Seminar in Urban Problems: Perspectives on Urban Poverty

POLS 609-75-4158/UPA 630-75-4158

University of Louisville

Political Science Department

Topic: "The culture of poverty"

Sleptcov Nikita

Introduction

The culture of poverty is a concept which, in our opinion, has a potentially explanatory power in uncovering the problem of ongoing poverty in the USA and probably in any country. Universalism of the cultural trace of poverty can be explained by Lewis's idea that culture of poverty transcends itself through national differences (Lewis, 1963). Any country on the planet has poor people (some more and some less) among its citizens. Poverty seems to be inherent in modern capitalist economies. "The Marxist principle that inequality and poverty are inevitably produced by capitalist societies" has its empirical basis (Peet, 1975, p. 564).

Katz in his book "The Undeserving Poor: America's Enduring Confrontation with Poverty: Fully Updated and Revised" distinguishes among different origins of poverty. He, though not excluding others, implicitly assumes that the main reason why we have such a problem as poverty is the capitalist economy itself. There is no doubt that the economy structure and markets are the key factors causing poverty, but it can be argued that poverty is sustained with the help of cultural traits which are generated in poor people and passed down from one generation to the other.

Moreover, the culture of poverty has become a conservative tool to criticize the left in their pursuit of more "active" government involvement. Therefore, not only did the notion of a culture of poverty become an explanatory factor of the problem of poverty, it is used as a political and ideological mechanism in "political battles".

The concept of culture of poverty cannot be fully understood without discussing broader approach to culture in general and political culture in particular. In the paper, we will attempt to provide the genealogy of the concept of a culture of poverty starting with the general idea of culture and various criticisms. We will also use Antonio Gramsci's "cultural hegemony" approach to culture with its application to culture of

poverty in particular. We argue that his neo-marxist understanding of culture is a useful tool to criticize the idea of culture of poverty.

The concept of culture: main approaches

What is culture? The question has not been fully answered yet and continuous producing controversies among scholars of different fields. Phycologists use it when they cannot explain dependent variables; the term becomes even more obscure when organizations in different countries are compared. As Child puts it, "the employment of the culture concept has been an excuse for intellectual laziness, whereby "culture" has often served simply as a synonym for "nation" without any further theoretical grounding. In effect, national differences found in characteristics of organizations or their members have been ascribed to...national differences, period." (Child, 1981, p. 304). Child's critique is not new to theoretical discourse. Concepts such as "culture" are sometimes difficult to research. Many scientists would agree that culture is a *fuzzy* term. J.W. Berry writes, "the c-word, mysterious, frightening and to be avoided" (W., 1997, p. 144). Jahoda notes that "culture" is the most elusive term in the vocabulary of the social sciences and the number of books devoted to the topic would fill many library shelves (Jahoda, 1984). Despite the significant amount of controversies and disagreements sparked by the concept of culture, we would argue that culture certainly exists and can be studied independently. Culture is intuitively perceivable. It is not only language differences which are quite obvious but far broader distinctions a scholar can make simply looking at different countries. For example, anthropological which assumes that culture means a very complex and whole entity of analysis. It can manifest itself in art, architecture, literature, and social life.

Speaking of the etymology of the word culture, we may see that the origin of the Latin word "cultura" is decipherable. It comes from the verb "colo" (infinitive colere), which means "to tend", "to cultivate", and "to till," among other things (Tucker, 1931).

Another possible object of the verb "colo" is animus ("character"). In that case, the expression would refer to the cultivation of the human character. Consequently, the Latin noun "cultura" can be associated with education and refinement" (Minkov, 2013, p. 10). As a modern scientific term, the culture was used by the Victorian anthropologist Edward Tylor. The culture was understood as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by a man as a member of a society" (Greenblatt, 1987). Hence, from the beginning it attempted to become an encompassing term explaining a wide variety of social life.

Later in the middle of the 20th century sociologists Kroeber and Parsons proposed a structural-functional definition of culture which, they thought, should mean, "transmitted and created content and patterns of values, ideas, and other symbolic-meaningful systems as factors in the shaping of human behavior" (A. L. Kroeber and T. Parsons, 1958, p. 583). Scholars who worked in post-structural tradition like White and Geertz emphasized symbolic part of the culture. White writes, "by the culture we mean an extrasomatic, temporal continuum of things and events dependent upon symbolling" (White, 1959, p. 3). Geertz makes the similar definition and writes, "the concept of culture I espouse…is essentially a semiotic one. Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take cultures to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law, but an interpretive one in search of meaning" (Geertz, 2000, p. 5). Therefore, from the position of poststructuralism culture is seen as a network of communications where the key role is played by the language. Semiotic explanation of culture is common for post-modernists, but it does not really give an understanding of what culture consists of, albeit coincides with common usage of culture as literature and fine arts, which are part of the culture but no its biggest part. Thus, we argue that culture cannot

be reduced to language in particular and means of communications in general. Another scholar Kluckhohn writes as follows:

> "Culture consists in patterned ways of thinking, feeling, and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts: the essential core of culture consists traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values" (Kluckhohn, 1951, p. 86)

A number of theoretical quarrels among social scientists gave rise to more practical approaches to the notion of culture explicitly stated by Segal. He insisted that instead of trying to conceptualize culture, scientist should attempt to "turn to the real business at hand and intensify the search for whatever ecological, sociological and cultural variables might link with established variations in human behavior" (Segall, 1984, p. 154). An appeal for a more pragmatic approach raised by Segall aims at putting an end to fruitless discussions about which definition is better than the others.

Nevertheless, not only were theoretical controversies raised about the terms but also what can be considered as part of a broader culture.[1] It is important when we think of what should and should not be studied and hence published with respect to culture. From that point of view a cultural student can select different independent variables and see how, for instance, climate influences attitudes, and values. Montesquieu wrote in his The Spirit of the Laws that people living in hot countries were "too hot-tempered," while those in northern countries are "icy" or "stiff" (Montesquieu, 2015). Some of the explicitly external variables with respect to culture – also known as "exogenous" or "extraneous"—are climate, geographic location, and pathogen prevalence. According to van de Vijver and Leung, gross national product, educational systems, and even health care institutions are culture-related variables (Van de Vijver F. J. R., & Leung, K., 1997, p. 4).

---

[1] see the Jahoda, 1984

Here we come to the most pressing issues for scientists of culture, namely what causes what. According to Jahoda, if culture is observed as including behaviors, it is not correct to say that culture causes behavior because that would be a circular explanation (Jahoda, 1984). And such a problem can be found in works of Lewis (1968), for example. Fischer and Schwartz in their research doubt that culture determines values (Fischer & Schwartz, 2011). Singelis, Bond, Sharkey, and Lai described two types of culture: residing inside individuals and outside of them (Singelis, T., Bond, M., Sharkey, W., & Lai, S. , 1999). The first type is what Triandis called subjective culture (Triandis, 2002) or what Hofstede referred to as software of the human mind: beliefs, values, and internalized interaction patterns (Hofstede, 2001). The second type includes the man-made environment and can consist of everything that people have created, including institutions and art. We think that culture definitely does determine values. It is the main characteristic of the culture. There are plenty of research showing a correlation between values and culture. However, it is questionable that only culture defines values.

Rohner argues that there are two other distinctions in the conceptualization of culture. First of all, there is a contrast between culture *as a system of behavior* and culture *as a set of meanings*. Second of all, there are scholars, called realists, who attribute *an independent existence to culture*, versus others, called nominalists, who view it as *a subjective human construct* (Minkov, 2013; Rohner, 1984).

We want to elaborate more on differences between those approaches because they shed light on particular aspects of understanding of culture.

Subjective culture is understood as something invisible that exists in the human mind. In his earlier works, Geert Hofstede explained culture as mental programming or software of the mind. However, he noted that not all elements of collective mental programming should be viewed as a culture (Hofstede, 2001). For example, collective and individual identities may not be classifiable as cultural elements. They provide an answer to the question "Where do I belong" (p. 10) or "Who/what are we?" and

"Who/what am I?" According to Hofstede (2001), populations that share similar cultural values may sometimes fight each other if they have adopted different identities. For that reason, religious identities should be distinguished from cultures.

Objective culture is conceptualized as a product of human activities; therefore, it is something "outside" of them. Here there may be the cultural (material) objects of humans such as fine art, architecture, clothing, work instruments that have objective existence. Institutions (formal and informal), such as marriage systems, and laws (including inheritance systems, taboos, etc.), and political or religious bodies, are examples of invisible elements of objective culture (Minkov, 2013, p. 14). Informal institutions sometimes may be superior in regulating behavior to written laws. For example, in Russian empire (before the revolution of 1917) duels between nobility were commonplace, although forbidden by law. For duelists, it was worse to refuse a duel than to die. "Where do informal constraints come from?" – Douglas North asks, "They come from socially transmitted information and are a part of the heritage that we call culture" (North, 1996, p. 37). Culture as a system of behavior is one of the most common approaches to the issue and, in our opinion, the most promising. According to Brown, "culture consists of the conventional patterns of thoughts, activities, and artifacts that are passed on from generation to generation." (Brown, 1991, p. 40)

The importance of socialization is emphasized by Parsons, who combines the Durkheimian theory of normative constraint with the Weberian theory of meaningful individual action in the bold proposal that norms have a psychological existence: through "socialization" they are "internalized" by the individuals (Welch, 2013). Parsons writes, "the normal concrete individual is a morally disciplined personality. This means above all that the normative elements have become "internal" and "subjective" to him. He becomes, in a sense, "identified" with them (Parson, 1968, pp. 385-386). He then adds, in a footnote: "They are, in Freudian terminology, "introjected" to form a "superego"" (Parson, 1968, pp. 386, n.1). Boyd and Richerson understand culture as the

transmission from one generation to the next, via teaching and imitation, of knowledge, values, and other factors that influence behavior (Boyd, R., & Richerson, P. J, 1985, p. 2). However, not every scientist purports this idea of an inextricable connection between values and behavior. William Haviland makes a claim that,

> "Recent definitions [of culture] tend to distinguish more clearly between actual behavior, on the one hand, and the abstract values, beliefs, and perceptions of the world that lie behind that behavior on the other. To put it another way, culture is not observable behavior, but rather the values and beliefs that people use to interpret experience and generate behavior, and that is reflected in their behavior" (Haviland, 2007).

Culture can be also understood as a set of meanings. Pepitone and Triandis define culture as "shared meanings that are encoded into the norms that constitute it" (Pepitone A., Triandis H., 1987, p. 485). Taken to an extreme, this position may severely reduce the perceived content and scope of culture while also clashing with the idea of cross-cultural analysis (Minkov, 2013). "Culture is treated as a symbolic universe of gestures and their micro-interpretation within specific contexts, whereas the broader brush-strokes of cross-cultural comparisons are suspect" (Liu et al., 2010, p. 452). Nevertheless, there are many reasons to be interested in the meanings that a particular culture attaches to a given concept or behavior. From a theoretical point of view, without an understanding of meanings a researcher may not be able to study culture. The practical reason lies in the ability to interpret the meanings within societal contexts, and the example with nobility in Russia illustrates that reason. In we do not put duels in cultural frameworks of the moral codes such acts can be seen as simple suicides and homicides. Another interesting example may be found in the (non) consumption of pork by Muslims and jews. While they do not have a convincing story about the meaning of the pork taboo; they will either simply refer to their Holy Scriptures, which ban the consumption of pork, or say that the pig is a dirty animal, although chickens and cattle

are not cleaner (Harris, 1992). Examples like that raise a question about how we should make sense and interpret cultural traits. We may look for original meaning or attempt to attach a new meaning to it in the modern context. If we take the first option, we might accept Harris's explanation: unlike grass-grazing animals, pigs were costly to raise in the Middle East and were therefore banned (Harris, 1992). But today, the meaning of the ban may be quite different: It can be viewed as a means of instilling self-control and discipline, similar to the practice of fasting, or as a group identity reinforce (Minkov, 2013). Therefore, it is very important to understand a broader cultural context without which an interpretation of social behavior may be impossible.

Culture can be approached as existing independently from individuals. White compares culture with language and supposes that linguists study languages themselves and not people who speak them (White, 1959). Therefore, in order to study culture scientist, especially anthropologists, may look at inheritance systems, social institutions, kinship terminologies, taboos, and religions. People are simply beyond this scientific focus; culture here is at the supra-individual level (Minkov, 2013). Consequently, modern culturologists predominantly view culture as an aggregated collection of individual values, beliefs and attitudes manifesting themselves on a societal level. Despite the determinism of "value-behavior" approach, the question of the independence of culture is still relevant. In our opinion this approach is not particularly interesting because seen as being external to individuals; culture does not give meaning to values and behavior. We argue that individuals are "bearers" of one or the other type of culture and individuals, therefore, can read the "cultural code" which gives meaning to actions of the others.

In conclusion, it is worth mentioning that some of the above-mentioned approaches can be reconciled. Scientist on the endeavor of practical examination of culture cannot do it without proper definition. Therefore, theoretical aquarelles have not been useless. Minkov approves that,

"The goal of such discussions should not be to arrive at one right and commonly accepted the definition that will once and for all lay the issue to rest. Rather, we should stay open to diverse conceptualizations of culture, provided they are clearly explained by their proponents and make sense to others" (Minkov, 2013, p. 16).

Just as a "society", "culture" is an analytical construct. According to Levitin, a construct is "not directly accessible to observation but inferable from verbal statements and other behaviors and useful in predicting still other observable and measurable verbal and non-verbal behavior" (Levitin, 1973, p. 492). Any construct represents a simplified reality and they are made in order to explain certain complex ideas appropriating them for better understanding. For the purpose of my research, we understand culture as *a set or a system of shared beliefs, values, customs or/and rituals, types of behavior that the members of a society use to cope with their world and with one another, and that are transmitted from generation to generation through learning* (Hall, 2002; Sarah Trenholm & Arthur Jensen, 2000).

From culture to political culture.

Culture is also a very important political concept in a sense that, we would argue, it shapes political behavior. The concept of political culture being understood as strong causal relationships between values and attitudes and political behavior was introduced to political theory in the 1960s by G. Almond and S. Verba who undertook comparative studies of five nations. In their classic work Civic Culture, the authors define national political culture "as the particular distribution of patterns of orientation toward political objects among the members of the nation"(Almond & Verba, 1989, p. 13). Based on Parsons and Shil's approach to the concept of "orientation" they formulate a typology of orientations: "(1) cognitive orientation, that is knowledge of and belief of the political system, its roles and the incumbents of these roles, its inputs and its

outputs; (2) affective orientation, or feelings about the political system, its roles, personnel and performance, and (3) evolutional orientation, the judgments and opinions about political objects that typically involve the combination of value standards and criteria with information and feelings"(Almond & Verba, 1989, p. 14). The authors of "Civic Culture" classified political cultures, concentrating on the political objects individuals are oriented to, especially, the parochial political culture, occurring in traditional societies where political socialization is limited; the subject political culture, where citizens are aware of the governmental authority and do possess affective orientations toward it, yet they are on the "downward flow" side of the political system; and the participant political culture, where citizens tend to be explicitly oriented toward both the output and input aspects of the political system(Almond & Verba, 1989, pp. 16–18). Later they revised their concept due to criticism they received. Almond and Verba introduced the concept of civic culture, related to the receptivity and the democratic character of a polity, as "not a modern culture but one that combines modernity with tradition [...] a pluralistic culture based on communication and persuasion, a culture of consensus and diversity, a culture that permitted change but moderated it." (Almond & Verba, 1989, p. 5,6). The main problem with their approach is the negligence of sub-cultures and the development of abstract relationship to the political structure or institutional arrangements of a polity and thus did not focus on the interrelationship of micro (individual) and macro (institutional) levels of a political system (Pateman, 1989, pp. 68-69, Craig AL, Wayne AC, 1989, p. 334).

Many scientists pointed to the interconnectedness of values and attitudes and actual political behavior (Klingemann, Fuchs, & Zielonka, 2006). "Extensive analysis of the causal linkage between self-expression values and democracy indicates that the causal arrow flows mainly from culture to institutions rather than the other way around, an issue that has been highly controversial in recent research." (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005, p. 5) Therefore, political culture is not seen as real politics but as reflections of

people about politics. This "subjective" vision of politics, notwithstanding uniqueness of every single person, can be aggregated in sub-cultures and cultures.

The a culture of poverty

Katz, discussing poverty in his book "The Undeserving Poor: America's Enduring Confrontation with Poverty", offers six sources of poverty among which are individual failures, places, resources, markets, political economy and power (Katz, 2013, pp. 268-269). Apparently, there is no room for cultural causes of poverty albeit we would argue his view is that culture may be put into the problem of individuals. However, this is not the reason why some people are poor and some are not. Katz would prefer us to understand poverty as "not an unfortunate accident, a residue, an indication that the great American mobility machine missed a minority of the people," but rather as a "necessary result of America's distinctive political economy" (Berkowitz, 1994; Katz, 2013).

In the late 1950s, Americans were shocked by the fact that about 25 percent of them lived in poverty (Harrington, 1962). Such a "discovery" was followed by attempts of economists, sociologists, and anthropologists to understand why there was still poverty "in the midst of abundance" (Roach & Gursslin, 1967, p. 384). Especially popular among these explanations was the "a culture of poverty" thesis[2]. Alice O'Conner writes,

"the idea of a lower-class culture was firmly entrenched in social problem research by the 1940s, although social scientists did not always agree on its

---

[2] Among those who have contributed to the literature on the "a culture of poverty" in American society are Frank Riessman, "The Culturally Deprived Child" (New York: Harper & Bros., 1962); Thomas Gladwin, "The Anthropologist's View of Poverty," in The Social Welfare Forum, 1961 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), pp. 73-86; Jerome Cohen, "Social Work and the A culture of poverty," in Frank Riessman et al. (eds.), "Mental Health of the Poor" (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1964), pp. 128-138; Roland Warren, "Multi-Problem Families: A New Name or a New Problem" (New York: State Charities Aid Association, 1960); Michael Harrington, "The Other America" (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1962); Lee Rainwater, "Marital Sexuality in Four Cultures of Poverty," Journal of Marriage and the Family, 26 (November 1964), pp. 457-466; Robert E. Will and Harold G. Vatter (eds.), "Poverty in Affluence" (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1965).

source. Not until the two decades following World War II, however, did social scientists begin to engage in debate about the existence of an independent culture of poverty that could persist even without the immediate deprivations caused by modernization, class, and race." (Alice O'Connor, 1958, p. 99).

With slight variations all of those students of a culture of poverty maintained that poor share distinctive patterns of values, beliefs, and action, and exhibit a style of life which departs significantly from that of the core culture (Roach & Gursslin, 1967). "Lewis first introduced the idea of a subculture of poverty in July 1958, in San Jose, Costa Rica, at the International Congress of Americanist" (Harvey & Reed, 1996, p. 468). He used the paradigm in the hope to uncover deep roots of the ongoing poverty in the US. For Lewis poverty is "traits of culture or subculture with its own structure and rationale, as a way of life that is passed down from generations to generations along family lines." (Lewis, 1963, p. 187) The especially sound argument for a cultural explanation of poverty has been that poor people live in enclaves, share common social characteristics such as occupation, income, and education, and have a similar way of life (Chilma, 1965, p. 9). Even though Lewis does not explicitly state a definition of a culture of poverty, he does say that one of the reasons for the development of the a culture of poverty is "the lack of effective participation and integration of the poor in the major institutions of the larger society" (Lewis, 1963, p. 189). However, a culture of poverty is not a characteristic of each and every poor person, according to Lewis. He especially highlights "absence of childhood", "early initiation into sex", "free unions", one-parent families, "competition for goods", and "lack of privacy" (Lewis, 1963, p. 191). All of those traits are somehow controversial. Katherine S. Newman in her "No Shame in My Game: The Working Poor in the Inner City", for example, tackles the idea that poor women usually give birth in early age mainly because they have that culture. She shows that young black women tend to give birth while they are in the reproductive age and their mothers are capable of taking care of the kids while they are at work (Katherine S.

Newman, 2000). Moreover, some young affluent whites also sometimes give birth to a child in a young age. However, this is not the only critique that can be attached to the idea. Milton Yinger comments that it is used, "whenever a writer wishes to emphasize the normative aspects of behavior that differ from some general standard." (Yinger, 1960, p. 626) Among the numerous interpretations of subculture, Yinger distinguishes two general usages:

1. One refers to *the normative systems of groups which simply differ from the larger society*. This, he suggests, is the common use of subculture.

2. The second prominent usage emphasizes the *conflict between a group and the larger society as seen by the presence of inverse or counter values*. This version he labels a contra-culture (Yinger, 1960, pp. 627-630)

Therefore, the a culture of poverty is seen either as a "derivative" [3] of the main culture or as a traditional cultural system with a unique set of values developed over many generations (Miller, 1959). Roach & Gursslin distinguish between two versions of the "derivative" type of explanation. "The a culture of poverty is conceived of as either a natural evolvement from the main culture or as a reaction to it, that is, as an emergent stemming from the dynamism of conflict[4]." (Roach & Gursslin, 1967, p. 385) When one thinks about the second approach, no supposition of functional derivation is made. According to Roach & Gursslin, "changing from one version of the a culture of poverty to another in the middle of a presentation is common, and some writers use a combination of several versions, apparently without recognizing that diverse explanatory schemes are implicated." (Roach & Gursslin, 1967, p. 385)

---

[3] The concept of a derivative subculture is a more inclusive term than Yinger's concept of contra-culture which he reserves for subcultures where the conflict element is central. The idea of a derivative subculture implies only that the explanation for the emergence of the subculture is in term of the group's relationship to the main sociocultural system (Roach & Gursslin, 1967, p. 385).

[4] Warren assumes derivation from or general linkage with the main culture (op. cit.). A conception of the culture of the poor as a conflict type is given in Peter Marris, "A Report on Urban Renewal in the United States," in Leonard Duhl (ed.), The Urban Condition (New York: Basic Books, 1963), pp. 123-127.

There are some other criticisms about the culture of poverty concept stressed by Roach & Gursslin, among which are:

1. *Generalizing from related subcultures to the culture of poverty*. The claim here is that a culture of poverty can often be confused with or equated to the subculture of black lower strata. There is not much of empirical evidence about similar phenomena in the case of white poor people (Kempton, 1964). Roach & Gursslin also point to a second questionable extrapolation from delinquent subcultures to the culture of poverty. They write, "in addition to the problem of generalizing from adolescent behavior to adult life, delinquent gangs comprise a very small fraction of the relevant population. Moreover, they consist of working-class as well as lower-class boys." (Roach & Gursslin, 1967, p. 385)

2. *Failure to indicate the purpose served by the concept*. As was said above, the concept of culture can be fuzzy. Since the concept is essentially contested, its application in fully to the convenience of the argument of the user. Unsurprisingly, as Katz writes, "by the 1970s the culture of poverty had become a conservative concept thought of as a justification for mean and punitive policies" (Katz, 2013, p. 10). "For many writers the concept appears to serve as a catch- all for covering gaps in knowledge about the poor. For others, it seems useful both as a descriptive label and as an explanation in itself." (Roach & Gursslin, 1967, p. 386)

3. *Inadequate designation of subcultural characteristics*. It becomes especially evident on the example of Lewis's piece. He established a tradition of thinking of the culture of poverty independent variables as of single-mother families, lack of education, young motherhood, etc. "If, as most writers hold, the term subculture basically refers to a normative system, then it is questionable that such characteristics as overcrowding, poor nutrition, and

unemployment should be classified as normative elements." (Roach & Gursslin, 1967, p. 386).

4. *Lack of specification of independent and dependent variables*. The main problem here is a circular explanation which catches students of a culture of poverty[5]. Generally speaking, the scheme of thinking can be presented as this: some poor people are poor because they have a cultural background which they have because they are poor. In some cases, two siblings of one family have different life paths which break this logic (Wacquant, 2002). Roach & Gursslin notice that,

> "most deficiencies in the concept of a culture of the poor can be traced to a failure to distinguish between culture as description and culture as the cause. *Culture as description* places emphasis upon the common way of life of a group. Used in this way, culture is generally treated as a dependent variable rather than as an independent variable. *Culture as cause* places emphasis on shared patterns of living and transmitted social learning in a society. The primary cause of the younger generation's behavior is the socially transmitted culture of the older generations. It appears that most writers intend the latter, that is, culture as the cause, when they use the concept "culture of poverty," for a major concern is what is held to be the socially transmitted "culture of poverty" from the older generation."
> (Gladwin, 1961, pp. 73-75)

---

[5] See Edwin M. Lemert, "Social Structure, Social Control, and Deviatioln," in Marshall B. Clinard (ed.), Anomie and Deviant Behavior (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1964), pp. 59-60. More generally see Judith Blake and Kingsley Davis, "Norms, Values, and Sanctions," in Robert E. L. Faris (ed.), Handbook of Modern Sociology (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1964), pp. 456-466.

The critique of the culture of poverty concept from the left

Before making any further inquiries, it is worthwhile to mention classical Marxian view on culture. Social determination constitutes a primary factor in Marx's approach to culture. Ideas, we read there, are "reflexes and echoes" of the real life practice of active men. Ideas now are no longer mediated by social structures: they directly reflect those structures which, in turn, reflect the conditions of the material process (Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, 2005). The very dualism between the corporeal and the spiritual that characterizes modern thought must be attributed, according to Marxist theory to the capitalist separation of bodily and mental labor[6](Dupré, 1980, p. 99). Culture is, therefore, a part of what Marx called the "superstructure" which is derived from the economic "base" to perpetuate and sustain the hegemony of the ruling class which is bourgeoisie in a capitalist society. Hence, culture cannot be seen, from classical Marxian view, as an independent area of human activity; its goal is ideologically interpret virtues of laissez-faire economy and democracy as the political tool to sustain the base. Marxists also hold the idea that "inequality and poverty are inevitably produced by capitalist societies, and [that] the social-geographic idea that inequality may be passed on from one generation to the next via the environment of opportunities and services into which each individual is implanted at birth." (Peet, 1975, p. 564) From that particular positions, Lewis takes his idea that engagement in social and political institutions such as labor unions is particularly important for the reduction of the impact of poverty culture on the individual (Lewis, 1963).

Poverty itself for Marx is the result of economic inequalities. Peet writes, "the Marxist view is that inequality is inherent in the capitalist mode of production. Inequality is inevitably produced during the normal operation of capitalist economies,

---

[6] Especially members of the Frankfurt School have noted the division in bourgeois culture. Both Horkheimer and Adorno wrote against the existence of a separate sphere of culture. Herbert Marcuse also stresses the separateness of culture in a capitalist society: "Culture means not so much a better world as a nobler one: a world to be brought about not through the overthrow of the material order of life, but through events in the individual's soul. Humanity becomes an inner state. Freedom, goodness and beauty become spiritual qualities." ("The Affirmative Character of Culture" [1937] in Negations, trans. Jeremy Shapiro [Boston: Beacon Press, 1968], p. 103)

and cannot be eradicated without fundamentally altering the mechanisms of capitalism"(Peet, 1975, p. 564). Negligence of economic inequality in America, Marcus, writes, "has left much of the theoretical debate on poverty in America focused on arguments over who the poor actually are and where they came from, rather than the politics of social inequality in America[7]." (Marcus, 2005, p. 47) Harvey and Reed continue, saying,

> "Capitalism uses machines to revolutionize labor's productivity as no other historical mode of production has. In transforming labor, however, a profound contradiction unfolds from within its mode of production. As capitalism produces ever greater quantities of material wealth, it also creates, of necessity, an industrial reserve army of the chronically unemployed and sub employed whose lives are continually haunted by poverty. That industrial reserve army, along with its superfluity and poverty, is as necessary a byproduct of the capitalist mode of production as is the physical waste and dross generated daily by the material process of production. Whether generated in the world's cosmopolitan centers, or by the colonial depredation of the Third World, as capital penetrates and wrecks traditional cultures, it of necessity produces an unending residue of poverty and pain among those rendered marginal to its productive process. If there is an enduring law of capitalist development, it is this inherent tendency to produce both wealth and poverty simultaneously. It is this contradictory productive requisite, not some supposed defect of the poor themselves that produces modern poverty from one generation to the next." (Harvey & Reed, 1996, p. 480)

Therefore, cultural traits play an insignificant role in sustaining poverty. As a matter of fact, as Harvey and Reed put it, it

[7] See also Maxwell, Andrew (1993) "The Underclass, Social Isolation, and Concentration Effects: The Culture of Poverty Revisited", Critique of anthropology 13(3): 231-245

"was an [a culture of poverty] unique social construction which facilitated survival at the bottom. The poor lived poorly because capital gave them little choice. Being politically powerless, they seldom had the wherewithal to alter the social relations that kept them poor. But, they survived on what they had, learned to adapt to poverty's uncertainty, and knew how to exploit their impoverished niche with amazing success. Hence, the poor did more than passively adapt to a pre-established social niche, they constructed collective responses to it and shaped poverty's space so as to ease the life pain of living poor. To this extent we can speak of the culture of poverty as a positive social construction – the result of a process by which the poor pragmatically winnow what works from what does not, and pass it on to their children."

(Harvey & Reed, 1996, p. 482)

A culture of poverty as a kind of adaptive mechanism was offered by Katherine Newman. She attempted to present family values which are especially valuable among the poor and not only for an economic reason but because families are virtuous. Middle class America, she boasts, has lost that sense of being a member of a family (Katherine S. Newman, 2000).

Therefore, some scholars, namely, from the left, while criticizing the right-wing theorist for making poverty look like the problem of individual laziness – especially blacks, - have noticed positive aspects of a culture of poverty. They protested from portraying poor people as inherently different from other Americans and stressed that the importance of social inclusion poor into the active social life.

The Gramsci's "cultural hegemony" as a way to tackle the culture of poverty notion

Gramsci's critique of classical Marxism is aimed at relationships between the base and the superstructure. Unlike Marx, Gramsci saw that notwithstanding

development of capitalist means of production, European states stayed stable and the political revolutions did not occur. It led him to the proposition that culture can be a revolutionary force (Gramsci, 1917). While in prison, Gramsci wrote essays that later were published under the name "Prison Notebooks". In those essays, Gramsci devised an idea for the proletariat to overthrow the western capitalism. Gramsci did not address poverty itself. However, the proletariat with whom he empathized was impoverished. Gramsci was not satisfied with Marxian emphasis on the economic base. His revolutionary ideas subordinated the Marxist determination of the economic base to the revolutionary power of the ideational superstructure (Kurtz, 2014, p. 330). His revolutionary project relied on the intersection of three ideas: hegemony, the intellectuals, and culture (Kurtz, 1996).

Kurtz notices that "hegemony is Gramsci's most potent idea."(Kurtz, 2014, p. 330). Its revolutionary potential is best understood in its function as a type of "political leadership" (Gramsci, 1971: 267; 55, en5, 57–58) that is materialized in collective entities, such as associations, groups, apparatuses, political parties, and classes (1971: 55, 267). However, for any group to be organized, it should develop internal leadership which he called "organic intellectuals", that is, "qualified political intellectuals, leaders [*dirigenti*], and organizers of all the activities and functions inherent ... in civil and political" society (Gramsci, 1971, p. 16). As an opposition to organic leadership, there is traditional leadership. Traditional intellectuals equate with professionals categories and individuals – lawyers, ecclesiastics, nobility, entrepreneurs, and technicians – who represent the interest of the ruling classes. Organic intellectuals are extruded from and represent the interests and aspirations of the impoverished proletariat and peasants. The intellectuals play a major role in the idealist context in which Gramsci frames his revolutionary agenda: culture (Kurtz, 2014). Gramsci defined culture as, "the exercise of thought, the acquisition of general ideas, the habit of connecting cause and effect ... enlivened by (political) organization" (Cavalcanti P and Piccone P, 1975; Buttigieg,

1987). The culture according to Gramsci was "personified in the intellectuals" (Gramsci, 1917, p. 417). Kurtz writes,

> "Traditional intellectuals were responsible for maintaining the culture established by the bourgeoisie. Organic intellectuals upon whom Gramsci's revolutionary theory relied were expected to incubate and nurture a new and different culture that would abrogate the influence and power of the traditional intellectuals and bourgeois culture. In short, organic intellectuals were charged with changing the socially and culturally constructed ideas and thoughts by which the impoverished understood how things ought to happen, that is their culturally ingrained ideas, thoughts and "habit of connecting cause and effect." (Kurtz, 2014, p. 330)

Gramsci recognized two strategies of assault on bourgeois governments (Gramsci, 1971, pp. 108–110). The first strategy relied on an armed revolution, so-called "war of movement" by the proletariat against oppressive governments of European states. However, governments of advanced European states held proletariat in false consciousness, their subversion required a different strategy, namely "war on positions". Gramsci believed that the West had

> "entered a culminating phase in the political-historical situation. Since in politics the "war of position" once won, is decisive definitively. In politics, in other words, the war of movement subsists so long as it is a question of winning positions which are not decisive so that all the resources of the state's hegemony cannot be mobilized. But when, for one reason or another, these positions have lost their value and only the decisive positions are at stake, then one passes over to siege warfare…" (Davidson, 1977, pp. 69-70).

Gramsci thought that the cultural revolution should happen prior to the political one. For Gramsci culture of poverty would be another idea, used by traditional intellectuals to entrench the dominance of the ruling class. Traditional intellectuals

would use the notion that some people are poor because they lack necessary cultural traits such as Lutheran "fair profit" idea, notion that each is master of their fate, and so on. Gramsci would probably agree that poverty is the result of the capitalist economy and I that instance he would not differ from classical Marxists. The proletariat, according to Gramsci, did not lack culture nor had a culture of poverty, it was "caught" by semblance image of the world which was imposed by capitalism.

The problem of poverty is a complicated problem. It involves the function of the economy, structure markets, the problem of place, etc. In our opinion, a culture of poverty has its own role as an integral. People, who live far below the poverty line in urban ghettos have a different worldview but not because they choose to. Simple relocation or welfare programs are not a firm resolution. Society itself should not "close its eyes" on the problem of poverty. Behavior attitudes are widely seen in peoples' treatment of minorities some of them are more likely than the other find themselves in poverty. Racial problem unlikely came from economic malfunction. It is definitely a problem of people. Culture is general should evolve but in comparison with economic change, the cultural shifts take more time and sometimes more painful for society is a conservative body. And the culture of poverty may be seen as playing not only negative but a positive role as well.

Bibliography
1. Alice O'Connor. (1958). Poverty knowledge: social science, social policy and the poor in twentieth-century U.S. History. Journal of Chemical Information and Modeling (Vol. 53). New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

2. Almond, G. A., & Verba, S. (1989). The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations. American Sociological Review.

3. Anon., 2015. Charles De Secondat, Baron De Montesquieu. [Internet] Available at:

http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Charles_de_Secondat,_baron _de_Montesquieu [Accessed: 22 10 2015].

4. Berkowitz, E., 1994. Review of The Undeserving Poor: From the War on Poverty to the War on Welfare. The American Historical Review, 99(3), pp. 999-1000.

5. Boyd, R., & Richerson, P. J, 1985. Culture and the evolutionary process. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

6. Brown, D., 1991. Human universals. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

7. Buttigieg, J., 1987. Antonio Gramsci's Triad: Culture, Politics, intellectuals. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota.

8. Cavalcanti P and Piccone P, 1975. History, Philosophy, and Culture in the Young Gramsci. St. Louis: MO: Telos Press.

9. Child, J., 1981. Culture, Contingency, and Capitalism in the Cross-national Study of Organizations. Research in Organizational Behavior, Том Vol. 3, pp. 303-356.

10. Chilma, C. S., 1965. Child-Rearing and Family Relationship Patterns of the Very Poor. Welfare in Review, Issue 3.

11. Craig AL, Wayne AC, 1989. Political culture in Mexico: continuities and revisionist interpretations. B: The civic culture revisited. London: Sage Publications, p. 325–393.

12. Davidson, A. B., 1977. Antonio Gramsci: Towards an Intellectual Biography. London: Merlin Press.

13. Dupré, L. (1980). Marx's Critique of Culture and Its Interpretations. Review of Metaphysics, 34(1), 91–121.

14. Edwin M. Lemert, "Social Structure, Social Control, and Deviation," in Marshall B. Clinard (ed.), Anomie and Deviant Behavior (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1964), pp. 59-60.

15. Fischer, R., & Schwartz, S. H. (2011). Whence Differences in Value Priorities?: Individual, Cultural, or Artifactual Sources. Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 42(7), 1127–1144.

16. Frank Riessman, "The Culturally Deprived Child" (New York: Harper & Bros., 1962)

17. Geertz, C. (2000). Interpretation of cultures.

18. Gladwin, T., 1961. The Anthropologist's View of Poverty. The Social Welfare Forum, pp. 73-86.

19. Gramsci, A. (1971). Prison Notebooks Selections. International Journal of Cultural Policy, 16, 1–573.

20. Gramsci, A., 1917. Philanthropy, good will, and organization. Avanti, 24 12.

21. Greenblatt, S., 1987. Culture. Critical Terms for Literary Study.

22. Hall, T., 2002. Savages and scroungers: Underclass fears in England at the close of the 19th and 20th centuries. Anthropology in Action, pp. 3-9.

23. Harrington, M., 1962. The Other America. New York: Macmillan.

24. Harris, M., 1992. America Now: The Anthropology of a Changing Culture. New York: Doubleday.

25. Harvey, D. L., & Reed, M. H. (1996). The Culture of Poverty: an ideological analysis. Sociological Perspectives, 39(4), 465–495.

26. Haviland, W., 2007. Cultural Anthropology: The Human Challenge.

27. Hofstede, G., 2001. Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations Across Nations. 2nd ed ред. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

28. Inglehart, R., & Welzel, C. (2005). Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence. The Human Development Sequence. Politica Y Gobierno., (June 2015).

29. Jahoda, G. (1984). Do We Need a Concept of Culture? Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 15(2), 139–151.

30. Jerome Cohen, "Social Work and the A culture of poverty," in Frank Riessman et al. (eds.), "Mental Health of the Poor" (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1964), pp. 128-138;

31. John W. Berry, 1997. An ecocultural approach to the study of cross-cultural industrial/organizational psychology. New perspectives on international industrial/organizational psychology, pp. 130-147.

32. Judith Blake and Kingsley Davis, "Norms, Values, and Sanctions," in Robert E. L. Faris (ed.), Handbook of Modern Sociology (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1964), pp. 456-466.

33. Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, 2005. Collected Works. New York City: International Publishers.

34. Katherine S. Newman. (2000). No Shame in My Game: The Working Poor in the Inner City (Vol. 0). OECD Publishing.

35. Katz, M. B., 2013. The Undeserving Poor: America's Enduring Confrontation with Poverty: Fully Updated and Revised. 2nd Edition ред. New York: Oxford University Press.

36. Kempton, M., 1964. No More Parade. The New Republic, pp. 5-7.

37. Klingemann, H., Fuchs, D., & Zielonka, J. (2006). Democracy and Political Culture in Eastern Europe (Routledge Research in Comparative Politics). Routledge.

38. Kluckhohn, C., 1951. The study of culture. The Policy Sciences, Issue Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, pp. 86-101.

39. Kurtz, D. V. (2014). Culture, poverty, politics: Cultural sociologists, Oscar Lewis, Antonio Gramsci. Critique of Anthropology, 34(3), 327–345.

40. Kurtz, D., 1996. Hegemony and anthropology: Gramsci, exegeses, reinterpretations. Critique of Anthropology, 13(2), p. 103–135.

41. L. Kroeber and T. Parsons, 1958. THE CONCEPTS OF CULTURE AND OF SOCIAL SYSTEM. The American Sociological Review, Том 23, pp. 582-583.

42. Lee Rainwater, "Marital Sexuality in Four Cultures of Poverty," Journal of Marriage and the Family, 26 (November 1964), pp. 457-466;

43. Levitin, T., 1973. Values. Measures of Social Psychological Attitudes.

44. Lewis, O. (1963). The culture of poverty. Society, 1(1), 17–19.

45. Liu, J. H., Paez, D., Techio, E., Slawuta, P., Zlobina, a., & Cabecinhas, R. (2010). From Gist of a Wink to Structural Equivalence of Meaning: Towards a Cross-Cultural Psychology of the Collective Remembering of World History. Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 41(3), 451–456.

46. Marcus, A. (2005). The Culture of Poverty Revisited: Bringing Back the Working Class. Anthropologist, 47(1), 35.

47. Maxwell, Andrew (1993) "The Underclass, Social Isolation, and Concentration Effects: The Culture of Poverty Revisited", Critique of anthropology 13(3): 231-245

48. Michael Harrington, "The Other America" (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1962);

49. Miller, W., 1959. Implications of a Lower-Class Culture. Social Service Review, Issue 33, pp. 219-236.

50. Minkov, M. (2013). Cross-Cultural Analysis: The Science and Art of Comparing the World's Modern Societies and Their Cultures. In Nature (Vol. 166, pp. 711–713). 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks California 91320 United States: SAGE Publications, Inc.

51. North, D. C. (1996). Political Economy of Institutions and Decisions. Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance. North, Douglass C. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

52. O'Connor, A., 2002. Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth-Century U.S. History. Reprint edition. Princeton University Press.

53. Parson, T., 1968. The Structure of Social Action: A Study in Social Theory with Special Reference to a Group of Recent European Writers. 2 vols, vol. 1 ред. New York: Free Press.

54. Pateman, C., 1989. The civic culture: a philosophic critique. B: The civic culture revisited. London: Sage Publications, p. 57–102.

55. Peet, R. (1975). Inequality and poverty: a Marxist-geographic theory. Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 65(4), 564–571.

56. Pepitone A., Triandis H., 1987. On the universality of social psychological theories. Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 4(18), pp. 471-498.

57. Peter Marris, "A Report on Urban Renewal in the United States," in Leonard Duhl (ed.), The Urban Condition (New York: Basic Books, 1963), pp. 123-127

58. Roach, J. L., & Gursslin, O. R. (1967). An Evaluation of the Concept "Culture of Poverty." Social Forces, 45(3), 383.

59. Robert E. Will and Harold G. Vatter (eds.), "Poverty in Affluence" (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1965).

60. Rohner, R. P. (1984). Toward a Conception of Culture for Cross-Cultural Psychology. Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 15(2), 111–138.

61. Roland Warren, "Multi-Problem Families: A New Name or a New Problem" (New York: State Charities Aid Association, 1960);

62. Sarah Trenholm, Arthur Jensen, 2000. Interpersonal Communication. 4th Edition ред. Belmont: CA: Wadsworth.

63. Segall, A. H. (1984). More than we Need to Know about Culture, but are Afraid Not to Ask. Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 15(2), 153–162.

64. Singelis, T., Bond, M., Sharkey, W., & Lai, S., 1999. Unpackaging culture's influence on self-esteem and embarrassability: The role of self-construals. Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, Issue 30, pp. 315-341.

65. Stephen Welch. (2013). The Theory of Political Culture. The Theory of Political Culture. Oxford University Press.

66. Thomas Gladwin, "The Anthropologist's View of Poverty," in The Social Welfare Forum, 1961 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), pp. 73-86;

67. Triandis, H. (2002). Subjective Culture. Online Readings in Psychology and Culture, 2(2), 1–12.

68. Tucker, T. G., 1931. A Concise Etymological Dictionary of Latin. Halle: Niemeyer.

69. Van de Vijver F. J. R., & Leung, K., 1997. Methods and data analysis for cross-cultural research. Newbury Park: Sage.

70. Wacquant, L. (2002). Scrutinizing the Street: Poverty, Morality, and the Pitfalls of Urban Ethnography. American Journal of Sociology, 107(6), 1468–1532.

71. White, L., 1959. The Evolution of Culture. N.Y.: McGraw-Hill.

72. Yinger, M., 1960. Contraculture and Subculture. American Sociological Review, Issue 25, pp. 625-63.