The Children of Sánchez, Pedro Martínez, *and* La Vida

by Oscar Lewis

With the agreement of author and publisher, 55 Associates were invited to participate in the Review☆. The first 20 who agreed to the terms were sent the author's précis and copies of the following three books by Oscar Lewis: *The children of Sánchez: Autobiography of a Mexican family* (New York: Random House, 1961, xxxi, 499 pp.), *Pedro Martínez: A Mexican peasant and his family* (New York: Random House, 1964, lvii, 507 pp.), and *La vida: A Puerto Rican family in the culture of poverty* (New York: Random House, 1966, xxxv, 675 pp.). Fourteen reviewers responded in time for their reviews to be sent to Dr. Lewis for his reply: Nathan Ackerman, Mary Jean Aerni, K. Aoyagi, Lorraine Barić, J. H. M. Beattie, Cyril S. Belshaw, Theodore Caplow, Robert Coles, Johannes Eichhorn, Eugenio Fernández Méndez, Joseph P. Fitzpatrick, Manual Maldonado-Denis, Marvin K. Opler, Rodolfo Stavenhagen, Peter Willmott, and Eric R. Wolf. Printed below are the author's précis, the reviews, and the author's reply.

Author's Précis

In the 19th century, when the social sciences were still in their infancy, the job of recording the effects of the process of industrialization and urbanization on personal and family life was left to novelists, playwrights, journalists, and social reformers. Today, a similar process of culture change is going on among the peoples of the less-developed countries, but we find no comparable outpouring of a universal literature which would help us to improve our understanding of the process and the people. While we have a great deal of information on the geography, history, economics, politics, and even the customs of many of these countries, we know little about the psychology of the people, particularly of the lower classes, their problems, how they think and feel, what they worry about, argue over, anticipate, or enjoy.

The people who live at the level of poverty described in the volumes here reviewed, although by no means the lowest level, have not been studied intensively by psychologists or psychiatrists. Nor have the novelists given us an adequate portrayal of the inner lives of the poor in the contemporary world. The slums have produced few great writers, and by the time they have become great writers, they generally look back over their early lives through middle-class lenses and write within traditional literary forms, so that the retrospective work lacks the immediacy of the original experience.

This situation presents a unique opportunity to the social sciences and particularly to anthropology to step into the gap and develop a literature of its own. Indeed, it is the anthropologists, traditionally the spokesmen for primitive people in the remote corners of the world, who are increasingly turning their energies to the great peasant and urban masses of the less-developed countries.

How can the anthropologist gather and present scientific data on these people and their cultures without losing a sense of the wholeness and vividness of life? Even in our best anthropological monographs people have a way of getting lost in culture patterns, statuses, roles, and other abstract concepts. Too many monographs on tribal and peasant communities give an unduly mechanical and static picture of the relationship between the individual and his culture. Individuals tend to become insubstantial and passive automatons who carry out expected behavior patterns. For all the pronouncements in theoretical treatises, too little of the interaction between culture and the individual emerges. Indeed, as theoretical concepts on the study of culture have increased and our level of generalization and abstraction has been raised, we have come to deal more and more with averages and stereotypes rather than with real people in all their individuality. It is a rare monograph which gives the reader the satisfying feeling of knowing the people in the way he knows them after reading a good novel. As Malinowski (1922:17) put it:

> ... we are given an excellent skeleton, so to speak, of the tribal constitution, but it lacks flesh and blood. We learn much about the framework of their society, but within it we cannot conceive or imagine the realities of human life.

Individual life histories are of some help here, but they are mostly based upon the informant's own statements rather than on trained direct observation. Parsons, Lowie, Kroeber, and others have tried to make anthropological data more vivid through the use of pseudo-fiction or what Kroeber (1952:233) has called "fictionalized ethnography," whereby an imaginary personage goes through all the stages of a "manufactured life cycle." "The purpose is to portray the culture rather than a psychologically convincing and individual character," so that we are left with what Kroeber has aptly called "a generalized dummy."

It seems to me that the intensive and minute study of whole families, nuclear and extended, can help us combine the scientific and humanistic strengths of anthropology. The idea of a subculture of poverty which cuts across regional, rural-urban, and even national boundaries grew out of my family studies. Indeed, family studies are probably the best method to establish the presence or absence of the more than 70 traits which I have suggested in defining the culture of poverty.

In my research in Mexico since 1943, I have attempted to develop a number of approaches to family studies. In *Five Families* (1959), I tried to give the reader some glimpses of daily life in five Mexican families, on five ordinary days. In *The Children of Sánchez* I offered the reader a deeper look into the lives of one of these families, by having each member of the family tell his own life story in his own words. My purpose was to give the reader an inside view of family life and of what it meant to grow up in a one-room home in a slum tenement in the heart of a great Latin American city which was undergoing a process of rapid social and economic change. This approach gives us a cumulative, multifaceted, panoramic view of each individual, of the family as a whole, and of many aspects of lower-class Mexican life. The independent versions of the same incidents given by the various family members provide a built-in check upon the reliability and validity of much of the data and thereby partially offset the subjectivity inherent in a single autobiography.

This method of multiple autobiographies within a single family tends to reduce the element of investigator bias, because the accounts are not put through the sieve of a middle-class North American mind but are given in the words of the subjects themselves. In this way, I believe I have avoided the two most common hazards in the study of the poor, namely, oversentimentalization and brutalization. Finally, I hope that this method preserves for the reader the emotional satisfaction and understanding which the anthropologist experiences in working directly with his subjects but which is only rarely conveyed in the formal jargon of anthropological monographs.

Because the family is a small social system, it lends itself to the holistic approach. Family studies bridge the gap between the conceptual extremes of culture at one pole and the individual at the other; we see both culture and personality as they are interrelated in real life.

It is in the context of the family that the interrelationships between cultural and individual factors in the formation of personality can best be seen. Family case studies can therefore enable us to better distinguish between and give proper weight to those factors which are cultural and those which are situational or the result of individual idiosyncracies. Even psychological tests become more meaningful when done on a family basis.

The family is the natural unit for the study of the satisfactions, frustrations, and maladjustments of individuals who live under a specific type of family organization; the reactions of individuals to the expected behavior patterns; the effects of conformity or deviation upon the development of the personality. Of course, those problems can also be studied in other contexts. However, I believe that the more data we gather on a small group of people who live and work together in the family, the more meaningful their behavior. This is a cumulative process, especially important for understanding the covert aspects of culture.

Family studies also serve to delineate the social networks within which families transact their lives and to this extent the family study approach and the social network approach are overlapping and mutually reinforcing. Relatives, neighbors, friends, *compadres*, fellow workers, employers, teachers, priests, spiritualists, policemen, social workers, shopkeepers all fall into place in intensive family studies.

The family case study is not in itself a new technique. It has been used by social workers, sociologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, and others; but their studies invariably have centered around some special problem: families in trouble, families in the depression, the problem child in the family, family instability, divorce, and a hundred and one other subjects. These might be characterized on the whole as segmental studies in which one particular aspect of family life is considered, and generally the methodology has been of a statistical nature with emphasis upon large numbers of cases supplemented by interviews and questionnaires. Despite all the emphasis in the textbooks on the family as an integrated whole, there is little published material in which the family is studied as that.

If the sociological studies of the family have tended to be of the segmental, specific problem type, the work of the anthropologist has been of the opposite kind, that is, generalized description with little or no sense of problem. In most anthropological community studies the family is presented as a stereotype. We are told not about a particular family, but about family life in general, under headings such as composition, residence rules, descent rules, kinship obligations, parental authority, marriage forms and regulations, separation, and so on. And always the emphasis is upon the presentation of the structural and formal aspects of the family rather than upon the content and variety of actual family life.

My intensive studies of families have in each case grown out of a larger research design. *Pedro Martínez* was part of my study of an anthropologically well-known Mexican village which I now call Azteca. *The Children of Sánchez* was part of my study of 71 sample families in a large *vecindad* in Mexico City. *La Vida* grew out of my study of 100 slum families in San Juan and their relatives in New York. However, intensive family studies require exhaustive research which by its nature precludes large samples. It involves the establishment of deep personal ties without which it would be impossible to obtain intimate data.

In *Pedro Martínez*, a tape-recorded story of a Mexican peasant family as told by three of its members—Pedro Martínez, the father; Esperanza, his wife; and Felipe, the eldest son—I have tried to convey to the reader what it means to be a peasant in a nation undergoing rapid cultural change. In this book I have tried to do for the Mexican village what my earlier volume *The Children of Sánchez* tried to do for the urban slum. Although both volumes use the technique of multiple autobiographies in a single family, there are important differences between them in focus, in organization, in the time span covered, in the character of the people, and in the quality of their language and imagery. In both books, however, I have attempted to give voices to people who would otherwise not be heard.

The contrast between *The Children of Sánchez* and *Pedro Martínez* is a contrast between urban slum life, with its crowding, its lack of privacy, its rapid pace, the early development of sexuality, and the intense sociability and expressiveness of the people, and peasant village life, with its slower rhythms, its greater stability and traditionalism, its emphasis on privacy, and the reserved, withdrawn, and suspicious nature of the people. The Martínez children, under the strict control of the father, had less freedom, fewer alternatives, fewer outside influences, and fewer ways of escape than did the children of Sánchez. The Sánchez family shows a greater variety of moods, from exuberant joyousness and abandon to dark despair, from luxurious thoughtlessness to panicky self-criticism, from a mood of carnival to a mood of atonement. Pedro Martínez and his family are much more emotionally constricted. There is less flux, less color, less joy.

The world view of Pedro Martínez and his family is less familiar and less accessible to most readers than that of the children of Sánchez. The values, language, imagery, and way of thought of *The Children of Sánchez* reflect much more of modern Western

culture. The Sánchez children, like most modern urban slum dwellers, are subject to the mass media: they listen to the radio, go to the movies, and are at least familiar with TV. The family of Pedro Martínez was, and is, more isolated and much fluess influenced by mass media. Even in language, these differences are reflected. In Azteca, most people are bilingual, speaking both Nahuatl (the language of the Aztecs) and Spanish, whereas in the Casa Grande only Spanish is spoken.

The story of Pedro Martínez gives us one of the few first-hand accounts of a great revolution as seen by a peasant who not only lived through it but actively participated and identified with its ideals. It is a tribute to the Mexican Revolution that it imbued poor and illiterate peasants like Pedro with ideals of social justice which gave meaning to their lives.

Pedro's life story illustrates some of the achievements and shortcomings of the Mexican Revolution on the village level. Today in Azteca, Pedro's village, there is no longer the pawning of children, no beating of *peones* on neighboring *haciendas*, no monopoly of the local government and the land resources by the *caciques*. At the same time, there has been a tremendous increase in the facilities of public education; in the Martínez family the parents and most of their relatives among the older generation were illiterate, but Pedro educated two of his children and his grandson to be schoolteachers. Peasants like Pedro now have the opportunity to participate in the local government, in elections, and in the political life generally. A striking feature of Pedro's account is that it reveals the intense participation of peasants in community affairs immediately after the Revolution. Indeed, Pedro, with only one year of formal schooling, was more in touch with national agencies and events during the '20's and '30's than are his more educated children at present.

Few men have undergone greater changes within a lifetime. Pedro has changed from an Indian to a *mestizo* way of life, from the Nahuatl to the Spanish language, from an illiterate to a "half-lawyer," from a *peon* to a village politician, from a Catholic to a Seventh Day Adventist.

Pedro's life has been a search for ideals and causes with which to identify: Catholicism, *zapatismo*, village politics, education, and most recently, Adventism and religious evangelism. He has become disillusioned with them all. His meager educational background and the effects of severe deprivation on his character have made him unable to absorb and to integrate meaningfully the many new ideas to which he has been subject during his lifetime. He has taken literally the slogans and catchwords to which he was exposed, hoping that each would lead him to a better life, and he has inevitably been disappointed. He was not attuned to the underlying middle-class values of post-Revolutionary Mexico and did not adapt quickly enough to the realities of the growing money economy. Time and money were of little importance to him; a higher standard of living and status-through-wealth were not his goals. He hoped to achieve recognition and respect through "good works" and communal effort, but was only partially successful. Moreover, as the Revolution took an increasingly conservative turn, he found himself on the losing side. In politics, Pedro has ended up a disillusioned and confused man. He gave lip service to the democratic ideals of the Revolution but could not truly understand them, particularly as they operated on the village and state level. By the time he was an old man, Pedro was nostalgically admiring the strong monolithic character of the Díaz regime which he had fought against in his youth.

There is a tendency among all of us, even anthropologists, to idealize the past and to think of Mexican Indian villages prior to the Mexican Revolution of 1910 as relatively stable, well-ordered, smoothly functioning, and harmonious communities. Pedro's story, however, reveals social disorganization, sharp class cleavages, widespread poverty, and the proletarianization of the landless segment of the population. It also shows the existence of many of the traits of the culture of poverty—consensual unions, the abandonment of women and children, child labor, adultery, and a feeling of alienation. One of the major accomplishments of the Revolution for villages like Azteca was to return to the villagers the privilege of utilizing their communal lands. This slowed down or stopped the process of proletarianization and eliminated many of the traits of the culture of poverty.

However, poverty itself has remained. The description of village conditions after the Revolution hardly encourages a Rousseauan view of peasant life. The stories of Pedro, Esperanza, and Felipe reveal the persistence of poverty, hunger, ignorance, disease, suspicion, suffering, cruelty, corruption, and a pervading quality of fear, envy, and distrust in interpersonal relations.

La Vida is the first of a series of volumes based upon a study of 100 Puerto Rican families from four slums of Greater San Juan and of their relatives in New York City. The major objectives of the study were to contribute to our understanding of urban slum life in San Juan; to examine the problems of adjustment and the changes in the family life of migrants to New York; to develop a comparative literature on intensive family case studies; to devise new field methods and new ways of organizing and presenting family data; and finally, to test and refine the concept of a culture of poverty by a comparison of my Mexican and Puerto Rican data.

The Ríos family presented in *La Vida* consists of five households: a mother and two married daughters in Puerto Rico and a married son and daughter in New York City. The mother, Fernanda Fuentes, a Negro woman of 40, is now living with her sixth husband in La Esmeralda, a San Juan slum. Her children, Soledad, 25, Felicita, 23, Simplicio, 21, and Cruz, 19, were born to Fernanda while she was living in free union with her first husband, Cristóbal Ríos, a light-skinned Puerto Rican.

In addition to the five major characters, I have included the views of the spouses, of two young grandchildren, ages 7 and 9, of a maternal aunt, and of a close friend of the family. In all, sixteen Puerto Ricans, ranging in ages from 7 to 64 and representing four generations, tell their life stories and those of their parents and grandparents. This gives the reader a historical depth of well over 100 years, reveals the patterns of change and stability over many generations, and provides some contrasts between rural and urban family patterns.

Although I call this book a family study, the number of people involved is greater than the population of some village communities described in anthropological monographs. Nineteen related households, 11 in San Juan and 8 in New York City, with a total population of 55 individuals, were studied in preparing this volume. The book also includes data on 12 other households. In all, over 300 individuals appear in these pages.

Perhaps the most important methodological innovation in this volume as compared to my earlier studies, *Five Families, The Children of Sánchez*, and *Pedro Martínez*, is the much broader canvas of the family portrait, the intensification of the technique whereby individuals and incidents are seen from multiple points of view, and the combination of multiple biographies with observed typical days. The biographies provide a subjective view of each of the characters, whereas the days give us a more objective account of their actual behavior. The two types of data supplement each other and set up a counterpoint which makes for a more balanced picture. On the whole, the

observed days give a greater sense of vividness and warmer glimpses of these people than do their own autobiographies. And because the days include a description not only of the people but also of the setting, the domestic routines, and material possessions, the reader gets a more integrated view of their lives.

The Ríos family, their friends, and neighbors, reflect many of the characteristics of the subculture of poverty, characteristics which are widespread in Puerto Rico but which are by no means exclusively Puerto Rican. They are also found among urban slum dwellers in many parts of the world. Indeed, the Ríos family is presented here not as a typical Puerto Rican family but rather as representative of one style of life in a Puerto Rican slum. The frequency distribution of this style of life cannot be determined until we have many comparable studies from other slums in Puerto Rico and elsewhere.

The language used by the Ríos family in this volume, as well as that used by the other families of our study, is simple, direct, and earthy. There is relatively little use of metaphor or analogy except that contained in some of the popular proverbs, and, while the language is strong and vivid, it never reaches the poetic levels of the language of the Mexicans I have studied. Most of the linguistic creativity in the San Juan slums seems inspired by bodily functions, primarily anal and genital. The description of the most intimate sexual scenes is so matter-of-fact that it soon loses the quality of obscenity, and one comes to accept it as an intrinsic part of their everyday life.

The people in this book, like most of the other Puerto Rican slum-dwellers I have studied, show a great zest for life, especially for sex, and a need for excitement, new experiences, and adventures. Theirs is an expressive style of life. They value acting-out more than thinking-out, self-expression more than self-constraint, pleasure more than productivity, spending more than saving, personal loyalty more than impersonal justice. They are fun-loving and enjoy parties, dancing, and music. They cannot be alone; they have an almost insatiable need for sociability and interaction. They are not apathetic, isolated, withdrawn, or melancholy. Compared with the low-income Mexicans I have studied, they seem less reserved, less depressive, less controlled, and less stable.

The Ríos family is closer to the expression of an unbridled id than any other people I have studied. They have an almost complete absence of internal conflict and of a sense of guilt. They tend to accept themselves as they are with little desire to change and do not indulge in soul-searching or introspection. The leading characters in *The Children of Sánchez* seem mild, repressed, and almost middle-class by comparison.

Reviews

by K. AOYAGI

Tokyo, Japan. 13 III 67

The method of multiple autobiography is a significant contribution. It has proved effective in narrowing the gap between scientific abstraction and human reality. Among the advantages of this method, supplementation and cross-checking seem to deserve more attention. A problem before multiple eyes reveals to us its wholeness, its implications, and its degree of importance. Felipe's discussion of Pedro's conversion from Catholicism to Adventism (1964:440), which he describes more realistically in a brief sentence than does his father, is an excellent example of supplementation. Also, Felipe talks about the domestic animals they keep for their farm labor (p. 312), while Pedro refers to them only rarely.

There is no doubt that cross-checking enhances the validity of data, yet I cannot help but feel that in the case of *La Vida* too many witnesses repeat almost the same things. There may be an optimum number of witnesses for avoiding redundancy.

The method has succeeded generally in pinpointing the crucial factors responsible for personality formation. The reader can come to understand all of the family members except Consuelo. Consuelo tries to be different when all the others seem to have accepted their fate with resignation. I cannot find anywhere in the book a concrete explanation of how she has come to be this way. Jesús, her father, says, "She is a headstrong girl, like her mother" (p. 487). This is the only clue given to us.

Anthropologists are always interested in fundamental human similarities, whatever forms they may take. One strong line the author follows is cross-cultural examination of the content of the culture of poverty. Reading any one of the three books, a reader will perhaps be tempted to involve himself in similar research. It is very probable that we can find a counterpart of the culture of poverty in the slums of a few larger Japanese cities, typically in Tokyo, Kyoto, and Osaka. Rapid economic growth along capitalist lines in Japan has not always been accompanied by sufficient welfare measures. Tokyo and Osaka, both centers of economic activity, have large slums. Economic deprivation is pronounced. Slum residents are only partially integrated into the larger society. Residental segregation is readily observable, and social intercourse with outside people is to a great extent blocked, particularly in case of the *Buraku* minority (see Dore and Aoyagi 1962). Poverty of culture and some of the other traits of the culture of poverty are also very noticeable.

However, certain traits or tenacious cultural patterns of poverty are missing or yet to be found in Japanese urban slums. Marriage patterns, sexual attitudes and behavior, neighborhood organization, and so on are more or less different from the comparable data in the three books. When testing a culture-and-poverty hypothesis, it is necessary, I think, to make a distinction between class difference within a culture and cultural difference. The author does not state this point explicitly, although I assume he is aware of it.

We have not done much research on class culture in present-day Japan, especially on a nation-wide scale. But I suppose, for instance, that the Japanese approach to sex is quite different from that of the people in *La Vida*, and that Japanese lower-class mothers may find Fernanda, who abets her own daughters in prostitution, repugnant. The "almost promiscuous" behavior reported in *The Children of Sánchez* is not likely to be prevalent in our urban slums. Even after more than 20 years of strong Western influence, we retain our traditional pattern of sexual modesty in public, I presume regardless of class difference. The culture of poverty may transcend cultural boundaries, but perhaps not every trait of the culture of poverty will do so.

Each of the books is full of data suitable for analysis, for example on the following problems:

a) Cultural value systems in Puerto Rico or Mexico. Echoing the author's proposition, I suggest that studies of the lower class may reveal something that is distinctive of a cultural value system as a whole.

b) The role of the kin group. The author refers to "a fairly narrow circle of close relatives which serves as a defense in economic and emotional crises" (1966:xx). Many of us are apt to assume that the reciprocal role of a kin group is something helpful and beneficial. The evidence from these three books indicates, in contrast, that kinsmen are often felt to be unbearable burdens to each other in terms of economic and emotional reciprocity. After all, a kin group of

this class is often too small and economically too weak to reciprocate effectively or to be relied upon as a sponsoring group. If I were to pursue the problem of how relatives are related to the culture of poverty, I would evaluate the negative effect of the role of a kin group.

c) The diagnosis of personality in a changing society. Value conflict is a common phenomenon in a changing society. Inconsistency and contradiction in personal attitudes and behavior are one sort of response to a changing situation and may mean that one cannot always live up to the values, principles, or demands of an intruding culture. Lower-class people who are deprived of political or other measures, even though they may try hard to live up to new values and ideologies, may be forced, consciously or unconsciously, into inconsistency and contradiction. (I have Pedro in mind.) They must either be contented with a low level of rationalization or give up espousing new ideas.

d) Migrants and their sense of belonging. *La Vida* provides us with excellent data on migrant psychological problems; on Puerto Ricans in an affluent society; and on their attitude toward racial problems (Simplicio shows a keen insight into the problem of race prejudice, p.451). Each of these is not only a domestic problem pertaining to the U.S.A. and Puerto Rico, but also a problem with international implications.

I admire the author for his deep understanding and strong commitment to the scientific argument of human misery and for his continual effort to make us realize the seriousness of its challenge.

by J. H. M. Beattie

Oxford, England. 23 III 67

The uses which anthropologists have made of actual case histories, and of texts written or dictated by the people they study, would make an interesting study in itself. On the whole American anthropologists seem to have been more aware of the value of such materials than their European colleagues, many of whom, until recently at least, have been more concerned with such drier topics as the structures and functional interrelationships of social institutions. Until a few years ago an anthropologist could get by with a monograph on a particular society or culture written entirely in general terms and wholly innocent of case histories or texts. The reader had to make the best of it, and take the anthropologist's word for it that his interpretations were the right ones. But nowadays most of us, on both sides of the Atlantic, recognise that this is not good enough; we expect to be given at least some cases, and some statements about aspects of their own culture made by the people studied, if only by way of illustration. If such material provides evidential support for the author's interpretations, so much the better.

With work like Lewis' the wheel has come full circle. What was formerly a means has now become an end in itself. Lewis is not concerned with institutional analysis; rather he wants to tell his readers what it is really like to be a Mexican peasant, a Puerto Rico slum-dweller, or whatever. So now the text *is* the book, and interpretation and analysis take second place—so far as they take any place at all. Anthropology has indeed become an art rather than a science, but it is the art of photography rather than of painting. Incidentally, I wonder if this is why none of the three books here considered is illustrated by photographs (though *Pedro Martínez* has attractive drawings): it might be thought—though I would disagree—that photographs could add little to such minute descriptions of the local scene as are provided, for example, in *La Vida*.

Lewis' three volumes contain between them something like 1,800 pages, but only about 140 of these are the author's own exposition and comment. Except for a few chapters in *La Vida* containing detailed descriptions of days with various families, the rest is the unannotated record, taken over periods of months or even years, of what informants actually said, in their own words. With the invention and development of the tape recorder there is virtually no limit to the amount of material which can be collected, processed, and delivered to the consumer in this way. Certainly the material given in Lewis' books is fascinating, and the advantages of this mode of massive presentation are obvious. As the author says, voices have indeed been given to "people who would not otherwise be heard," and the reader really gets to see these people in close-up. But the sheer bulk is a little intimidating, and some may feel that the editor's scissors might have been wielded with a rather heavier hand. Also, this reader at least would have welcomed some expert guidance, in the form of occasional annotation and summary, through the tangled jungle of personal histories, interactions, and attitudes which makes up so much of the books.

These reflections suggest that there may be two difficulties, in particular, in this kind of wholesale importation of field data into classroom or study. The first is that the reader may be left too much on his own to draw—or to fail to draw—the right conclusions about the significance of what he reads. Lewis rightly draws attention to the danger that readers of anthropological studies will get lost in abstract concepts; but we do have to have *some* concepts, and data may appear more meaningful when they are systematically related to an explicit conceptual framework. No doubt his concept of "the culture (or subculture) of poverty" provides such a schema, but a little more indication might perhaps have been given, in the context of each study, of the bearing of the data on some of the numerous hypotheses which the concept involves. Again, independent versions of the same incidents may indeed provide a "built-in check on the reliability and validity of data," as Lewis claims, but the reader would be helped, in particular cases, by the author's own judgments about such reliability and validity.

The second difficulty is that although Lewis' method of presentation avoids the material's being "put through the sieve of a middle-class North American mind," that mind has none the less been at work on it, in so far as it has, in Lewis' words, "translated, edited, and organized" it. A fuller statement, in the context of each study, of the kinds of criteria and considerations which influenced these processes might have been helpful.

In a nutshell, what I am saying is that as a non-specialist in Lewis' area and problems I should like to hear a little more of *his* voice, and perhaps a shade less of his informants'. But it would be captious to attach too much weight to these very minor criticisms; one cannot have everything at once, and anyway further publications on these data and on "the culture of poverty" are promised. Lewis' presentation of the life histories and values of selected families in Mexico, Puerto Rico, and New York is a major and massive contribution to anthropological understanding.

by Cyril S. Belshaw

Vancouver, Canada. 16 III 67

The anthropology of culture and society is probably unique among the disciplines which study behaviour in that it does not derive its boundaries from a coherent and restricted set of methodological assumptions. This could of course represent an early phase in the formation of the discipline, in which we were still searching for agreement and exploring for procedures; or it could represent a wooliness of thought, an intolerance of logical

precision, a denial of the value of accumulative knowledge in the sense in which the term applies in other subjects. I think we should be proud of, and positive about, our eclecticism, for it can enable us—if we can avoid the real dangers of dilettantism—to forge a variety of tools which will be productive to the extent that our sensitivities and skills permit.

Oscar Lewis' work comes at a time when logical and statistical models are receiving much attention and the search for general laws is being intensified. Lewis generalizes when he wishes to do so (behind each of these microscopically focussed accounts lies a considerable apparatus of cumulative and statistical data), but he proclaims the right and value of doing so not by the methods of science, but rather by approaches which are closer to those of art. In this, he illustrates a tension which is continuous in anthropology and deep within the make-up of most who choose anthropology as a career. Almost all of us are novelists, dramatists, artists, manqué. What distinguishes Oscar Lewis from most (but not all) of us is that he has forged an instrument to give voice to this part of our creative impulse.

This is not to say that it is easy for us to recognize what Lewis is doing, or that we should agree that his path is ours, or that we should assume that his conclusions and emphases are always just. It can be argued that art is successful to the extent that it communicates or awakens a comprehension of some generalized set of relationships, doing this by a play on emotive and subjective sensation, and above all by a close attention to individual events (including objects). But the artistic form of expression is quite different from that of analytical generalization; for one thing, the medium is different. A musical composer may sense the universality of the tonal relationships with which he is painting, may even know something of their mathematical basis; but the moment he tries to explain what he is doing in mathematical or verbal terms, he leaves his artistry behind, and it is not even certain either that he says what he means or that his conclusion is the valid conclusion for others who enjoy his work. This is even more true of painting, of poetry, of the novel.

Oscar Lewis, possibly because he is working within the world of anthropologists who have other conventions, is not quite willing to go this far. I think he would like to have it both ways. His texts are artistry; this appears in their structure, in the use of language, in the selection of incident, even in the selection of the families as the subject of elaboration, and in the exclusion of the author from the scene. In this he has gone much further than the "scientific" or the "objective" methodology would allow. Those who would wish to use his texts for controlled comparative purposes will be frustrated by the lack of even a sample of a notation of interaction between the questioner, with his tape recorder, and the respondent, with his memory and his language. The text is emphatically not a text in the Boas sense.

He does not, however, confine himself to his artistic medium, for he has something to assert which is more dramatic even than the lives of his subjects, more controversial and more capable of objective control: the culture of poverty, and all that goes with it. He also asserts that in some sense the conclusions to be inferred from a study of the families are valid for the subculture of which they are a part. As one study succeeds another, the implications of the culture of poverty are made more precise, and Lewis extends the presentation of background material in ways which are designed to suggest the degree to which the life histories are to be regarded as representative. As a stranger to Hispano-American cultures, and in the absence of a convincing summary of even the statistical elements of the background material, I cannot comment upon the point of representation.

The culture of poverty is something else again. When Lewis first presented it, I thought he was saying: "Where there is substantial poverty which has persisted over a considerable period of time, the people who live in these conditions develop defences, institutions, norms, which have a functional validity under their conditions of living, and which are resistant to pressures to change." He stated this, and demonstrated it, with sympathy, yet with the observer's objectivity, and with a realism which condoned nothing. The idea has the great merit of simplicity and conviction; we knew it, it was consistent with our observations. Still, until Lewis elaborated upon it I think we were puzzled by it, and we are still sometimes reluctant to admit it, especially when we are eager for reform.

It is now clear to me (as it should have been at the beginning) that Lewis asserts something further: that all, or many, cultures of poverty have some essential features in common. Artistry is left behind, and the grand generalizer steps in. The assertion is important and challenging; it may well be validated. But the methods of the life histories are not the methods which will validate it. They will give us beginnings, insights, sensitivities, hypotheses. But as yet we don't even know whether the culture of poverty in Mexico and Puerto Rico is of the kind we would infer from the experience of these families.

Nevertheless, every anthropologist has some personal experience or data against which to compare the information. The events revealed to us are neither surprising nor novel, even to those of us who have never been to Mexico or Puerto Rico. We do not in fact have to go to other cultures for similarities of material; if we would pay more attention to non-middle-class or to causal-labor circles in Canada, the United States, or Europe, the similarities might well be telling. Exercises oriented in this direction, incidentally, might do much to reduce the impact of criticism of *La Vida* as giving support to cross-cultural intolerance or snobbery. More important, they might indicate that the culture of poverty is indeed a significant reality.

One further point: Lewis' books are deservedly successful, in a financial and popular sense. What will his families think of them? At what point does some kind of proprietary interest arise? Can the observer and the activist be so clearly separated? Does one know people so intimately and not help, and if one helps, how and when?

by THEODORE CAPLOW

New York, N.Y., U.S.A. 31 III 67

I was one of those who welcomed the appearance of *The Children of Sánchez* as an epical event, marking a happy convergence of the realistic novel and descriptive ethnography, with a trace of cinematic influence besides. During the eventful century from 1840 to 1940 the realistic novel enabled the average man to understand a society that had grown too vast and complicated for him to experience directly. The middle-class reader, to whom the novel was usually addressed, could learn enough about the rich above, and the poor below, to satisfy his curiosity and guide his political opinions. From Dickens to Dos Passos, from *La Comédie Humaine* to *Les Hommes de Bonne Volonté*, from *War and Peace* to *The Grapes of Wrath*, the realistic novels that mattered revealed the rich or the poor, or both, to readers who would otherwise not have known them.

The same hundred years, more or less, saw the development of scientific ethnography and the invention of diverse techniques for describing and classifying the behavior of unfamiliar peoples.

Both traditions still persist, but some of the heart has gone out of them since World War II. The fiction writers of the atomic age have moved towards a more personalized view of experience in which the social environment is something to be reacted against, but the need to describe it exhaustively is no longer felt, perhaps because it is now too vast to be thoroughly scrutinized even through a book. The poor have learned to speak and write for themselves, deliberately disqualifying the middle-class observer and his claim to understand them. It is a far cry from Sinclair Lewis to Le Roi Jones.

Meanwhile, descriptive ethnography has been slowly overtaken by a kind of electronic blight. The resources of film and tape have made it easy to accumulate data without much notebook labor and to preserve it in almost raw form, unsullied by intermediate interpretation. At the same time the supply of intellectually intriguing material has declined, partly because few unstudied tribes are left, and partly because so many variations of method have been tried. The modern ethnographer may well feel that the interior valleys of New Guinea are not likely to offer material as rich and diverse as what he can find in the canyons of Harlem.

The cinematic elements include the bone-deep relativism that pervades a film like *Rashomon*; the camera's lack of shame and resistance to expurgation; and above all, its tolerance of the unexplained movement, the inexplicable gesture, the pointless happening, whose omission from written narratives is a subtle and prevalent form of bias.

Against this background *The Children of Sánchez* seemed to embody a new form, at once more accurate, candid, and comprehensive than any novel, but capable of arousing that compassionate empathy we associate with the very best novels. What fiction achieves by a convincing simulation of real life, the new form might claim in its own right, so to speak.

These bright hopes remain unfulfilled. It is too early to say whether Lewis will have successful imitators, but the two works of the genre that he himself has published since *Sánchez* arouse dismay. Moreover, the trend is downward. *Pedro Martínez* is disappointing, but *La Vida* would be unreadable without its large component of pornography. It is jumbled and chaotic, and conveys the impression that the author is implacably hostile to his unfortunate subjects.

What went wrong? Lewis himself gives us the answers in the introduction to *Sánchez* when he says that his professional interest in the lives of his earlier subjects turned into warm and lasting friendship, that he was deeply involved in their problems and often felt as though he had two families to look after—the Sánchez family and his own—and when, in the same introduction, he apologizes for rearranging his materials and says, "these life histories have something of both art and life." The evident disadvantage of the method that produced *Sánchez* is that it would not allow an author to produce many books in a single lifetime. *Pedro Martínez* is a little more hasty. Although Lewis first interviewed the Martínez family in 1943, the tape recordings were not made until ten years later, and then apparently with some haste. Pedro himself is the only fully rounded character. The voices of his wife and children are heard only in passing, and there is practically no use of the *Rashomon* technique—the same event independently described by several participants—that gave *Sánchez* so much of its interest. In *La Vida* the author's connection with the deplorable Ríos family is not very fully described, but it is plain that they are not his friends and that numerous research assistants, observers, and intermediaries were introduced into their lives to obtain a mass of unassimilated information in a short time.

The result is a nasty book in every sense, unfair to its readers as well as its subjects. Lacking a conceptual structure, it has the arbitrary quality of fiction. Because behavior is described with ruthless impersonality and with arbitrary dislocations of sequence, the observers seem to be undiscriminating, unforgiving, and utterly inhuman.

Sánchez is a book written by a thoughtful man with the aid of mechanical devices. *La Vida* is the product of a machine.

by Robert Coles

Cambridge, Mass., U.S.A. 9 III 67

I have found the work of Oscar Lewis a necessary and continuing example—to the point that I seriously have to consider whether I might have pursued my own research were not his book *The Children of Sánchez* available to remind me, a child psychiatrist, how much work there is to do. For a number of years now I have been trying to study in a limited (medical and psychiatric) way what Lewis looks into much more comprehensively: how the rural or urban poor manage in backward nations, fast-changing nations, or—my interest—backward sections of a "progressive" and advanced nation.

I want to speak here of the psychological and psychiatric implications of Lewis' work, because I believe his observations have more relevance to us in medicine, and particularly psychoanalytic psychiatry, than we perhaps care to acknowledge. Doctors deal with sick people, and psychiatrists predominantly with the well-to-do nervous, most of whom are citizens either of the United States or a European country. Only recently have a significant number of physicians begun to think about health, in contrast to illness, and only very recently have psychiatrists begun to ask themselves how "ordinary" people survive and make do, rather than collapse and go awry.

Certainly the drift of Freud's work was toward making a general psychology out of what was essentially a meta-psychopathological theory. Analysts like Anna Freud emphasized how important it was to observe, rather than speculate in an endless, densely abstract way, and to observe in the nursery and schoolroom as well as the clinic or hospital. Analysts like Erik Erikson went further, by trying to give psychoanalysis a history, a cultural context. The Sioux or the Yurok are not members of middle-class Vienna or New York; and whether some psychiatrists know it or not, their conceptual view of the life of the mind is a very particular one, conditioned by the social assumptions and customs they all too casually take for granted or deny to be relevant in their work.

I mention these problems and trends because they seem to parallel the issues and struggles that have plagued other fields, among them anthropology—as Oscar Lewis points out in his summary of his three books. I find his work very similar in its effect to Erikson's. Both men have tried to give their respective disciplines a more general—universal, if you will—relevance. Moreover, both men are essentially artists as well as scientists; they want to observe carefully, but they want to do more than record. They want to make the seen and the heard come alive.

I want to say how perceptive and advanced a psychiatrist I find Lewis to be. I wish he somehow could spare the time to educate the many psychiatrists who lack not only his empathy and compassion, but his shrewd and developed psychological sensibility. He knows that concepts like "mental health" or "maturity (so bandied about not only in public but in all the professional journals) are not self-sustaining abstractions, to be meted out with fine impartiality to all who come within sight of the middle-class American psychiatrist. He knows that psychiatric terms can be mere substitutes for name-calling, new ways to keep our fastidious, self-centered puri-

tanism very much alive. He knows, finally, that the psychiatrist's job is to figure out what any particular kind of behavior means, and that to do so requires making sense of deeds rather than rating them on some implicit (terminological) scale of "health" or "illness"—for which words like "virtue" and "vice" are all too easily substituted.

In a matter-of-fact way, Lewis makes years of psychiatric argument seem futile and irrelevant. Again and again, I hear my colleagues assert "nature" over "nurture" or "drives" over "adaptation." The words seem more important to many of them than any effort to look systematically at what in fact goes on in the lives of people (in contrast to the "free associations" uttered by literate, highly articulate and theory-bound "patients" to doctors who are indeed similar). In these three books Oscar Lewis is both "biologically oriented" and intent on documenting the "sociocultural forces" that constantly influence our thoughts and feelings. Rather than pit hunger, sex, and anger against class and caste, he aims to show the body and soul fighting it out or giving up, in the face of social and economic odds that seem to me psychologically impossible. Yet, what I find impossible, what I "evaluate," others deal with as everyday life, and in so doing reveal once again the ironies and ambiguities of life. They do not have the complicated, thoughtful, and "subtle" minds that "we" have, but neither do they develop the neuroses that Freud wisely saw inextricably tied to "civilization."

Accordingly, Lewis is neither sentimental, romantic, nor unfairly harsh when he portrays the open, evident lusts and joys, hates and envies of people who quite obviously have never had any reason to learn the rewards that go with intricate "ego-defenses" or strongly entrenched super-ego "activity." By the same token the Mexicans and Puerto Ricans he has studied can have energy, vitality, and exuberance, which we envy quite inappropriately. The warmth and candor we as individuals, or even as a people, may lack are not quite the incredible restlessness and animation one finds described or avowed in *The Children of Sánchez* or *La Vida*. The sources are the same, in the blood and heart we all have at birth (and to some extent keep or lose as we grow up) but the knotty, restrained, self-critical quality of the middle-class Western mind makes most of the emotions that surface in us a pale (and richly intricate) contrast to what surges forth in certain parts of Mexico City, San Juan, or New York City, and in my experience Boston, too.

In sum, then, I find the work of Oscar Lewis a decisive and sound contribution to psychiatrists and psychoanalysts. What he calls "the culture of poverty" fits in with what child psychiatrists have observed, insofar as they have allowed themselves to leave middle-class child guidance centers. The quality of his material is not only thoroughly first-rate, but a grim reminder to us in another field how far we have to go to achieve what presumably we all along have had as a goal: the ability to study *lives*.

by EUGENIO FERNÁNDEZ MÉNDEZ

Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico. 9 III 67

Anthropology has been remarkably timid in applying its rich methodological and theoretical resources to the study of important aspects of Western civilization. While it is true that the holistic approach of our science is better suited to small-community studies, it is also true that given careful planning and with due allowance for the requisite division of labor, the anthropologist can tackle subcultural, biographic, autobiographic, national character, and other specialized field studies with remarkable results. This is, in my estimation, what Oscar Lewis has accomplished (when we discount whatever reservations, mainly of a political nature, that we may have with regard to his work) in his studies *The Children of Sánchez*, *Pedro Martínez*, and *La Vida*.

The three-fold contribution of Lewis —methodological, theoretical, and informative—is truly tremendous. He has based his research on fundamental premises of anthropological theory and practice: fieldwork, the concept of subculture, and the expressive-interview, intensively pursued. On all three he has left an imprint.

The fieldwork method has been extended by recorded long-term interviewing which permits approximation to real-life depth-depiction of cultural documents, linguistic, social, and psychological. The theoretical construct of subculture has been sharpened by the definition, in terms of some 70 traits, of the "culture of poverty," as one persisting and extended structural aspect of modern Western (urban-industrial) civilization. Finally, the wealth of detail on life in the Mexican village and in the Puerto Rican and New York ghetto-like-slums as revealed in the biographies of members of actual families, which are in some aspects typical and in others simply illustrative of the conditions of life in national variants of the culture of poverty, is truly massive and highly revealing.

In Mexico and in Puerto Rico, where the studies have raised most controversy, the objections to Lewis' studies have been based mainly on hurt pride and fear of malicious identification of the subcultural variant with the larger national group. Scientists as a whole have taken a rather reserved attitude, the same timid attitude which makes Lewis' almost unique scientific efforts daring and refreshing.

I believe that modern anthropological science stands to gain from all of Lewis' pioneer contributions. This is particularly true in the case of Puerto Rico, when we keep in mind such other important background anthropological studies as Steward *et al.* (1956) and my own book of readings on Puerto Rican culture (1956).

Lewis has concerned himself with the customs and personal lives of living peoples; he has put forth impressive documents on their behalf. It now remains for all of us to listen to the voices of these "people who would otherwise not be heard." Here we have a clear cut case of *culture against man*; or is it man against man?

by JOSEPH P. FITZPATRICK

New York, N.Y., U.S.A. 24 III 67

The work of Oscar Lewis represents an extraordinary anthropological achievement. It marks him as a creative innovator in anthropological method, an artist as well as a scientist. Redfield always insisted that scientific achievement in the social sciences required the gifts of the artist.

The popularity of Lewis' books is no accident. He has brought the stereotypes to life. He is more than just a spokesman for the masses of the urban poor; he has created an instrument through which they are remarkably effective spokesmen for themselves. It is their language, their style, their feelings and values which come through. *Pedro Martínez* enables the reader to penetrate a remote way of life more deeply than any instrument I know. And *La Vida* and *The Children of Sánchez* throw into perspective patterns of behavior which are not only misunderstood but ordinarily judged as barbarous or revolting by the wider world of rich and poor to whom this way of life is foreign.

However, the very strength of Lewis' books, particularly *La Vida* and *The Children of Sánchez*, involves their greatest danger. It is extremely important that the intimate details of the lives of the people in these books be reported for scientific study and analysis; but widespread popular circulation exposes the data to misunder-

standing and possible misuse. The lives of people in the culture of poverty should perhaps be shielded from the view of the merely curious, who will almost surely misjudge them and who, in cases such as that of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, may use their misjudgment to rationalize damaging forms of discrimination. Therefore, serious consideration must be given in studies like those of Lewis to the potential injury to which it exposes the people who are studied. This must be weighed against the importance of communicating insights to a serious public. As a prominent Puerto Rican educator has said of *La Vida:* "The danger of over-generalization is great; but even more dangerous is the situation where teachers, social workers, and others are dealing with this type of Puerto Rican people without the insights that Lewis' book can give."

The increasing clarification of the concept of the culture of poverty is also very important. It is significant that Lewis has been able to identify this particular life style with one type of poor people throughout the world. What I think is even more important is the fact that he detects this as a style of life which was present among peasant peoples centuries ago. It indicates that unless people participate effectively, no matter what the economic or social system, in decisions which vitally affect their lives, they are inclined to develop the culture of poverty as a mechanism of survival and defense. Thus the efforts, particularly in Latin America, to bring the peasant populations to awareness of themselves and of their situation, to help them mobilize their resources to assume a position of strength in the political life of their nations, are seen as essential steps in basic human development.

What needs more exploration is Lewis' conviction that the culture of poverty is damaging to the person. There are widespread efforts today to call the attention of the middle class to the strengths of the poor, and the important values in the lives of the poor. This sometimes results in a denigration of certain aspects of middle-class life which appear to be universally related to human fulfilment. What is evidently needed here is a careful comparative study of values and the manner in which basic values become related to life styles and culture. For example, it appears that, in the case of Jesus Sánchez and Pedro Martínez, values were strongly at work in their lives which could have brought them to middle-class status. How does one explain the origin and expression of these values in the lives of these two men, and of many more? There are many similarities between Pedro Martínez and Taso Zayas, the Puerto Rican whose life history is given by Mintz (1960). The interesting conversion of both men to Pentecostal forms of religious belief and behavior seems to reflect the prior existence of values of discipline, deferred gratification, and responsibility which are related to middle-class success. The people of *La Vida* often express their desire for human qualities and styles of human interaction (respect, consideration, affection, etc.) which are found outside the culture of poverty. How, therefore, do we set about identifying the strengths and values of the poor, whether in or out of the culture of poverty, in contrast to the values of the middle class? And, much more important, how do we evaluate the quality of personal development which is related to these differing values? Lewis' description of the poor in the culture of poverty, with all the insights it gives into the values and strengths of these people, indicates also that there are values which transcend social class, and, according to these, there are damaging features to the culture of poverty which should not be permitted to continue. If Lewis can clarify these problems in his future studies, he will contribute much to our knowledge of man, and to the development of public policy in relation to the poor.

by MARVIN K. OPLER

Buffalo, N.Y., U.S.A. 27 III 67

Because of space limits, I am confining my criticism to the one book, *La Vida*, to Lewis' précis, and to his concept of "culture of poverty." Lewis states his problem as being "the psychology of people." His comment that people on the poverty level "have not been studied intensively by psychologists or psychiatrists" is entirely wrong (see, e.g., Rohrer and Edmonson 1960). I happen to be writing this account in Puerto Rico following studies begun in 1952 and including a ten-year study of Puerto Rican families in New York and on the island. The Midtown Manhattan Mental Health Research Study, for which I am the principal anthropological investigator, is certainly known to Lewis, since I and other researchers on the project discussed it with him in New York and elsewhere many times. Puerto Rican islanders and New Yorkers have been studied intensively, not only by psychologists and psychiatrists, but by anthropologists, including myself, as well (Opler 1958*a*, *b*; Rogler and Hollingshead 1965).

In contrast with his study of a prostitute's family, we have randomly drawn samples in the proper proportion for the poverty level and other levels. An account of a prostitute's family may produce a sensational best-seller, but our studies of Puerto Ricans—employed, on relief, from the highland Jivaro background and from other strata—indicate that it is not all representative. It is true that about 2/3 of the islanders are on relief; but slum areas like La Perla and others in shacktowns along the ocean water inlets of San Juan also contain persons who are productively employed. Slums, La Perla included, contain strata; for instance, there are Jivaros at the choice upper end of the hillside, and more urban derelicts in shacks on the ocean side. This has been pointed out by various anthropologists for slums in La Paz, Bolivia and Lima, Peru (Patch 1951; Fried 1959) and San Juan (Opler 1958*a*). Cultural variations within the slum are blurred in Lewis' account, where he ignores the Jivaros and working people of La Perla as contrasted with the more urbanized derelict populations who drift in from towns and cities.

Further, the concept of "culture of poverty" blurs and levels, and, indeed, stereotypes the indigent of various cultures of the world. The blurring is a middle-class or ethnocentric stereotype. Lewis lists, for example, as one of their leading characteristics not simply the hopelessness produced by poverty, but a pervading sense of worthlessness. For a simple refutation, the reader is invited to consult *Child of the Dark*, by Carolina Maria De Jesus (1962), a prime example of a slum-dweller's ideas about her own worth and about "the worthy" and the "worthless" in her estimation. There is little of Carolina's social ethics, applied to Río's *favela*, in Lewis' account of Fernanda and her relatives. Carolina says, for example (p. 33): "Brazil needs to be led by a person who has known hunger. Hunger is also a teacher."

Discussions with Puerto Rican psychologists, psychiatrists, social scientists, dramatists, and poets lead me to conclude that Lewis' unfortunate stereotype can only aggravate the tendency of many governments, our own included, to overgeneralize when dealing with poverty and slums. Everyone knows that the "pockets of poverty" in Appalachia and in our urban centers are not reached because the programs are not tailored to either the "Hollow Folk" or to such ethnic lower-class groups as we have studied in New York (Puerto Ricans, Czechs, Hungarians, Italians, Irish, etc.). Anthropologists have seen the same mishandling occur on the more indigent Indian reservations, where local values, traditions, and economic practices are ignored. Cultural backgrounds count heavily within any economic level. There are "cultures *in*

poverty" rather than a "culture of poverty."

When Lewis describes what he calls the "uncontrolled id," failing to note the prudish Jivaros with their flowery and often properly "Puritan" language, he is simply missing the texture within one "poverty-ridden culture" and ignoring one type within the populous peasantry described by Julian Steward and colleagues (1956). The prostitute's family with the allegedly "uncontrolled id" is not even well described psychiatrically, since a more or less uncontrolled *id* is a schizophrenic characteristic which any clinical testing, psychological or psychiatric, would pick up (Rogler and Hollingshead 1965). What is required is attention to the kinds of traditional values exemplified in projective tests —the role of sexual, self-, and social identification—rather than the simple playing up of sex "as an obsession." Further, Lewis ignores the rural poverty and even the question of the gradients represented in the deterioration of traditional values for different populations. In Puerto Rico it is important whether one comes from the city, the coastal plantation, or the highlands. Puerto Ricans say, "You can't hide the sky with one hand" and one intellectual in San Juan paraphrased: "You can't describe our poor by means of one prostitute's family." One learns nothing in this book of most parents' concern about the exposure of their children, particularly girls, to sexuality, almost an aberration (with Hispanic origins) in the island. The slums, La Perla included, are too close to peasant backgrounds, stated a leading journalist here in San Juan, "to have dropped down so far in style of language and the expression of values." A leading editor of a popular literary journal, interested in what Lewis calls "fictionalized" study, hazarded the guess that Fernanda and certain relatives tended to dramatize and exaggerate both language and sexual exploits in order to impress the anthropologist's "fieldwork aides." Since the aides did the translations and gathered the tapes, there are many further questions about method beyond the question of informants' sampling, the apparent weaknesses in projective testing, and the fit between data and ultimate theorizing. I have doubts about the standardization of methods of inquiry, not to mention the question of fieldwork rapport, and I find that Puerto Ricans themselves have raised this question time and time again.

by RODOLFO STAVENHAGEN

México, D.F., México. 20 III 67

Oscar Lewis' books are fascinating human documents that give us insight into three different family situations. They attest to Lewis' talent, the intelligence and cooperativeness of his informants, and, in no small measure, the hard work and solid research of his assistants.

The human testimonial is, however, only one aspect of Lewis' work. As a scientist, he will ultimately have to be judged by his contribution to anthropology. In this respect, it seems useful to discuss his work under three main headings: (1) ethnography, (2) method, and (3) theory.

1) *Ethnography.* Being detailed descriptions of the lives and loves of his subjects, Oscar Lewis' books fall into the hallowed tradition of good ethnography, but take us a step further in that much of the ethnographic description is done by the subjects themselves. One could easily rearrange the materials under the familiar headings—"habitat," "technology," "economy," "life cycle," etc.—and get a traditional ethnographic monograph. As in all such cases, the author must surely have asked himself whether his material contained all the data he needed and, conversely, whether he needed all the data it contained. Much of the information of the life histories is repetitious, and, if the books were organized along the lines of traditional ethnographic monographs, much of it would have been eliminated. On the other hand, it is intriguing to think of all the data that must surely have remained on the tapes and in the notebooks. The selection of what is important in an ethnographic report is always arbitrary, yet the general idea is that the reader is supposed to get an objective or balanced view of the culture or group under study. This is decidedly not the case in Lewis' books. We get a picture of the culture as Lewis' subjects themselves seem to see it through their family relationships, and this indeed has been Lewis' purpose from the start. Yet there is no doubt that Lewis' own theoretical preferences or research orientations have played an important part. His emphasis on the sex life and intrafamily relationships of his biographees —as well as his own psychoanalytically oriented interpretations of these, as briefly expounded in the introductions —lead us to believe that another researcher, with another set of questions or topics for study, with other criteria in editing the taped interviews, would conceivably have come up with quite different biographies. This suggestion is by no means intended to belittle Lewis' important contribution, but only to point to the pitfalls of presenting such complex material from only one point of view. In this respect, it is well to remember Lewis' anthropological restudy of the Mexican village Tepoztlań (1951), in the course of which a similar problem arose as to the interpretation of Robert Redfield's earlier study of the same village (1930). While it will be much more difficult, if not impossible, to eventually do a restudy of the Sánchez, Martínez, or Ríos families, the doubt remains as to how complete or incomplete, how unilateral or well-balanced, how unique or typical the studies of these families are.

2) *Method.* Oscar Lewis has made abundant use of the tape recorder, a research instrument of fairly recent vintage, in combination with more traditional techniques of data collecting such as the questionnaire, the open-ended interview, and participant observation. With excellent craftsmanship he has put the material together in the multiple family biography and the presentation of "typical days." The result is a vivid, throbbing picture of naked humanity; the living flesh on the ethnographic skeleton. These family biographies are kept from being "just another case study" by the fact that the author never once seems to turn off his tape recorder; no detail is omitted. This attention to detail at the same time limits the value of these family studies for the analysis of the social structure (which is, after all, what social anthropology sets out to do); for the accumulation of detail, no matter how interesting, does not in itself contribute much to the understanding of society.

What is missing in Lewis' books, and what would transform them from readable testimonials into solid anthropology, is precisely analysis. Lewis has used well the anthropologist's techniques for the collection of field data and the writer's techniques for presenting a salable book; he has not used his tools for social analysis. The anthropological critic of Lewis' work would prefer to see less naturalistic detail and more anthropological reasoning. Despite Lewis' claim to a holistic approach through the family study, we do not get a clear picture either of Puerto Rican culture or of San Juan and New York slum life in *La Vida*, nor of modern Mexico's marginal urban populations in *The Children of Sánchez*. Pedro Martínez' story, because it is so intertwined with his country's recent history, and because a part of it is to a certain degree the story of his community, is much more revealing on this score. Thus his biography is the perfect complement to Lewis' community study of Tepoztlán. It is to be hoped that Lewis will publish at some later date his anthro-

pological findings related to the societies in which the Sánchez and the Ríos families live. Without such a frame of reference, these family studies will be left hanging in air.

3) *Theory*. Lewis' interpretation of his findings is limited to the short introductions to each of his books. His major theoretical contribution is the concept of culture of poverty, applicable to the Sánchez and Ríos families, but not to the Martínez family, who are peasants. The culture or subculture (Lewis states that it is "technically" a subculture) of poverty describes an urban social situation that used to be referred to as social disorganization or anomie, but it is both wider and more specific than these concepts. As Lewis uses the term, it appears to have taxonomic value, but it seems doubtful that it can be used as an analytical category in anthropology. Of what is poverty a subculture? And how does it relate to the culture of which it is "sub"? Lewis does not say, but he does suggest that the kind of social situations he describes in these terms are to be found only in the early free-enterprise stage of capitalism and in colonialism. (Neither Puerto Rico nor Mexico fits the former category, and only Puerto Rico fits the latter.) On the other hand, it seems to be characteristic of periods of rapid and far-reaching social and economic change, in other words, of periods of transition. The people involved in these transitions are themselves, socially speaking, "in transit." While nobody will quarrel with Lewis about the existence of many of the 70 traits he lists in the societies thus described, to apply the term "culture" here seems to be stretching the concept as it has traditionally been used in anthropology. Many of the traits are in fact common to people in other class situations also, and Lewis recognizes that the way these traits are interrelated may vary from society to society and from family to family. Perhaps the fact that up to now Lewis has only studied the culture of poverty in two Latin American societies may make the concept itself too culture-bound.

At any rate, Lewis' work shows only too well that these families are integral to, and the product of, a "class-stratified, highly individuated, capitalistic society" (Lewis 1966:xliv). This deserves further analysis, because even though this subculture may be "a way of life, remarkably stable and persistent, passed down from generation to generation along family lines" (Lewis 1961:xxiv) and though its members "are not psychologically geared to take full advantage of changing conditions or increased opportunities which may occur in their lifetime" (Lewis 1966:xlv), the main reasons for the persistence of the subculture are no doubt the pressures that the larger society exerts over its members, that is, the structure of the larger class society itself. In another context, I have found the term "internal colonialism" useful to describe the relation between the larger society and the backward, marginal rural populations (Stavenhagen 1966). It seems to me that the same relationship holds between Lewis' poor and the larger society in which they live. But the concept culture of poverty does not suggest a relationship at all; it is essentially a static, formalistic, non-relational concept which Lewis applies to an essentially dynamic and certainly not self-contained social situation. In fact, Lewis seems to have adopted the old practice of reifying culture when he insists that the subculture of poverty "is also something positive and provides some rewards without which the poor could hardly carry on" (1966:xliii). Now, by definition, culture is someting positive and provides some rewards, and there is no reason why poor people should be any different from other people in that sense. It is not the culture "of" poverty that provides these rewards, but the simple fact that the poor, like all other people, live in society. These difficulties are perhaps only due to the fact that the concept "culture" as such is so vague and ambiguous. Did not Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) review over 160 definitions of the concept? However, there is a particular implication to Lewis' use of the word culture which should be pointed out. Lewis does not believe that there is something positive about being poor, but by introducing the term "culture" with its "positive adaptive functions" (Lewis 1966:li) he makes it appear as if there were. In other words, he seems to be saying: "being poor is terrible, but having a culture of poverty is not so bad." The implications of this position (if I have understood it correctly) should not be lost on applied anthropologists.

Margaret Mead once suggested that every graduate student should go out and study a culture. As primitive cultures have been slowly disappearing, in recent years graduate students (particularly in Latin America) have studied folk communities; but the folk community has also been passing out of existence, or at least out of fashion. I venture to predict that in coming years many students will go out and do biographies of poor families in urban slums, who, unfortunately, will be with us for a long time to come. There could be no greater tribute to the pathbreaking efforts of Oscar Lewis.

by PETER WILLMOTT

London, England. 20 III 67

When it was first published in Britain in 1962, *The Children of Sánchez* aroused immediate interest among both social scientists and non-specialist readers, and a paperback edition predictably followed two years later. *Pedro Martínez*, though as yet only available in hard-back, has also been widely noticed and discussed. *La Vida* has not yet been published in this country, but anyone who has been privileged to read it can confidently forecast the same kind of success.

The reason is fairly obvious. Despite the differences in setting and in focus, the three books have important qualities in common. By portraying the lives of poor people in their own words, they convey vividly something of what it feels like to be such a person living such a life. The reader identifies with the subjects, and his understanding is consequently deepened and enriched. In an extraordinarily effortless way, because the books are so readable, each one opens up a whole series of windows onto other people's worlds. Readers often describe the books as "like a novel," and Oscar Lewis himself draws such a parallel in his introductory statement to this collection of reviews. To the reader who is not a social scientist, this is the great atraction—the books read like novels and yet, because they are written by a social scientist and are based on real-life material, they have an authenticity that most novels lack.

Some social scientists are prone to dismiss Lewis' books because of this very quality; they say, some more tolerantly than others, that his work is more akin to that of a novelist and therefore can not properly be regarded as a contribution to the literature of social science. But this is surely to take too narrow a view of social science. Truth, like the devil, has many faces, and rigorously conducted statistical investigation, despite its undoubted value, can present only one dimension of reality. I would prefer to regard the output of social science as ranging over a broad spectrum, with intensive personal documents at one end and large-scale statistical surveys at the other. No one method, out of the battery available, is the right one, though some are specially appropriate to particular tasks.

Of course, if social science is to get anywhere near justifying the second part of its name, there must be abstractions, conceptual schemes, theoretical systems. But social science is strongest when it maintains the links between concepts and generalisations on the one hand and recognisable human reality on the other. Lewis'

major contribution is not only that he brings this latter element into the arena of discourse but also that his skills and predilections enable him to do so in a way that may perhaps do something to bring together the at present unnecessarily divided disciplines of sociology, psychology, and social anthropology.

Lewis himself is clearly not unaware of the need to move from case history to general statement; he has tried to draw from other studies as well as his own a series of general patterns associated with what he calls the culture of poverty. A critic might reasonably argue that he does not go far enough. The three books under review would be stronger if they managed to combine the individual stories with more general statements about the communities and the kinds of people under examination. The fact is that, although Lewis has extended his techniques in *La Vida*, by enlarging the linked network of kin and by interviewing samples of Puerto Ricans in San Juan and in New York, he has made little real advance in marrying the two elements. In *La Vida* the sample material is drawn upon only in the Introduction, and even there little use is made of it. It is by no means an easy task to build sample material and general statements about social patterns into the body of a book made up largely of personal narratives, but if such a conjunction could be achieved it would mark an immense step forward in Lewis' work.

We should, however, be grateful for what he already does with such consummate skill. It would be foolish to imagine that, because so much of the material of these three books is drawn from tape recordings, their creation has not demanded immense organising ability on the part of the author, to say nothing of his success in gathering the material in the first place. And, although there is an obvious bias in selecting families whose members are "good talkers" and amiably disposed to research workers, the accounts are, in a general sense, completely convincing. Many other research workers must have been struck, as have I, by parallels between the studies in Mexico or Puerto Rico and those in quite different communities. To give a small example, the description in the Epilogue of *La Vida* of Cruz's feelings about her transfer to the neat but unfriendly atmosphere of a new housing project reminds me of the reactions of Londoners to removal to suburban dormitories (Young and Willmott 1957; Willmot 1963) and of people similarly rehoused from Lagos, Nigeria (Marris 1961). Cruz conveys, vividly and with a wealth of personal detail, the response reported in a shelf-full of sample surveys of migration from slum communities. With material like this, Oscar Lewis successfully brings flesh and blood, real feelings and emotions into the scholarly discussion of social behaviour —and this is his outstanding strength.

by NATHAN W. ACKERMAN

New York, N.Y., U.S.A. 15 IV 67

My perspective on the writings of Oscar Lewis on the culture of poverty is influenced by the fact that I am a psychiatric clinician focusing on the problems of family study and family psychotherapy. My work has impelled me to reconceptualize "mental illness" as a family phenomenon, even though it is manifested in individual behavior. Within this broader conceptual scheme, "mental illness" encompasses a sequential series of interrelated, interpenetrating behavior disorders among family members which can be delineated across three generations. The way of life of the given family and the balance of social health and social disorder are intimately connected to the emergence across time of patterns of vulnerability to breakdown in family relationships and individual members. My interest in Lewis' studies of the culture of poverty is in the relations between family pattern and mental health and in the ways in which social science and psychiatry may usefully join forces in a cross-class and cross-cultural study of family life and individual adaptation. Lewis' explorations present the possibility of a new and more profitable interdisciplinary collaboration.

The importance of close study of the way of life of impoverished people is self-evident. To focus the study on the prototypical social unit, the family, is more than appropriate; it is indispensable. Lewis reminds us repeatedly of the social significance of this study:

> The people of the underdeveloped countries represent 80% of the world's population. What happens to [these] people... will affect directly or indirectly our own lives. It is ironic that many Americans, thanks to anthropologists, know more about the culture of some isolated tribe in New Guinea, with a total population of 500 souls, than about the way of life of millions of people in Mexico or India and other underdeveloped nations which are destined to play so crucial a role on the international scene.

Oliver La Farge says in the introduction to *Five Families* that we are concerned with

> people whose culture... is going to hell in a handbasket before the onslaught of the age of technology.... All over the world people are hating the light-skinned, machine-age nations and busily aping them. One of the first returns they get is a cultural desolation.

Torres-Rioseco (1959) argues that the family of Latin America is imitating the image of the North American family, which is itself disintegrating.

In our age of revolution what is especially poignant is the agonizing contrast between the rich and the poor. It is the haves and the have-nots living side by side, the existence of want among plenty, the stark and cruel banging together of the contrasting ways of life that lends to the problem its devastating urgency. At the same time, it seems clear that virtually all families today, rich and poor alike, are victims of cultural shock. Signs of family decadence and breakdown are well-nigh universal. There are, of course, crucial differences between rich and poor, but these are mainly differences in levels of coping—differences in resources for saving face, in opportunities for escape and diversion, in capacity for compromise, compensation, and healing. The healing of family distress and disintegration seems insufficient in all classes, though the depth of failure may vary enormously from one class to another. The progressive spread of family breakdown may, in fact, be the harbinger of the decline of our civilization. If so, the antidote is not yet in view.

The observer in Lewis' studies is a participant-observer. He becomes a trusted, helping friend, one who offers "sympathy and compassion." In order to carry out his study Lewis must devote a period of six months to making himself a proven friend. He must be on 24-hour call whenever any part of the family needs help. Beginning as an outsider, he is ultimately accepted as an insider. By his own admission, Lewis lived in two families, his own and that other family whose way of life he was recording. He becomes "a student and spokesman" of the culture of poverty.

One wonders about this six-month period during which Lewis' interest, his sympathy and loyalty, are being tested. What is the natural history of this relationship between a deprived, segregated family and a middle-class, professional observer? In all probability the observer is first perceived and felt as a potential enemy and may be greeted with suspicion, fear, moroseness, even open anger. How does he comport himself so as to dissolve this initial suspicion and hostility? For example, was Lewis' life ever threatened? Has he ever been physically mauled?

During the first six-month period,

Lewis listens over and over to the life stories of these people, but does not yet dare to tape the proceedings. Only when a firm bond is established can he begin to make the permanent recording. There is, unfortunately, no record of the relationship transactions in this crucial first phase of contact between the family and the observer, that period of transition in the role of the observer from potential enemy to friend. It must be assumed that the final taping of the way of life is a repeat of earlier accounts. To what extent is this later repeat a faithful recording of the original life story? One would also like to hear more about how Lewis selects and edits his material, more about the questions he puts to these people which are edited out of the final version.

Lewis uses four approaches: (1) a topical study; (2) the family seen through the eyes of each member; (3) the family seen through the adaptation to crisis situations; (4) the typical day. Each of these methods selectively highlights some aspects of the way of life while obscuring others. For example, the typical day gives the impression of a more serene, ordered, and benign life than can be found in the other studies. It may be that while each day is liveable and can be managed, the cumulative experience of a marginal way of life adds up to the weight of misery and failure that Lewis describes. The greatest value of this naturalistic approach is the raw material it provides; yet selection, condensing, and editing must play a part in the shaping of the final picture. On the other hand, something may be lost in the method of separating the reports into individual autobiographies. Comparison of the different methods points up not only what each can uniquely contribute but also limitations and biases of each that are not made explicit by the author.

Lewis states that his tape recording provides "a camera-like view of movement, conversations, and interactions." While a sound record is invaluable, I do not think that it provides a camera-like view. Every known method of permanent recording of behavior and relationships has its own limitations. From the point of view of the clinician, one is concerned to obtain a gestalt of the way of life which embraces content, mood, bodily expression, total interchange in communication, and social action patterns. In Lewis' studies we get the content, and we catch by indirection something of the mood, something of bodily expression and interaction; but we do not get a gestalt.

The values of Lewis' work for the psychiatric clinician derive precisely from his naturalistic orientation and his focus on the life cycle of the family unit. An extraordinarily vivid picture is drawn of the relations between way of life, family pattern, and individual adaptation, and between social disorder and deviant behavior. Of special interest are the dramatic effects on family life and individual performance of the sheer struggle for physical survival. In this setting, the elemental emotions of love, fear, and hate come into stark relief. The cravings of the body achieve an extraordinary emphasis. To live is to eat, drink, defecate, and copulate. Throughout all aspects of the struggle, the yearning for love is paramount.

For the clinician the question of selective reinforcement of particular patterns of coping and related defenses against anxiety is of great importance. For survival, sharing and cooperation, flexibility and resiliency of adaptation, are essential. These people learn by doing. They exhibit extraordinary resourcefulness and agility. They are alert and cunning in the manipulation of their harsh environment. Effective action, rather than introspection and a private struggle with conflict, holds priority. It is difficult in this setting to distinguish action and "acting out." These people achieve much of their social learning through the process of "acting out." Evidently, the families of the poor do not pay the same kind of attention to mental breakdowns as is characteristic of the families of the middle class. Among the poor, psycho-pathology is often simply attributed to idiosyncratic differences among people. The poor are so intensely preoccupied with the daily struggle for survival that they have neither the time nor the interest to fuss with those among them who break down mentally. In general, the peculiarities of "sick" people are treated with tolerance.

In exploring the relations between family experience and the disposition to emotional breakdown, I have sought help for 20 years or more from social scientists. I have obligated myself to become familiar with the literature and have tried collaboration with social scientists. With perhaps one or two outstanding exceptions, the labor of collaboration has yielded little fruit. I have emerged from these interdisciplinary adventures with a gnawing sense of disappointment. I have long felt that I must learn all that I can from social science; now I feel that social science also has much to learn from the clinician. An effective blend of the two branches of knowledge is still to be achieved. The clinician seeks to understand human behavior through a participant experience. He follows his clinical hunches in order to uncover significant themes. He tests the validity of these hunches in a therapeutic encounter. Above all else, he is launched upon an expedition to discover some useful insights. Too often, the problems that are important to him cannot be researched by the known methods of science. In contrast, the experimentalist takes the life out of the problem; the operation is a success but the patient dies. What the methodologist selects for testing and measuring may be of little use or interest to the clinician. The variables chosen for the systematic methods of science are all too frequently trivial, tangential, or inappropriate. The clinician strives to understand the phenomenon in nature; the experimentalist unwittingly distorts it to fit his measuring instrument. He takes the position that unless we can measure, check, and verify by the standards of science we cannot really know anything. The clinician is disillusioned. He comes to the conclusion that there is a lack of fit between the techniques and the problem—that the conventional methods of science are, in this instance, simply no good. He takes the stand that the human problem has the first priority, and the technique is secondary. His plea is: Let us not take the search out of research; let us seek bold, imaginative, new methods to fit the complexity of the human situation. Here again I quote La Farge:

> The longer we study human beings and their infinite variety, the more apparent it becomes they cannot in reality be encompassed within the specified rigidities of the kind of data that can be manipulated mathematically, even given the staggering range of present-day computers. Somewhere along the line, there must be an interpretation arising from the individual's observation, with all its weaknesses of emotion and bias.

The Lewis approach offers a fresh hope for effective interdisciplinary collaboration. In further naturalistic family studies, a professional team composed of social scientist and psychiatrist might bring us to a richer understanding of the relations between the individual, the family, and the community in varying conditions of health and illness.

by MARY JEAN AERNI

Kampala, Uganda. 13 III 67

Oscar Lewis has made a brilliant contribution to an understanding of the behavior patterns and problems of adapting to a money economy of several subcultural groups in Mexico and Puerto Rico. The three books under review provide what is rarely achieved in any anthropological work, an intense personal experience in the lives and suffering of individuals in their social setting. This compelling

personal quality is very strong in *The Children of Sánchez* and characterizes *La Vida*. The extraordinary emotional impact of *La Vida* evokes comparison with the work of a great novelist such as Dostoievski. Much praise is due Lewis for his discriminating editing; the people reach the reader through their own expressions of pleasure and of pain. It is evident that he has given to the task years of preparation and many months of empathetic relationships in order to enable the subjects to speak so candidly concerning their lives.

As Lewis notes, people in the slums, urban or rural, have patterns of behavior which are outside the experience and knowledge of the middle-class administrators who are committed to ameliorate their physical and social surroundings. His records make clear the nearly complete alienation of the poor from those institutions which claim to be their spokesmen or mentors: Government, church, union, educational system, or political party.

In *Pedro Martínez*, although hunger and poverty, misery and corruption, and callousness in human relationships are recurrent themes, there is not the anomie, the rootless struggle for individual pleasure which is characteristic of urban poverty. Old Martínez has never lost his devotion to the soil and to the village, although this loyalty exists in his children in a more social form. The description of the authoritarian role of the father and the martyr complex of the mother as revealed in the biographies give great insight into the family structure in Mexican rural life.

Lewis has pioneered with several methodological procedures which characterize all three books: the use of the family as a unit for recording and analyzing the process of growth, development, and social change within the subculture, and the recording on tape of retrospective life histories of several or all members of a family. The new technology of the tape recorder has enabled the editor to achieve personal documents of great emotional validity. As a counterbalance to the extreme subjectivity of *The Children of Sánchez*, Lewis has added in *La Vida* the recording by a trained observer of the events of a single day in the contemporary life of the members of the family (a technique used earlier in *Five Families*). The observed day gives a change of pace and added dimension to the taped autobiographies. The stylistic device of having each member of the family give his interpretation of the same events provides the reader with an absorbing chronicle of the psychology of family life and of interpersonal relationships. The human tendency to absolve oneself from responsibility and emerge the hero is admirably demonstrated in *The Children of Sánchez*.

The significant hypothesis for anthropology of all three books is that there is a culture of poverty which transcends the cultural or national setting and which can be found in many parts of the world. Lewis makes this generalization on the basis of his data from Mexico and Puerto Rico, in both of which Spanish colonial culture is combined with an exploitative and densely populated agricultural system. He argues that there are many societies which contain some of the elements of the culture of poverty, but not the whole pattern—among them African tribal societies, nonliterate cultures, and socialist societies. Lewis posits in the introduction to *La Vida* that African tribal societies have a corporate nature which, along with village ties, will inhibit the formation of a full-blown culture of poverty in African towns and cities. He states further that wherever unilateral kinship systems or clans exist, one would not expect to find the culture of poverty, because such a system gives people a sense of belonging.

The evidence from one African city, Kampala, does not support this view. The predominantly non-African municipality is surrounded by urban areas containing Africans of many tribes who have migrated to earn money or enjoy the freedom and novelty of a city. Areas of dense urban population have arisen, without outside supervision, which may be characterized as slums, lacking in the amenities of sanitation, adequate housing, or public security. These areas exhibit a higher proportion of men than in the general population, high mobility of occupants, chronic underemployment and low income, sexual relationships of a consensual type or open prostitution, and a general instability of marriages with resultant frequent change in marital partners and abandonment of wives and children. Many men come to the capital leaving their wives and children on the family land, and not a few women have come to the city after an unsatisfactory marriage has been terminated. Sexual unions are contracted in the city without recognition by family or clan and without payment of a bride price. Many men come from distant tribes or from neighboring countries. As "foreigners" they secure the least remunerative work and hence are least committed to urban life. They expect to live in the city for a few years, then return to the tribal area with whatever savings they have amassed to make a proper tribal marriage. For both town and rural dwellers, Christian marriage is a matter of social prestige and is confined to upper status groups. Neither are most town marriages based on customary tribal marriage, since such marriages tend to be inter-tribal. Hence the majority of town dwellers live in free union.

This instability of the marriage relationship is one of the core problems of African urban life. Women particularly are beginning to look for a new type of marriage which is more satisfying and less punitive than the traditional form. Children of unstable urban marriages may be given shelter within the extended family. Children separated from parents may live with relatives on either the mother's or the father's side and are subject to the vicissitudes which orphans experience, particularly when their upbringing involves expenses on the part of guardians who have other children to feed and educate. The psychological results of maternal deprivation for children can lead to feelings of helplessness and resignation, weak ego structure, lack of impulse control, present time orientation, and a sense of inferiority and marginality—all individual characteristics of the culture of poverty listed by Lewis. This early conditioning cannot be compensated by later knowledge of belonging to the clan.

In Africa, in the present stage of transition, many traditional forms are in question and being put to the test by people with freedom to move. Many of the problems described as part of the "culture of poverty" emanate from an inability to move from the limitations of a subsistence economy to a money economy in a constructive fashion. Personal adjustments are made difficult because traditional highly authoritarian family patterns may have damaged the potential of the individual to function purposefully (as in *The Children of Sánchez*). The towns lack the social cohesion which makes law and order feasible within the small village community through the mechanism of projecting hostility outside the group, and they equally lack consensus that there is a common social and cultural system to which both the institutions and their representatives and the common people belong. The mixture of tribes, languages, and customs, along with the attitudes of latent suspicion, jealousy, and open aggression which are endemic in African rural life, militate against such consensus. These scarcely repressed aggressive attitudes are most destructive in interpersonal relationships between the sexes and in the family, with situations not unlike

those described in *La Vida* existing in African slums.

Although I do not agree with Lewis' hypothesis that Africa is exempt from the "culture of poverty" as he defines it, it may be that the definition itself is not adequately based cross-culturally. The culture of poverty has been described only in urban areas in the New World.

Despite these reservations, the three books of Oscar Lewis succeed in the author's main objective: to personalize the sociological situation of poverty in the slums. Lewis has given us memorable "salvage ethnology" of a submerged economic subculture.

by LORRAINE BARIĆ

Salford, England. 15 III 67

Considering the immense and growing amount of reading thrust upon anthropologists, we should be grateful to colleagues like Oscar Lewis who write books that are gripping, stir the imagination, and give aesthetic pleasure. His variant of the life-history method, employing multiple family autobiographies, is a powerful means of permitting us to see the same event or action from the different perspectives of the actors. It reveals the ambiguity and elusiveness of ethnographic "facts" and demonstrates the interrelations and complexities of social situations by encouraging the reader to refer interpretations of events to the statuses and roles of those involved. This is in addition to the accepted advantages of the life history: its directness of presentation, the grasp it gives of what it is like to live in another culture, the coherence that an individual point of reference gives to a study over time, and its vivid, concrete ethnographic detail.

On the other hand, the method has drawbacks. It is never clear how much generalization about a culture or a social system the study of one family permits. Here the old problem of intensive observation vs. random sample survey emerges sharply. One case can never be "typical" in all respects of any population. For instance, the Ríos family of *La Vida* is not necessarily typical either of Puerto Ricans (cf. Lewis 1966:xxx), or of Puerto Rican slum families, or even, to be precise, of Puerto Rican prostitute slum families.

Another drawback concerns the inevitable editing that is needed to turn chaotic reminiscences on tape into a systematic presentation. The unseen hand of the anthropologist, as prompter, questioner and finally shaper of the whole, is, in fact, creative. How much does this alter—consciously or unconsciously—the data? Lewis shows his awareness of the problem in offering his colleagues the original material for scrutiny, but this hardly answers the difficulty. The anthropologist must have been an important person in the lives of the families, and yet he scarcely enters into the stories of *The Children of Sánchez* or *Pedro Martínez*. Rosa, the research assistant, appears in the "days" described in *La Vida*, but the autobiographical narratives give no clue as to the relation between observer and observed. Having once noticed this gap, one wonders what else has gone.

A third drawback relates to the anonymity of informants, which usually has to be preserved, particularly in case studies of complex, literate societies. It demands careful coding to ensure that exact kin relationships are preserved and that pseudonyms correspond throughout. Secondary analysis using the autobiographies must rely on the assumption that the concealing of identities and possibly of other characteristics has been completely consistent. A conclusion from these points is that greater explicitness about the management of data would be helpful.

This question of autobiographies as basic ethnographic data is related to the contribution they can make to the advancement of anthropological theory. Since there is a great deal implicit in these three books, different conceptual systems may be illustrated by them. Lewis' emphasis on the theoretical importance of families as natural units for study is hard to quarrel with, but I should have thought that it goes back a long way in anthropology: at least to Firth's *We, the Tikopia* (1936). Lewis dismisses earlier work lightly in attempting to emphasize the novelty of his approach.

The other main theoretical contribution Lewis makes is towards the so-called culture of poverty. In his opinion, a number of characteristics can be singled out which together define this culture or subculture. I doubt very much whether this is a useful explanatory concept at all. Since it overlaps in part many characteristics of society and culture in underdeveloped countries but is not as a whole diagnostic for a large number of areas of the world (some of which Lewis notes [1966:xlviii-l]), it is both broad and imprecise. Lurking behind the idea of a separate culture or subculture of poverty is the ethnocentric assumption that there is something distinctive about the nature of the poor, be it the "unbridled id" Lewis mentions or whatever. This assumption is, rather like early explanations of the customs of the simple natives. It distracts attention from the existence of economic and social factors independent of, and external to, the people supposed to share this "subculture" which limit the choices people can make, which make it meaningless to plan ahead (even though some people might well be able to do so under different circumstances), and which force them to rely on personal networks of kin, friends, and neighbours as insurance against misfortune.

A more instructive use of the wealth of ethnographic material in these books might be to attempt to specify the limiting factors of the range of social situations in various societies for people at the lower end of the continuum of income. Some of these will be cultural and may emerge at all income levels (for example, some characteristics of poor Puerto Ricans may be also found among richer Puerto Ricans), but there is likely to be greater freedom of manoeuvre and variety of alternatives at the upper levels. Where one is tempted to list, e.g., "fatalism and a low level of aspiration as one of the key traits for the subculture of poverty" (1965:li), one should look first at the objective possibilities for action.

In other words, a more sociologically oriented situational analysis could provide a sounder basis for the comparative study of problems of poverty throughout the world than the concept of the "culture of poverty," which is a construct apparently irrelevant to large parts of the world. Such a study is feasible: books like Lewis' provide the sort of data we need in order to make significant advances in the field of the study of poverty, but not, I believe, through the theoretical framework he favours.

by JOHANNES EICHHORN

Kleinmachnow, Germany. 3 III 67

Almost 170 years ago, Alexander von Humboldt spent four years travelling, investigating, teaching, and collecting scientific materials in Latin America. Widely known as a scientist, author, and organizer of international scientific collaboration, he was also an indefatigable and devoted champion of human dignity, and in his books, diaries, and letters there are many proposals for improving the living conditions of the underprivileged masses in that part of the world. His suggestions, and those of others of his time, went unheeded. Liberation from Spanish rule, which many had hoped would mean change for the better, brought only a new set of rulers seeking their own profit and continued exploitation of the lower classes. Efforts at reform in recent years have been frustrated by rapid increase in population. Despite the increasing number of scientists and

technicians who are turning their attention to Latin America, serious social problems remain.

Oscar Lewis is one of the still very few scientists who has devoted himself to the study of extremely bad living conditions, first in Mexico and then in Puerto Rico and New York. Generously sponsored by scientific institutions, he has been able, with patience and kindness, to win the confidence of men and women who are by nature suspicious and reticent when dealing with people outside their own circle, especially foreigners. As a trusted friend of the family, he has lived in their overcrowded rooms, accompanied them to work, to church, to school, to market, and to meetings with relatives and friends. He has participated in their celebrations, in their most intimate situations. Grasping the most minute details, he has tried to understand their feelings and opinions, their expressed and secret wishes, their behavior in trouble and pleasure, rage and delight. More recently, he has enlisted the help of experts in sociology, anthropology, philosophy, psychology, and psychiatry in the interpretation of his results, and of students and friends in the practical fieldwork. His research has led him to believe that people can make the best of any situation, even one that seems to us intolerable.

Lewis' books can be read like novels, but they go even beyond the novel in frankness, particularly about bodily functions, as the characters tell their own story in their own words. The most undisguised realism appears in the description of sexual life. We read of families of eight or more persons sleeping in a single room, where children become aware of sexual practices at an early age, observe the excesses of drunken fathers and the love affairs of mothers, and early begin to play "father and mother" themselves. Early marriage and frequent change of partners seems to be the rule. Reading hundreds of pages of details on such subjects can be a burden; surely we could get along with less of them in a study presumably dealing with the whole of the life of the very poor.

It is difficult to understand how people in such misery, who abuse each other physically and verbally so much, can be so kind and helpful to each other in cases of illness or necessity. A woman will make sacrifices—selling or pawning essential things, borrowing money at high interest, etc.—to help a husband, father, or brother who regularly beats and insults her. If one were to ask why, the answer would probably be, "What are we going to do? He's part of the family." This loyalty seems to me remarkable.

Lewis has given us profound insight into the lives of the poor. Whether or not this insight can be made available to the administrators who could use it in developing plans for improving the living conditions of those poor is another question. The books are long, and the time of administrators is limited. Perhaps a summary of the information in Lewis' voluminous works would be useful. It would be regrettable if the results of his research, like those of von Humboldt, should fail to receive the consideration they so much deserve.

by ERIC R. WOLF

Ann Arbor, Mich., U.S.A. 20 III 67

Since men act and speak, but also think and feel, anthropology forever oscillates between studying men from without and studying men from within, seeing culture now as design or machine, now as a flow of internal experience. For more than two decades, however, Oscar Lewis has attempted to transcend this antinomy, and to do so, moreover, by using "hard" methodology which permits of replication rather than the "soft" methodology of subjective insight. The aim is to observe as closely as possible, to record as accurately as possible, to quantify where relevant. To achieve maximum intensity of focus, he has moved from the study of whole communities to the studies of families and individuals in families. *La Vida*, with its census-taking and sampling, its observation of daily sequences of action, and its many kinds of interviews, represents a major milestone in reaching this goal. The result is unique, and it has wide implications for anthropological work.

Lewis makes a virtue of what others have tended to view as a drawback: the fact that while we claim to study communities or institutions, if one looks carefully there is at the center of every study a network of 15, 25, 50, or 100 well-known, well-observed, "fully specified" individuals whom we treat as diagnostic of how the culture works. We may concomitantly flesh out the data obtained from this core group by gathering information on other persons whose interconnectedness is only partially known or assumed. This anthropologists have always known; and for this reason—quite rightly, I think—they have always valued the diagnostic data obtained from their core group above even the best statistical information on persons whose position in observable networks could not be fully clarified. If we have sometimes been shamefaced about knowing so much about so small a segment of the universe, Lewis' books ought to teach us that our micro-sociology is capable of uncovering evidence of very large significance.

Another lesson we can learn from these books is an increased awareness of how we collect and connect data. We often speak of *the* anthropological method as participant observation; but this phrase tends to obscure the simple fact that we observe and participate in many more speech events of any other kind. "Pay attention to what people do, not to what they say they do," has been a familiar and sometimes salutary slogan for many of us. Nevertheless, our runs of observation on what people do are often all too short and selected by circumstances over which we do not have much control. I would bet that no matter how hard we try to observe non-verbal behavior, the bulk of our field notes will be made up of verbal statements. These verbal statements always pass through at least two cognitive and emotional screens, that of the informant and that of the recorder. But when we sit down to construct our own abstract statements about what we have seen and heard, we blithely assume that the very process of abstraction renders objective that double subjectivity. I should not like to be misunderstood: I, too, want our statements to be as objective as possible; but such objectivity is obtained through better methods and not through magic. Lewis' books do not abolish subjectivity, but they go a long way in making subjectivity more "tolerable."

Some will ask how representative these individuals and families are of the universe of individuals and families for which they are made to stand. Each individual event is, of course, to some extent unique; so are the events reported here. Their value for the anthropologist, however, lies much less in their statistical representativeness than in their diagnostic value: they are uniquely and singularly diagnostic of the forces to which a population is subject under specified conditions. I would be hard put to find any study of Mexican politics which shows the play of these forces as vividly as *Pedro Martínez*. We simply know more, a lot more, when we read this book, than we ever did before; and we know more, a lot more, than we ever did about Puerto Rican families in slums—or families in slums—after reading *La Vida*. Lewis' concept of the culture of poverty may or may not convince; but these books increase the number of permissible propositions available to anthropology and decrease the number of impermissible ones.

Finally, it seems to me important that such books are written at this time and place. I tend to read the history of anthropology as an odd dialectic between servitude and freedom. We anthropologists have been both the offspring and handmaidens of colonial expansion, but we have also been among its foremost critics. Now we are coming to discover that we are also the offspring and handmaidens of an internal colonialism, quite as much productive of powerlessness, social isolation, and anomie as the external form. I think it fitting that an anthropologist has been instrumental in rendering that anomie, powerlessness, and isolation visible to the world.

by MANUEL MALDONADO-DENIS☆

Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico. 20 IV 67

When *The Children of Sánchez* was translated into Spanish and published in Mexico by the Fondo de Cultura Económica, the uproar in the official circles of Mexico was so great that it forced the resignation of Dr. Arnaldo Orfila y Reynal, for many years the Director of the Fondo. The publication of *La Vida* has prompted a similar reaction among those in government circles in Puerto Rico and New York, who see in Lewis' volume a tarnishing of the image they have so assiduously tried to build in the United States and abroad. In both cases one witnesses the desperate efforts of those whose commitment to the maintenance of the status quo requires continuous myth-making and mystification to silence or deprecate any study that exposes the truth. Setting aside the trivial and exploring the roots of the alienation experienced by the poor in advanced capitalistic societies, Lewis has indeed restored the true character of social science, a radical pursuit devoted to the discovery of man and society beneath the pious platitudes expressed by the intellectual spokesmen of the powers that be.

La Vida, like the previous volumes about the culture of poverty in Mexico, offers to both the social scientist and the layman valuable insights as to the world view, the attitudes, and the orientations of those who live on the lowest rung of the social ladder. The experience is disturbing, and it should be. Only those whose prudish predisposition will make them shrink from an encounter with uninhibited sex, or those whose consciences remain unshaken after reading a tale of misery and deprivation, can fail to be moved by the contents of this book.

"*La Vida*" means "Life" in Spanish; but in the context *una mujer de la vida* (translated literally, "a woman of the life") it refers to prostitution. Lewis uses the title to convey this double meaning. For many of the members of the Ríos family, life is lived in "the life." Amparo uses the term in both senses when she says:

> I don't object to Soledad or Nanda because they were in the life.... Everyone is born to a different fate. Some babies are born head first, some feet first. Take any five people and you'll always find two wrong-headed ones. That's the way it goes, three good to two bad. Looked at that way, a woman in the life is a woman like the rest of us. And why say "in the life"? Aren't we all alike and human? Aren't we all part of life, in life, too?

In the passage one notes the sense of helplessness expressed by a belief in an inexorable destiny that seems to be the lot of those that live in the slums. It describes very well the sense of frustration and hopelessness, the profound sense of alienation, that the Ríos family expresses throughout the book and that it tries to counteract by frequent recourse to witchcraft, spiritualism, saints, prayers, etc.

The world of the Ríos family is a world of dire necessity, of a very precarious living on extremely limited resources. Their attitude toward the future and the past can be best understood when one realizes that their world lies always in the present, in the immediate. This attitude was brilliantly portrayed recently by a young Negro from Watts in his testimony before a Congressional committee when he said that the ghetto "has a habit of reaching into your life just when you think you've climbed to the top of the mountain and in one fell swoop bringing you crashing to the bottom." The San Juan slum-dweller portrayed by Lewis, like his counterpart in Watts, never reaches the top of the mountain; but he is much more passive and acquiescent than his fellows in the Los Angeles ghetto. New York offers no respite, but rather a continuation of the same. The "land of opportunity" soon becomes the land of prejudice and exploitation, the land of the naked struggle for life and of each looking only after his own.

Life in the slums of San Juan or New York is a succession of events to which the subject reacts but which escape his control. The inhuman conditions under which life must be lived on a day to day basis leave very little room for anything beyond the struggle for existence. As Lewis says in his introduction, the subculture of poverty

> is a relatively thin culture. There is a great deal of pathos, suffering and emptiness among those who live in the culture of poverty. It does not provide much support or long-range satisfaction and its encouragement of mistrust tends to magnify helplessness and isolation. *Indeed the poverty of culture is one of the crucial aspects of the culture of poverty* (my italics).

This "poverty of culture" within the "culture of poverty" not only dehumanizes those who are subject to its influence but also helps to explain the almost purely biological character of their basic values. In a capitalistic society like that of Puerto Rico, "culture" is something accessible only to the upper and middle classes. The culture of poverty is a world of its own existing on the margins of "respectable" society. Hence the abysmal ignorance many of the slum-dwellers show as to Puerto Rican historical figures (although this must be explained on the basis of our perennial colonial situation as well as upon a class basis) and their seriously distorted view concerning Puerto Rican politics and what it has in store for them.

Except for occasional grumbling about the rich, the members of the Ríos family lack class consciousness, and this lack gives them a conservative political orientation. Most of them belong to the Statehood Republican Party, a party representative of the higher and middle classes and a traditional foe of both workers and peasants. The Ríos family is anything but revolutionary. On the contrary, it seems to confirm Marx's dictum as to the counterrevolutionary character of the "Lumpen-Proletariat." Thus poverty perpetuates itself with the acquiescence and support of those who are in its grip.

Lewis mentions Cuba and Algeria as instances where the "Lumpen-Proletariat" becomes a revolutionary force and thus overcomes both its sense of alienation and the strait jacket of the culture of poverty. But Puerto Rico still awaits its social revolution, as Lewis' book shows only too well. That is why his book has been received with almost hysterical cries by those who, in order to build an American showcase in the Caribbean, have turned their backs on the needs of the Puerto Rican masses.

Lewis says that

> the most likely candidates for the culture of poverty are the people who come from the lower strata of a rapidly changing society and are already partially alienated from it.

But he also points to the fact that

> often it results from imperial conquest in which the native social and economic structure is smashed and the natives are maintained in a servile colonial status, sometimes for many generations.

Because it is a product of the combination of "servile colonial status" under

American domination and rapid social change under a kind of greenhouse industrialism, Puerto Rico's own culture of poverty must be different—and much more difficult to overcome—than its Mexican counterpart. Insofar as these conditions—colonialism and unbridled capitalism—coexist in our midst, the biblical sentence about the poor will remain a reality. But Puerto Rico cannot for long remain insulated from what is stirring in the world at large; and when colonialism and capitalism have been overcome, the Ríos family and those who share their lot will be on the road to the discovery of their true humanity.

Reply

by OSCAR LEWIS

Urbana, Ill., U.S.A. 1 v 67

I am grateful to my colleagues who have given generously of their time in reading the volumes under review and in sharing their reactions with me. I found the reviews on the whole appreciative, stimulating, and rewarding. In the light of the non-traditional and experimental nature of the books reviewed and the fact that I wrote them for a wide audience, it is most encouraging to find such a tolerant and receptive reaction from my colleagues. It is also good to know that in the field of anthropology one is not read out of the scientific community for the sin of writing a best-seller. (For those of my colleagues who assume that best-sellers are *ipso facto* unscientific, I should like to recall that Darwin's *Origin of Species* became a best-seller immediately upon publication.)

I was fascinated by the wide range of reaction to my work. The reviewers answer each other's criticism so fully and so directly that there is little for me to do except sit back and enjoy the performance. For example, Stavenhagen's failure to realize that anthropology is as closely related to the humanities as to the sciences and his narrow identification of anthropology with structural analysis is countered by Belshaw, who reminds us that art too can lead to generalizations, and by Willmott, who writes, "This is truly to take too narrow a view of science. Truth, like the Devil, has many faces . . ." Caplow says of *Pedro Martínez*, "There is practically no use of the Rashomon technique . . . ," but Aoyagi cites as one of the special merits of *Pedro Martínez* the fact that it permits supplementation and cross-checking of different versions. Indeed, in *Pedro Martínez* there are many crucial incidents which are seen from three different points of view, and some are seen from four and five points of view. I can only conclude that Caplow hasn't read the book carefully. This conclusion is also suggested by Caplow's characterization of *Pedro Martínez* as "a little more hasty" than *The Children of Sánchez*. *Pedro Martínez* is the book on which I worked the longest and hardest—over a period of 20 years—and in many ways it is my favorite of the three volumes under review. I was especially pleased, therefore, by Wolf's warm appraisal of this book. Wolf is the only reviewer with first-hand field experience both in Mexico and in Puerto Rico, and I have long admired his work.

Opler's and Caplow's imputation to my work of a negative and degrading view of the Ríos family is answered by the comments of Ackerman, Belshaw, Coles, Eichhorn, Fitzpatrick, and others, who point to the many strengths and positive aspects of the people in my books. Moreover, Caplow and Opler seem to have missed one of the essential points of *La Vida*; namely, that it is an indictment not of the poor, but of the social system that produces the way of life of the Ríos family with its pathos and suffering. It is also an indictment of some members of the middle class, government officials, and others who try to cover up the unpleasant and ugly facts of the culture of poverty. Judging from their reviews, Caplow and Opler have joined the Establishment and seem primarily concerned with maintaining the Puerto Rican image.

Caplow's suggestion that my assistants and I were hostile to the Ríos family and that I did not consider them my friends is patently false. I see the Ríos family often and regularly, and they are indeed my friends. His statement reveals a profound ignorance of some of the basic and elementary conditions necessary for my kind of intensive family studies: a complete acceptance of the people, a deep sense of sympathy and identification with their problems, and an enduring friendship.

Opler's unnecessarily defensive review with its negative appraisal of my work is countered by most of the reviews, including those of my two Puerto Rican colleagues, Eugenio Fernández Méndez and Manuel Maldonaldo-Denis. Clearly not all Puerto Rican scholars share Opler's views. His review is full of distortions and untruths. A few examples will suffice to illustrate the inaccuracies of his charges. He reduces the objectives of my book to "the psychology of people," thereby ignoring the five major objectives of the book which are clearly stated in the Introduction (p. xviii). He writes about the apparent weakness in my projective test data although he has never seen the Rorschach and TAT protocols on the major characters in the Ríos family. He writes, "It is true that about $^2/_3$ of the islanders are on relief." This is false. Only 15% were on relief. He writes, "Lewis ignores the rural poverty . . ." Since my research design called for a study of urban slum-dwellers, it is natural that the major concern of the book has been with urban rather than rural poverty. However, the life histories of most of the characters in the book actually detailed the miserable conditions of rural life which they experienced in their youth, and some of the statistics which I cited on national income certainly took rural income into account.

Perhaps a more striking example of the irresponsible character of Opler's remarks can be seen in the following. He writes, "One learns nothing in this book of most parents' concern about the exposure of their children, particularly girls, to sexuality, almost an aberration (with Hispanic origins) in the island." Actually, there are many places in *La Vida* which indicate evidence of concern for the chastity and sexual behavior of daughters. Many of the beatings reported by the girls in the book were given because of misbehavior with the opposite sex or in an effort to prevent it. The three sisters, Soledad, Felícita, and Cruz, express the wish that their daughters remain virgins until marriage. Soledad says (pp. 264-65):

> I want my girls to be well-behaved. When I see them playing with boys, I hit them. If I hear them say dirty words, I hit them . . . . I don't like to see them do improper things . . . . I want to bring them up to take the straight path . . . . And I won't stand for that business of little girls acting like young ladies, painting their faces and manicuring their nails. They can use make-up when they reach the proper age. On *weekends* I'll let them go to the movies but not to dances. And my girls won't wear close-fitting dresses or plunging necklines. That's how girls get snatched away . . . .

In the case of Flora, who grew up in the country, the strict attitude of her *jibaro* family is clear. After Flora had had her first affair, despite her

fear of punishment, she informed her mother (p. 522):

> It was my duty to tell her. I had gone off with a man and it wasn't right to let her believe I was still a señorita. Well, she practically had a fit when she learned I had lost my virginity. She cried, "You! My eldest daughter!"
>
> *Papá* never knew it. If he had, he would have killed me. Why, he practically killed my sister Arlín when she took off with her boy friend. As for my eldest brother, he would have slit my throat if he had known....

Another clear example of familial concern and control is expressed by Hortensia, who became Cristobál Ríos' second wife at the age of fifteen (p. 584):

> One day he [Cristóbal] invited me to the movies and I went. When we got back, you should have seen the row they raised! We were in the thick of the hullabaloo when in walked my sister María del Carmen.... She laid down the ultimatum, right then and there. "All right, you're getting married, and fast," she told Cristóbal. Well, it was arranged and we were married. And to this day that man has been the cross I bear.

Most of the constructive comments and criticism in these reviews can be grouped under two major headings: (1) comments on methods, and (2) comments on the concept of the subculture of poverty. Seven of the sixteen reviewers (Ackerman, Barić, Beattie, Belshaw, Opler, Stavenhagen, and Willmott) asked for more data on the methods I have used in my studies. They want to know more about how I establish rapport, the selection of families, the problem of typicality, the questions asked, the principles employed in my selection, condensing and editing of the tapes, etc.

I explained my methods of work in the various introductions to my books. Certainly, I said about as much on my field methods as is usually said in introductions to more traditional ethnographic monographs. It now appears that I didn't say enough. It is almost as if my colleagues were asking for a tool kit so that they or their graduate students might go out and do their own family studies. I am flattered by this intention, but I am afraid it would take a full length monograph to answer all the questions raised. Some of the reviewers have also asked for further analysis of the data. I agree. There is room for much more analysis than I have had time to do in my introductions. Some of the analysis will appear in my forthcoming book, *A Study of Slum Culture: Backgrounds for* La Vida (New York: Random House, 1968). I am also preparing an article on "Religion in the Culture of Poverty" based on the materials in my last four books.

Dr. Ackerman suggests that in the early phase of my research I am probably seen as "a potential enemy" and greeted "with suspicion, fear, moroseness, and even open anger." He even wonders if I have ever been physically mauled. What an aggressive projection! I have in fact not experienced the conditions he envisages during the first six months of fieldwork, and had I been mauled, I doubt that I would have persisted in my study.

Ackerman wants a complete natural history of the relationship between myself and my informants. In principle, I think this is a great idea, and had I kept a careful and systematic diary, I might have been able to provide him with some partial answers. But even then, I suspect some of my colleagues would say that such a record was too subjective. It might be possible to have someone follow me around during my fieldwork and observe and record all of my movements, speech, and the over-all interactions with my informants. However, this would invade the privacy which is such an essential part of my relationship with an informant, particularly during the recording session. And who would vouch for the objectivity of the person observing me? In short, I see no final solution to some of the questions that have been raised. However, I am grateful to Ackerman for his thoughtful review and for his kindness in suggesting that my own approach offers a fresh hope for effective interdisciplinary collaboration between our disciplines. I would certainly welcome such collaboration.

I want to thank Dr. Coles for his generous appraisal of my work and for adopting me into his "tribe." Coles is a remarkable child psychologist who leaves his office and his clinic to study children in their natural milieu —in their homes and in their schools. His new book, *Children of Crisis* (New York: Little, Brown, 1967), is an unusually sensitive and inspiring human document.

Some of the critics who are most concerned about the methods I have used are apparently favorably impressed by the final results. If the portraits which I have presented on the lives of my Mexican and Puerto Rican families are convincing to readers with experience in these countries, then why so much fuss about the methods? Perhaps Ackerman is right in referring to some of my colleagues as "compulsive methodologists."

In this connection, I might point out that most Mexican and Puerto Rican critics have not challenged the essential truth of the data in my books. The only question that has been raised has concerned the advisability of publishing such data because of possible harm to the Mexican or Puerto Rican image.

For many years, both in my teaching and in my research, I have been actively involved with the improvement and refinement of field methods in anthropology. Indeed, it was my dissatisfaction with the traditional methods of anthropological community studies, and particularly the methodology employed in the derivation of culture patterns, which led me to explore the possibilities of family studies as a complement to community studies. I would argue that the data in my family studies are on the whole much more precise, more valid, and more reliable than a good deal of the generalizations about culture patterns or for that matter, about roles and role structures. (For a discussion of some of these issues, see Lewis 1952, 1953*a*, *b*, 1955, 1960-61, 1965.)

My general objective has been to develop methods which will lead to data which are more precise, objective, meaningful, and replicable. I am sympathetic, therefore, to all questions and suggestions which are intended to improve the quality of anthropological research. Unfortunately, none of the reviewers have come up with any specific recommendations for the improvement of intensive family studies, perhaps because of their lack of experience with this kind of work.

I am glad that Eric Wolf realized that my approach to family studies is not an impressionistic one at all and that I have been using hard methods in the study of subjective data, i.e., life histories. I have done my best to achieve a balanced view of the lives of my subjects by using a broad and eclectic approach which gives equal attention to ecological, social, economic, religious, psychological, moral, and historical factors. Stavenhagen's suggestion that my work emphasizes sexual materials is belied by *Pedro Martínez*, which has very little on sex because it is not a subject highland Mexican peasants like to discuss. I used the same techniques, asked the same kind of questions, and had the same biases in doing *Pedro Martínez* (Stavenhagen's favorite) as in the other books. The differences between these books reflect the objective differences in the nature of the families studied. For example, for some of the women in the Ríos family, whose occupation involved sex, talking about it was like shoptalk and came easily.

Stavenhagen's conjecture that different investigators studying the same family might come up with different results is one of those easy generalizations which don't get us very far. His analogy with my own restudy of Tepoztlán is misleading and super-

ficial. In the study of an ancient village with a history of over 2,000 years and with a population of over 5,000 people, there is much greater opportunity for variation in results than in the study of an individual life history or of a single family. Incidentally, one of the major explanations for the differences between Redfield's study and my own was my greater interest and emphasis upon economics (not sex!), quantification, and the study of range of variation.

If three separate investigators were to ask Pedro Martínez the kinds of questions which I normally ask my informants: "Tell me about your earliest memories," or "Did you go to school? How many years? Tell me about your first day in school," etc., I doubt that the differences in the theoretical orientations of the questioners would significantly alter the nature of the responses or the basic facts of the informant's life as he sees them. In fact, Stavenhagen contradicts himself. On the one hand he claims I did not give a balanced view of the families (presumably because my approach stresses intra-family dynamics), but on the other hand he says that my data are so full and wide-ranging that they can readily be reorganized under the headings of a traditional ethnographic monograph. I am afraid that a good deal of Stavenhagen's rather pompous criticism reflects his own personal bias against psychological approaches. I say this advisedly because he was once my student-assistant in Mexico. Unfortunately, he showed no aptitude for family studies or, indeed, for anything that involved the study of interpersonal relations and the psychology of peoples.

I am glad to learn that so many of the reviewers found my conceptual model of a subculture of poverty useful and promising. Aerni's suggestion that many of the traits of the subculture of poverty must be seen as the result of the process of transition from a subsistence economy to a money economy is not incompatible with my own conception of the model. Her statement that most of the traits are found in the city of Kampala in Uganda, in spite of the unilinear kinship system of the migrants to Kampala, suggests to me that the kinship system is in itself in the process of rapid change and no longer serves some of its earlier functions. In any case, I found her discussion very helpful.

I am also grateful to Aoyagi for his interesting remarks on possible differences between lower-class Japanese and my Mexican and Puerto Rican families in regard to sexual mores. Unfortunately, there are no intensive studies of Japanese low-income urban slum families for comparison with my own data. However, judging from some Japanese movies I have seen (for example, *Ant Woman*), I suspect there may be greater similarities than appear on the surface.

Some of the reviewers seem to have misunderstood the subculture of poverty model and to have failed to grasp the importance of the distinction between poverty and the subculture of poverty. In making this distinction I have tried to document a broader generalization; namely, that it is a serious mistake to lump all poor people together, because the causes, the meaning, and the consequences of poverty vary considerably in different sociocultural contexts. There is nothing in the concept which puts the onus of poverty on the character of the poor. Nor does the concept in any way play down the exploitation and neglect suffered by the poor. Indeed, the subculture of poverty is part of the larger culture of capitalism whose social and economic system channels wealth into the hands of a relatively small group and thereby makes for the growth of sharp class distinctions.

I would agree with Stavenhagen that "the main reasons for the persistence of the subculture are no doubt the pressures that the larger society exerts over its members, that is, the structure of the larger class society itself." However, *this is not the only reason.* The subculture develops mechanisms which tend to perpetuate it, especially because of what happens to the world view, aspirations, and character of the children who grow up in it. For this reason, improved economic opportunities, though absolutely essential and of the highest priority, are not sufficient to basically alter or eliminate the subculture of poverty. Moreover, it is a process which will take more than a single generation, even under the best of circumstances, including a socialist revolution.

Stavenhagen misunderstands me completely when he writes, "[Lewis] seems to be saying: 'being poor is terrible, but having a culture of poverty is not so bad'." On the contrary, I am saying that it is easier to eliminate poverty than the culture of poverty. I am also suggesting that the poor in a pre-capitalistic caste-ridden society like India had some advantages over modern urban slum-dwellers because the people were organized in castes and *panchayats* and this organization gave them some sense of identity and some strength and power. Perhaps Ghandi had the urban slums of the West in mind when he wrote that the caste system was one of the greatest inventions of mankind. Similarly, I have argued that the poor Jews of Eastern Europe, with their strong tradition of literacy and community organization, were better off than people with the culture of poverty. On the other hand, I would argue that people with the culture of poverty, with their strong sense of resignation and fatalism, are less driven and less anxious than the striving lower middle class, who are still trying to make it in the face of the greatest odds.

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