer tolerable for a man having multiple wives. Back in Africa, if a man could afford more than one wife, he could afford to place her in her own house. Even if they lived close to the other wives, they at least had some measure of separation. However, an immigrant male who manages to save enough money to return home to his village in Africa, acquire a second or third wife, and bring her back to France typically cannot afford to set her up in her own apartment. Consequently, two or three families may pack into a two-room apartment, a situation some wives indicate as difficult, making them feel "trapped" or that they are "losing their minds."

Vignette 4: In Bellflower, California—a 13-square-mile section of Los Angeles—39 languages are spoken (Simmons 2004). A security guard at the local Department of Motor Vehicles speaks to customers with phrases in English, Spanish, Chinese, and Tagalog. Residents find that the cultural diversity makes learning about other cultures a way of life. As one observer in Bellflower put it, "Koreans are among the throng of customers having their eyebrows plucked by Indian beauticians. Japanese housewives have their nails clipped and polished by Vietnamese manicurists. Mexicans and Vietnamese dine on Vietnamese *pho* soup or Mexican pozole porridge at each other's eateries. And it is typical to find Indian spices being sold in Latino grocery stores" (Simmons 2004).

#### WHY IS TRANSNATIONAL MIGRATION IMPORTANT FOR ANTHROPOLOGISTS?

To pick up and move in search of a better life or security from a hostile environment is such an old pattern in human history that it is practically human nature. So is setting down roots in new locations, only to move on again should the opportunity or need arise. In today's theoretical discourse, humans have been deterritorializing and reterritorializing for almost as long as we have been a species (Gupta and Ferguson 1997). *Homo erectus* managed to migrate throughout Europe and Asia beginning more than a million years ago. And yet, despite the fact that migration and settlement are so fundamental a part of what it means to be human, the process itself is fraught with issues for both those who move and those whom migrants encounter.

The contemporary movement of people across national borders raises a whole range of issues, because migration creates the possibility of change in many directions: among those who move, among those where migrants settle, and among those left behind who often continue to communicate and maintain material relations with migrants (Basch, Schiller, and Blanc 1994). About 150 million

people live outside the country of their birth (Stalker 2001). Although this accounts for only about 3 percent of the world's population, the importance of that movement is significant for those involved, that is, the migrants, those left behind, and those in the places migrants settle. Importantly, the forces propelling people from their homes and drawing them to live and work in primarily industrial societies will likely continue for most of the twenty-first century (C and Miller 1998). Thus, the sheer magnitude of, and the variety of, responses to the movement of people in the world today and in the next few decades makes transnational migration a topic of long-term anthropological interest.

The United States, long considered the preeminent immigrant-receiving nation, is now but one among many nations receiving large numbers of migrants. For example, in 2003, 11.7 percent of the U.S. population was foreign-born, but the foreign-born accounted for 18.1 percent of Canada's population and 23.1 percent of Australia's population in 2001 (Institute 2004). In the 25 years, millions of Eastern Europeans, North Africans, Turks, Albanians, others have migrated into the industrialized nations of Europe. As a result foreign-born populations in European countries increased, with at least 4.2 percent in the United Kingdom in 2000 (particularly from South Asia and Caribbean), 2.2 percent in Italy in 1999, and 6.2 percent in Denmark in 2 (Institute 2004). In 1999, the foreign-born accounted for about 9.8 percent of Germany's population (mainly Turks, Yugoslavs, and Poles),<sup>1</sup> and 7.4 percent France's population (mainly Algerians, Moroccans, and Portuguese).<sup>2</sup> In 2001, the foreign-born accounted for 2.5 percent of Spain's population (Perez 2004). In 2000, Japan, not known for its openness to immigration, had about 864,000 for workers originally from Korea, China, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Iran, the Philippines, Peru, and Brazil, with an estimated 230,000 undocumented immigrants (Yamanaka 2000). In 2001, Russia had as many as 10 million undocumented migrants, mostly from former Soviet republics drawn by economic opportunities (*Los Angeles Times* 2001).

The paradox, however, is that although pressures may exist for more immigration, the presence of immigrants often raises fears associated with epochal change, especially in nations not accustomed to large-scale immigration. The integration of immigrants is not always an easy one. Immigrants pose challenges to dominant notions of what constitutes "the nation," that is, the people. People who had taken for granted that they were the standard bearers of national identity must cope with racial and cultural diversity in their society. Not surprisingly, then, immigrants and immigration often become ground zero in a battle over the perceived implications of change in contemporary societies around the world.

Immigration, and its counterpart, emigration, are often key symbols for a society (Ortner 1973). By this I mean that they are central and important concepts for how a people understand their identity. Some nations explicitly identify themselves as "immigrant nations," for example the United States, Canada, and Australia. Other countries have historically considered themselves "emigrant nations," because they have sent so many of their people to work and live in other countries (for example Italy and Spain). Other nations have not viewed themselves as immigrant nations at all because they have seen their identity as singular and not open to mixing with other people (for example, Japan, Germany,

Saudi Arabia, and many others) (Williams 2000a). An important aspect of key symbols is that they can refract multiple meanings. How any individual member of a society perceives the meaning of that symbol depends on that person's own personal status and history. Thus, immigration and being an immigrant nation (or not) can mean different things to different people at the same time. But the centrality of notions about immigration to a nation's identity is at the core of many of the issues raised by transnational migration, and thus a key source of anthropological investigation (Foner 2003).

#### A LOVE-HATE RELATIONSHIP WITH IMMIGRANTS

Vignette 5: In 1996, a black woman, a naturalized citizen who had immigrated from the Dominican Republic four years earlier, won the title of Miss Italy (Bohlen 1996). For a nation that had imagined itself as setting the standard in European beauty with international stars such as Gina Lollobrigida and Sophia Loren, the crowning of Denny Méndez as Miss Italy raised considerable controversy over the appropriate symbol of Italian female beauty. Suddenly, Italians questioned what it means to be Italian. One of the judges of the beauty contest asked "whether China would accept a Miss China without almond-shaped eyes, or if a non-black African could become Miss Senegal" (Bohlen 1996). However, Italy is changing. A nation that until recently sent emigrants out to other nations to work and live now receives many immigrants, mainly from North African, Albania, and the Balkans. As one person wrote in the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica*: "Italy became a land of immigration without ever deciding to, and in some cases, without ever wanting to" (Bohlen 1996). A year after Ms. Méndez was crowned Miss Italy, the guidelines for competing were changed so that at least one parent had to be "full-blooded Italian" (Rodriguez 2004).

Vignette 6: In Japan, Portuguese-speaking Japanese Brazilians find that they are looked down upon by the Japanese (Tsuda 2003). They came to Japan to work in factories, where they can earn more than in Brazil, even though many have experience in business or professional training. The Japanese wanted them because, after all, they are Japanese, and for a nation that values racial similarity rather than diversity, this was a huge plus for a foreign workforce. However, culturally, the Japanese Brazilians stand out because of the way they walk, the way they sit, and the way they express their emotions, all of which are more casual, open, and familiar than is customary in Japan. They also speak Japanese in a way that is noticeably imperfect, if they speak Japanese at all. The Japanese often treat the Japanese Brazilians with suspicion, as culturally inferior, and as people whose families must have been socially and economically unsuccessful if they had to emigrate from Japan in the first place. They are sometimes mocked as "country bumpkins" on television shows. As a result of their experiences, the Japanese Brazilians who migrate to Japan to work often wind up emphasizing their Brazilian, rather than their Japanese, identity. In Brazil they had emphasized their Japaneseness, rarely participating in events such as Mardi Gras parades. Once in Japan, however, it was clear that they had also acquired Brazilian culture, which they came to embrace and exhibit with pride. Japanese Brazilians now put on an annual Mardi Gras parade in Japan, complete with costumes and music.

In the United States, the often heated debate over immigration is about more than just the number of immigrants coming to our shores and living in communities (Lamphere 1992). Immigration is a very personal and emotional issue that touches fundamental, and often unconscious, beliefs about how we think of ourselves as a people, as a nation, and how we think of American culture (Chavez 1998). And despite immigration being central to how we identify ourselves as a nation, America has had a love-hate relationship with immigrants.

Since colonial days, Americans have desired the economic benefits resulting from immigrant labor while at the same time they have often worried about negative influences of newcomers on American culture and society. In keeping with this love-hate relationship, Americans tend to denigrate this generation of immigrants, while remembering past immigrants fondly. Ironically, the same immigrants in the past were probably just as feared and reviled as some contemporary immigrants. Consider the alarmist sentiments that Benjamin Franklin made about Germans in 1751:

Why should the Palatine boors be suffered to swarm into our settlements, and, by herding together, establish their language and manners, to the exclusion of ours? Why should Pennsylvania, founded by the English, become a colony of aliens, who will shortly be so numerous as to Germanize us, instead of our Anglifying them...?  
(Steinberg 1981).

Franklin's statement reflects concern that "Germanizing" would change and destroy what he viewed as a coherent Anglo-American culture in the colonies. This is a view of culture as static and inelastic, and thus as brittle and vulnerable to changes wrought by immigration. But despite such fears, other colonists desired more immigration to the colonies. Indeed, one of the main articles of the Declaration of Independence of July 4, 1776, was a complaint about England's unwillingness to let more immigrants come to the colonies:

When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another...a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation...The present King of Great Britain... has endeavored to prevent the population of these states; for that purpose obstructing the laws of naturalization of foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migration hither.

Come hither immigrants did. The nineteenth century became *the* century of immigration, first from northern European countries such as the various countries making up the United Kingdom, Ireland, Germany, and Sweden. China and Japan also sent many immigrants beginning in the mid-1800s. By the late 1800s, immigrants were overwhelmingly from southern and eastern European countries, such as Italy, Austria, Hungary, Poland, and Russia. Because these "new" immigrants differed from the previous immigrants, they were often viewed with suspicion and ambivalence, as this article in the *Literary Digest* in 1892 strongly indicates:

Ignorant, unskilled, inert, accustomed to the beastliest conditions, with little social aspirations, with none of the desire for air and light and room, for the decent dress and

home comfort, which our native people possess and which our earlier immigrants so speedily acquired, the presence of hundreds of thousands of these laborers constitutes a menace to the rate of wages and the American standard of living, which to my mind is absolutely appalling.... Taking whatever they can get in the way of wages, living like swine, crowded into filthy tenement houses, piecing out their miserable existence by systematic begging and by picking over garbage barrels, the arrival on our shores of such masses of degraded peasantry brings the greatest danger that American labor has ever known (Simon 1985).

Despite being thought of as biologically inferior to the stock of Americans at the time and thus unable to fully assimilate into American life, these immigrant groups fared well by today's standards. An Irish American became president (Kennedy), President Reagan liked to joke that his grandfather was an illegal alien from Ireland, and an Italian American is on the U.S. Supreme Court. In short, the descendants of southern and eastern European immigrants are integrated into every aspect of American life. The point is that immigrants once thought to be harbingers of the decline of American culture and people are now considered just plain Americans. Racialized immigrants (Asians, Africans and Afro-Caribbeans, and Latin Americans), however, may find their acceptance in the American mainstream less of a linear process (Pedraza 1996).

The current movement of peoples across national borders raises many of the same concerns as those of earlier periods. But less often is there critical reflection on the underlying causes of transnational migration. A nation can either produce the labor force it needs (by having babies) or import labor. Most of the industrialized nations of Europe, the United States, and Japan are experiencing large numbers of immigrants, partially due to low fertility rates and a demand for unskilled and semiskilled labor. According to the Population Reference Bureau's 2002 Population Data Sheet, the number of children per woman was at a low of 1.2 in eastern Europe, 1.3 in southern Europe, 1.5 in western Europe, and 1.6 in northern Europe. Particularly low fertility rates were the norm in the Czech Republic (1.1 children per woman), Spain (1.2), and Romania (1.2), with slightly higher fertility rates in many countries, including Italy (1.3), Germany (1.3), Austria, (1.3) and Russia (1.3) (Bureau 2002). In the United States, 1.23 children are born per woman between ages 18 and 44 (Bean, et al. 2000). Japan's fertility rate is 1.3, the lowest since 1947, and families who produce more than two children receive rewards (French 2000; *Newsweek* 2000).

With such low fertility rates, even modest economic growth can lead to a demand for immigrant labor. But the response to increased immigration has also been ambivalent and, at times, negative. Indeed, right-wing political parties have gained ground in many countries, especially in Europe.<sup>3</sup> For example, Denmark has witnessed increased anti-immigrant sentiments associated with the rise of the Danish People's Party (Williams 2000b). Despite Denmark's being among the 10 richest countries in the world, immigrants are blamed for the few economic ills that exist in that country. Especially troublesome is the need to import labor with computer skills from countries such as India and Russia. In other European countries, as well, right-wing political parties and leaders have gained popularity as a result of pandering to xenophobic sentiments toward foreigners (Los Angeles

Times 2000). Examples abound of such sentiment: Jean-Marie Le Pen in France, Joerg Haider in Austria, Pia Kjaersgaard and the Danish People's Party Denmark, Filip Dewinter in Belgium, the British National Party and the National Front in England, and Pat Buchanan and a number of anti-immigrant organizations in the United States (Brugge 1995; Oakley 2001; Williams 2000b).<sup>4</sup>

Reaction to increased international migration has sharpened the debate over national identity and even the meaning of citizenship in many countries (On 2003). Nations that have not included immigration as a core element of the national identity suddenly see their taken-for-granted assumptions challenged. As a spokesman for Denmark's right-wing Danish People's Party commented "We don't believe in Denmark turning into a multiethnic society. We have never been an immigrant country, and we will never be one" (Williams 2000b). Jean Marie Le Pen's National Front Party in France views large-scale immigration "as a recipe for cultural suicide" (Tannann 2001). In March 2001, Tory leader William Hague, speaking at the Tory party's spring conference in Harrogate, said that the United Kingdom was becoming a "foreign land" because of immigration. Hague went on to promise that, if elected, the Tories would "give you back your country" (News 2001a). In a similar vein, Italy's Silvio Berlusconi, leader of the center-right House of Freedom coalition that won a majority of seats in both the Chamber of Deputies and Senate, made reducing immigration one of his campaign themes: "Italy's borders are a sieve. The immigrants sail here across the Adriatic, or get over the border with Slovenia, and then they disappear. . . That has meant a rise in crime. What we need to ensure is that any illegal aliens arrested for committing crimes are repatriated immediately. They cannot be tolerated" (News 2001b).

Even in countries like the United States that have historically received immigrants, some residents may believe that their national identity is under attack as the number of immigrants increase. For example, Peter Brimelow (1992) holds in disdain America's self-image as a "nation of immigrants," calling it something; that children are taught in schools nowadays, "a sort of multicultural Pledge of Allegiance." He calls for an end to immigration into the United States: "It may be time to close the second period of American history with the announcement that the U.S. is no longer an 'immigrant country.'" It should be noted that Brimelow himself is an immigrant, from the United Kingdom.

Brimelow is not alone. Many have expressed concern about the large numbers of immigrants in the United States endangering the common values that defined the American way of life by bringing their plurality of differences, languages, and histories (Geyer 1996; Huntington 2004; Kadetsky 1994; Lamm and Imhoff 1985; Maharidge 1996; Tatalovich 1997). Patrick Buchanan, a nationally recognized conservative politician, provides us with perhaps one of the best articulations of contemporary American nativism (Bosniak 1997; Johnson 1997; ~Perea 1997). In a *Los Angeles Times* opinion piece, Buchanan (Buchanan 1994) expressed a deep concern for the future of the "American nation." His main anxiety concerned the very real possibility that, sometime in the near future, the majority of "Americans" would trace their roots not to Europe but to Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, and the Pacific Islands. He thus asked: What would it mean for "America" if, for example, south Texas and



Southern California became almost exclusively Latino?<sup>5</sup> He provided the following answer: "Each will have tens of millions of people whose linguistic, historic, and cultural roots are in Mexico," and thus "like Eastern Ukraine, where 10 million Russian-speaking 'Ukrainians' now look impatiently to Moscow, not Kiev, as their cultural capital, America could see, in a decade, demands for Quebec-like status for Southern California" (ibid., B7). For Buchanan, this prospect is not very appealing. He notes that the United States is already suffering for this trend toward cultural differentiation:

Crowding together immigrant and minority populations in our major cities [is bringing] greater conflict. We saw that in the 1992 [Los Angeles] riots. Blacks and Latinos have lately collided in Washington's Adams-Morgan neighborhood, supposedly the most tolerant and progressive section of the nation's capital. The issue: bilingual education. Unlike 20 years ago, ethnic conflict is today on almost every front page (ibid.).

From Buchanan's perspective, the only solution to this problem of ethnic-cultural conflict is to put a stop to immigration: "If America is to survive as 'one nation, one people,' we need to call a timeout on immigration, to assimilate the tens of millions who have lately arrived. We need to get to know one another, to live together, to learn together America's language, history, culture and traditions of tolerance, to become a new national family, before we add a hundred million more" (ibid.). He concluded the article by noting that "Americans" must have the courage to make the decisions that affect "our" lives; otherwise, others will "make those decisions for us, not all of whom share our love of the America that seems to be fading away" (ibid.).

*Newsweek's* cover illustration on August 9, 1993, captured the image of America dying as a result of immigration. The cover depicts the Statue of Liberty drowning. She is barely visible above a flood of water. Only the top half of her head and her arm holding the torch remain above water. Dark-skinned people circle her in boats, unwilling to leave her alone in her torment. Her eyes are downcast, as if in shock and bewilderment, as she watches the coming peril but is powerless to act.

The meaning of the image is not difficult to read (Chavez 2001). The nation, in the guise of the Statue of Liberty, is in danger. The flood is a common metaphor for the flow of immigrants to the United States. And with floods come anger as the raging waters overwhelm people, land, and nations. The people in boats represent the immigrants themselves, who are characterized as relentless in their pursuit of America (the Statue of Liberty) and who ultimately destroy that which they so eagerly seek. The image speaks clearly that the nation is at risk because of the uncontrolled movement of large numbers (floods) of immigrants. The text underscores the image's message: "Immigration Backlash: A Newsweek Poll: 60% of Americans Say Immigration Is 'Bad for the Country.'"

The image reflects a common view of culture and draws us to conclude that changes wrought by immigration spell the death of the nation. The theory of culture embedded in this message is that culture is static and nonresilient, that culture should reproduce itself, and that change can destroy a culture. Nothing in the image reflects change being transformative, or of the ability of American

culture to absorb that which is new and then to turn the newness into something quintessentially American. Many examples of this process exist in American history. American culture is neither static nor immutable; it has constantly recreated itself. And yet, the message this image conveys is that immigration causing the impending death of the American nation and culture.

### CULTURE CHANGE AND CULTURAL REPRODUCTION

Vignette 7: In Yolo County, California, Andres Bermudez is a successful tomato farmer (Mena 2001). He is so successful, in fact, that his compatriots call him the "Tomato King." He came to the United States illegally 30 years ago, but has since become a U.S. citizen. Long active in U.S.-based organizations that provided money for projects in his hometown of Jerez, Zacatecas, Mexico, Bermudez ran for mayor of Jerez and won on July 1, 2001. He became the first U.S. citizen to win elected office in Mexico. Mexico has been promoting a "dual nationality" program that allows Mexicans who become citizens in other countries to retain property and nationality rights (Mena 2001). Voting in Mexican elections has been another issue. Although Mexico promotes transnational civic engagement, the country has yet to implement a balloting mechanism for U.S.-based Mexican nationals to vote in Mexican elections. Bermudez's election was later overturned because he failed to meet Mexico's residency



requirements, but he finally assumed the position of municipal president of Jerez in September 2004 (Pickel 2004).

Vignette 8: In New York, Indian American college students, both those born in the United States and those who immigrated at an early age, are struggling with issues of identity and Indianness in the American context (Maira 2002). For these second-generation Indian Americans, issues of gender and sexuality are often a point of conflict when it comes to what it means to be "Indian" and what it means to be "Indian American." The tension arises because norms and values that immigrant parents bring with them can become hyper-emphasized, to the point of fossilization, in these immigrant families. For Indian American women, this means that control of their sexuality and public behavior is more important than controlling young men. Immigrant parents view Indian American women as the repositories of the family "izzat," or reputation. Even more, Indian American women are caught in the double bind of representing both tradition and modernity. By adhering to traditional behaviors, they represent authentic Indian ethnic identity. They are the stabilizing factor in cultural reproduction. However, if they change and exhibit "American" cultural behaviors and dress, then they represent change and modernity, and the loss of Indian identity in the American context. Thus, second-generation Indian American women face many pressures from family and community members who expect them to behave in ways that represent ethnic stability and continuity.

Vignette 9: In Long Beach, California, Riem Men, a Cambodian man, reflected on his culture shock at seeing young women taking responsibility in the public sphere. As he so eloquently put it (Yarborough 1996):

In Cambodia, it was always taught that women must obey and respect men. Many of the old books that some Cambodians still read set out rules for a "good woman." She should always go to bed later than her husband and get up earlier than him, so she can attend to all household tasks. If he is a drunkard or adulterer or gambler, he is still always right. And even if he curses her, she should be quiet and respectful. If she follows these rules she'll be considered the best woman in the community and when she dies she'll go to heaven.

When I grew up in Cambodia no one had any different ideas about that, so it all seemed natural and right. In my mind, women were a group of people who were there to take care of the house and raise children. They were regarded as very weak people, and they certainly had no chance to express opinions on such matters as politics.

Therefore you can imagine my surprise when I first landed in San Francisco with a group of 350 other Asian officers and at our orientation an American girl [who looked] about 19 years old got on stage and talked in front of hundreds of high-ranking officers. She didn't even seem nervous, just normal, and I thought: Oh, my God! I've never seen anything like this before! Yet it was exciting to see a woman taking that kind of role and I felt admiration for her. Suddenly, it seemed appropriate. And as time went on, all my ideas began to change.

When people migrate they often come into contact with different nations, or people, who also often speak a different language and share different cultural views of the world and different ways of organizing their social lives. Today, nations are often associated with states with formal political borders. One of the

most difficult problems migration raises is how to *think* about culture and what happens as people move and mix, or migrate and interact with people in different places. Too often culture is conceptualized as a "thing," as something that mechanically gets reproduced from one generation to the next. If novelty is introduced, or change occurs, and the system does not appear to reproduce itself then fears arise that the culture is broken, failed to function properly, or is about to be destroyed. To parents, this could signal the breakdown of their way of life. Those experiencing rapid in-migration could view the newcomers as unwilling to learn about the welcoming society's culture. Immigrants might also desire their children reproduce their parents' cultural beliefs and values and this can generate transgenerational tensions and conflicts (Espirltu 2003).

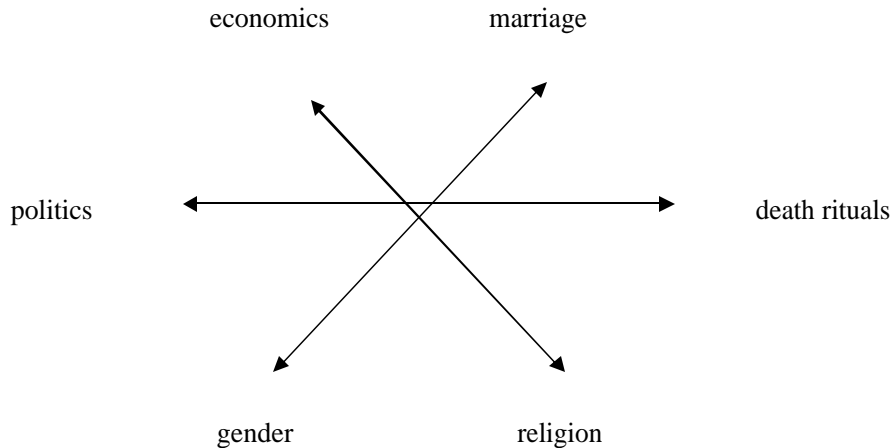
To a certain extent, anthropologists have had a hand in creating this problem of thinking of culture as mechanically reproducing itself. Anthropology became popular early in the twentieth century as part of a discourse on human societies. One of the prominent theories of culture and society at the time was functionalism, which later came to be known as structural-functionalism. In this perspective, the various elements of a society "functioned" in a way that produced or maintained the overall social system. Bronislaw Malinowski (1960 [1944]) believed that "each culture can be understood as an integrated whole of parts, autonomous, partly coordinated institutions" (cited in Salzman 2001, 14). Interdependence, maintenance, equilibrium, and continuity of the system as a whole were keys to functionalism and structural-functionalism. In this view, there is not so much change as cultural reproduction with little change. Radcliffe-Brown, another leading theorist of the time put it this way: "The function of any recurrent activity, such as a the punishment of a crime, or a funeral ceremony, is the part it plays in the social life as a whole and therefore the contribution of it makes to the maintenance of social structure" (Radcliffe-Brown 1948). Change, in this view, is not as important to understand as the coherent cultural system as a whole. Indeed, change was difficult to even articulate in this theory. Interestingly, functionalism contrasts with an earlier anthropological theory, diffusionism, which focused on the diffusion of cultural traits across geographic areas. But functionalism and structural-functionalism described cultures and societies as independent, self-sustaining, and autonomous cultures (Salzman 2001).

The arrows in Figure 12.1 represent the way particular cultural domains mutually reinforced the stability and coherence of the overall sociocultural system.

The seeming continuity and mechanical reproduction inherent in functionalism and structural-functionalism lead to the critique of functionalist theories as representing cultures and societies as static and ahistorical. As Eric Wolf (1982) argued, such thinking resulted in many non-Western peoples viewed as people without history." However, societies and cultures are, or were even then, rarely, secluded and cut off from their neighbors and the larger world.

Contemporary anthropological theory conceptualizes culture and change differently. Culture is still the system of meanings that people construct to order to their world, and the material productions and social relationship that are part of that cultural world. However, cultural reproduction is not cloning. One generation does not transmit a culture in perfect formation to the next.

Figure 12.1 Functionalist View of Culture



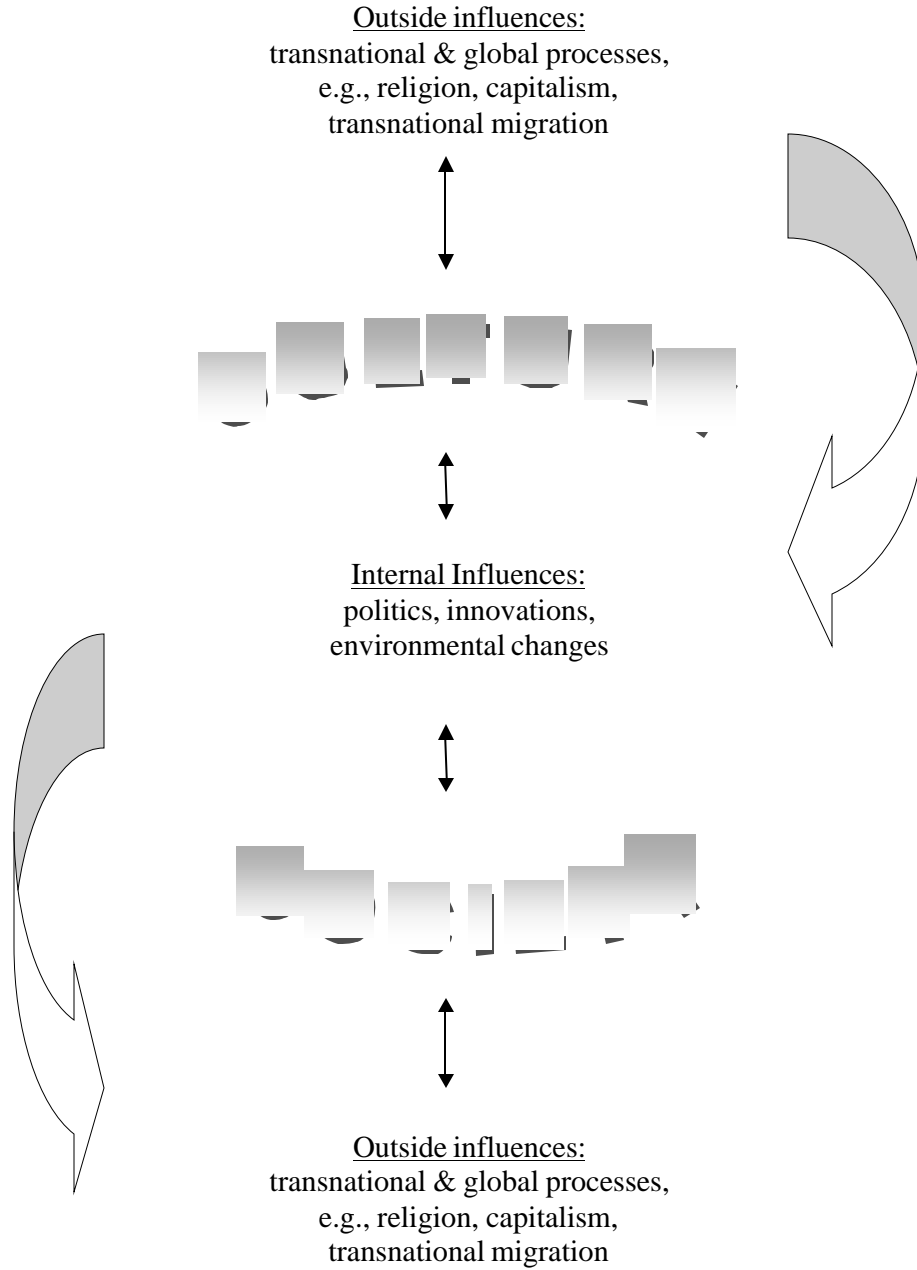
generation because the individuals in the next generation are subject to flows of information from many directions at once: from parents, peers, teachers (formal and informal), and the many other interests and institutions in the society and beyond. Therefore, reproduction is never complete; cultural systems are not static. Cultures are dynamic and subject to historical processes, even though culture change is constrained by preexisting cultural understandings and social structures, but these too are subject to change.

Culture is not a fixed, thing-like concept, but is fluid, dynamic, processual, and constructed. Cultural understandings of the world are contested and open to new information so that, although some aspects of culture have continuity, change and even a lack of consensus also exist because of the multiple perspectives found among members of a society. Differences occur because members of social groups differ in terms of gender, age, relationships, where they were born, where they were raised, ethnic/racial identities, and many other ways. Moreover, a sociocultural system is subject to influences for change that originate both internally and externally to the system, which is really a system within systems, as Immanuel Wallerstein (1989 [1974]) argued. A model of culture change along these parameters would look very different from the previous functionalist one (see Figure 12.2).

Cultures and societies can change from internal dynamics, history, and societal pressures. On the other hand, people do not live in isolation. They are often in contact with other people who behave differently and have different ideas about the world. Sometimes people borrow from these others freely. Other times, these outside influences are imposed. Religion was one such transnational force. Whether brought by the sword or diffused more peacefully, major religions have moved from people to people and nation to nation. Conquerors and colonizers often imposed new religions and new ways of living on the people they conquered and colonized. This was as true in the past when “world” religions, such as Christianity and Islam, were spread across national borders, as it today, when Christian evangelists pursue converts in U.S.-occupied Iraq.

But religion is not the only transnational force in history or in contemporary life. The spread of capitalism in the world today is another such transnational force (Ong 1999). Globalization is a term that refers to how the world and its

FIGURE 12.2  
CULTURE CHANGE:  
CULTURAL AND SOCIAL REPRODUCTION



people are increasingly becoming integrated into one giant economic capital system. The spread of world capitalism also carries with it a spread of Western – often American - culture. One thing anyone who travels the world notices is how common American fast-food restaurants have become, a process often referred to as the McDonaldization of the society (Ritzer 2000). But globalization does not just refer to the movement of capital and the search for cheap labor. It is also about the movement of people, ideas, movies, music, "traditional" Chinese Medicine, and a whole host of flows unmoored from fixed nation places (Zhan 2001). Jonathan Inda and Renato Rosaldo (2002) define a "world of globalization" as

... a world of motion, of complex interconnections. Here capital traverses frontiers almost effortlessly, drawing more and more places into dense networks of financial interconnections; people readily (although certainly not freely and without difficulty) cut across national boundaries, turning countless territories into spaces where various cultures converge, clash, and struggle with each other; commodities drift briskly from one locality to another, becoming primary mediators in the encounter between culturally distant others; images flicker quickly from screen to screen, providing people with resources from which to fashion new ways of being in the world; and ideologies circulate rapidly through ever-expanding circuits, furnishing fodder for struggles couched in terms of cultural authenticity verses foreign influence.

New technologies that allow rapid electronic communication and faster transportation have made possible the increasing movement of people, capital, ideas, and cultures around the world and across national borders (Appadurai 1996). Although these powerful, worldwide trends may be occurring, they do not simply move around the world unimpeded. People living in local areas often have something to say about how global ideas and ways of life are integrated into local life. However, as some of the vignettes presented here indicate, change often results in backlash, as not everyone is pleased with change, especially if it upsets established relations of power and privilege. Forces for change and those resistant to change lead to a synthesis of new and old cultural beliefs and practices. This new crystallization of local life is not necessarily as hard and durable as the metaphor of a crystal suggests, because here, too, global life continues to influence. But at the same time, the local can effect changes in the global because change can occur in multiple directions, as the arrows in Figure 12.1 indicate.

In this process of change, the movement of people plays an important role. When people move from one social and cultural system to another, changes occur. Immigrants encounter new ideas and behavior while at the same time introducing their ideas and behaviors to the receiving society and culture. The next section examines specific examples of how migration and culture causes change in unanticipated ways. Over time, what was seen as new becomes routine and ordinary.

### IMMIGRATION AND CULTURE CHANGE

Anthropologists often take the long view of culture change. Immediate reactions to newcomers (immigrants) in a society often focus on difference. New people in the neighborhood speaking a different language, practicing a different religion, and putting up signs on stores in foreign languages all raise ethnocentric responses and even fears. Over time, these differences may not be as pronounced because what was once new can become part of the accepted way things are, and even become central to a nation's identity and symbols of that identity.

Anthropologists are likely to speak of the culture changes that occur in a world of moving people, ideas, and cultural products as a blending, fusion, syncretization, hybridization, and creolization. These concepts reflect the multidimensional, multidirectional, and often unpredictable changes that take place as people and ideas, beliefs and behaviors collide and interweave into new cultural formations. Culture is always an emergent form of life (Fischer 2003). Anthropologists prefer these concepts to the more unidirectional flow of changes presented by models of assimilation, which are often inadequate to capture the complex process of culture change (Foner 2003, 3~35). A few examples make the point.

Food is often considered the symbol of a culture's identity and authenticity. Food is so closely associated with particular ethnic and national groups that this relationship is often taken for granted as natural, as if it always existed. People less often consider the history of food and its essential associations. In the United States, for example, burritos are considered Mexican food, but they were really invented in the United States. In Italy, Italianness is represented by food. The



very image of tomatoes, tomato sauce, and pasta conjures up connotations about what it means to be Italian (Barthes 1972). Carol Delaney (2004) notes that Italians are particularly identified with tomato sauce, what Americans often refer to as spaghetti sauce. Tomato sauce is a cultural force that holds generations Italians together. However, before Europeans migrated to the Americas, Europe had no tomato sauce. It took years for the *tomatl* (as the Aztecs called the fruit in the Nahuatl language) to become accepted in European kitchens. Did the introduction of tomatoes destroy Italian culture (or cultures, as the state of Italy did not yet exist)? The introduction of tomatoes to the Italian peninsula actually resulted in tomato sauce eventually becoming the quintessential symbol of what it means to be Italian.

Another example starts close to my home. My local airport is John Wayne Airport in Orange County, California. For years, a statue of John Wayne, dressed as a cowboy, has been displayed prominently at the airport. But where does the "cowboy" come from? The image of the cowboy that John Wayne personifies has not always existed. The cowboy is a far cry from the image of Daniel Boone and the frontiersman of the colonial states in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth



*John Wayne's statue at John Wayne/Orange County airport*

centuries. When whites and blacks from the colonial states moved West they encountered people in what is now New Mexico and Texas living a life well adapted to cattle and sheep ranching and herding. They were *vaqueros*, Mexican cowboys, from whom the Americans learned the cowboy way of life. Imagine how foreign the first American cowboys-with their big hats (*sombreros*), bandannas, ponchos, leather leggings over their pants, boots, ropes, and general demeanor-must have looked. And the words these new types of Americans used for the items and the techniques of their trade were essentially foreign, too, because many were words borrowed from Spanish (some of which were in turn borrowed from the Moors in Spain) (Graham 1994). Some cowboy words and their origin include,

### Spanish

Vaqueros "men who work with cows"  
 chaparreras (pant leg coverings)  
 la reata (rope)  
 lazo (noose on rope)  
 reinda (ropes riders used to guide horse)  
 mecate (rope made of horse tail hairs)  
 Jaquima (bitless bridle to tame horses)  
 broncos (wild horses)  
 mesteno (trained horse)  
 corral (pen)  
 darle vuelta (roping and stopping cattle in their tracks  
 by quickly snubbing a rope around the saddle horn)  
 rodeo  
 juzgado (local jail)

### English

buckaroos (cowboys)  
 chaps  
 lariat  
 lasso  
 reins  
 McCarty  
 hackamore  
 broncs  
 mustang  
 corral  
 dolly roping  
 rodeo  
 hoosegow

But perhaps just as important as the words cowboys borrowed and adapted from the *vaqueros* was their lifestyle and personal characteristics: the strong, silent type whose time alone on the range made him manly (macho), independent, and self-reliant. Is this not the image John Wayne, the cowboy, exudes? In a few short years, the foreign-looking cowboy became the central figure in the myth of the West, and his qualities and characteristics came to epitomize the quintessential elements of what it means to be American. Did migrating West, encountering Mexican *vaquero* culture, and constructing the cowboy destroy American culture? Or did American culture change and in the process incorporate novelty? The answer is the statue standing at John Wayne airport.

Another example shows the unanticipated ways culture changes as a result of immigration. Generations of Mexicans lived in Texas before it became part of the United States. As discussed previously, the cowboy was constructed out of the meeting of Americans and Texans in the early 1800s. However, another group of immigrants, Germans, had a profound and lasting effect on Tejanos (Texans of Mexican descent). Thousands of Germans migrated to Texas in the 1800s (Jordan 1966). They brought with them the accordion and their fondness of the polkas that they played during their parties. Locals heard the music and picked up the accordion, adapting it to fit their needs. Soon Tejanos were playing a new style of music in Texas that came to be known as "conjunto," "Tex-Mex,"

"Tejano," and "norteno" music (San Miguel 2002). To many Americans it was "Mexican" music, and yet, this music was a real American invention, blending German polkas, Mexican ballads, and other song styles (see also the excellent PBS documentary *Accordion Dreams*). The late Texas singer, Selena Perez was one of the most nationally famous performers of this style. In the long run, Tejanos did not lose their culture because they incorporated aspects of German culture into their lives. Their culture changed and was enriched in many ways because of such exchanges.

What are the lessons for anthropologists and others living in today's world of movement? It is that migrations engender dislocations, opportunities frictions, fears, and change. Most likely, the changes that occur will be unanticipated because transformations that cultures undergo are difficult to plan and predict. One thing is certain: the sets of cultural practices and understandings about the world that will emerge in the near future will make sense and seem as natural and enduring as the cultures and world we live in today.

## Notes

1. See Federal Statistical Office Germany, [http://www.statistik-bund.de/e\\_home.htm](http://www.statistik-bund.de/e_home.htm).
2. See National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) France in Facts and Figures, [http://www.insee.fr/en/home/home\\_page.asp](http://www.insee.fr/en/home/home_page.asp) [QA: This link does not work. Please advise. This one works, Leo]
3. There has also been an outcry against anti-immigrant politics and actions (Dahlburg 2000; Williams 2000c; Yee 2002).
4. The list of anti-immigrant organizations in the United States is too numerous to detail here, but includes the Federation for American Immigration Reform, American Citizens Together, Voice of Citizens Together, Stop Immigration Now, and California Coalition for Immigration Reform. See (Bandhauer 2001; Chavez 1997; Maharidge 1996; Reimers 1998) for a more thorough discussion of anti-immigrant organizations in the United States.
5. See Samuel Huntington (2004) for a more recent example of anti-Mexican discourse.

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