DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 118 708   UD 015 750

AUTHOR   Clark, Woodrow W., Jr.
TITLE   Learning: Intellectual Imperialism from Barrio to
               Nation.
PUB DATE   Nov 74
NOTE   21p.; Paper presented at the American Anthropological
               Society Annual Meeting (Mexico City, Mexico, November
               1974); Appendix A will reproduce poorly

EDRS PRICE   MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS   Community Characteristics; Economically
               Disadvantaged; *English (Second Language); Ethnology;
               Field Studies; Ghettos; Imperialism; *Political
               Issues; *School Role; *Second Language Learning;
               Social Influences; Teacher Education; Urban Culture;
               Urban Population
IDENTIFIERS   *Colombia (Bogota)

ABSTRACT
               The research for this paper was concentrated in a
poor barrio in Bogota, Columbia. The Paper discussed learning in a
poor urban community using the ethnographic example of a small
community to illustrate the larger socio-political impact of the
implication of the United States' policy and position for Colombia.
The account is considered to be highly personalized and based upon a
participant-observation approach, supplemented with survey data. A
later section of the paper discussed language learning at a major
Colombian educational institution. The contrast between language
learning at the major institution and that in the poor community is
the substance of the paper. Six approaches to the anthropological
study of education are discussed and followed in combination in the
paper: (1) education as an instrument for socialization or
enculturation; (2) education as the culturally different aspects of a
society in terms of its language, conceptual style, behavior, and
learning processes; (3) education as a ritual of series of "rites de
passage", (4) education as the differential patterns marking the
degree and depth of participation by people in the educational
process; (5) education as out of school instruction provided by
institutions of all kinds; and, (6) education viewed from a diversity
of management perspectives. (Author/JM)

Am. Anthrop. Assoc
Dec. 1974
Mexico City, Mexico

Learning:

Intellectual Imperialism

from barrio to nation

Woodrow W. Clark, Jr.

Far West Educational Laboratory
1855 Folsom Street
San Francisco, California 94103

and

Associate in Education
University of California
Tolman Hall
Berkeley, California 94705

Research Associate
Center for Educ. Policy &
Mgmt.
Un. of Oregon
Eugene, Oregon

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Learning: intellectual imperialism
            from barrio to nation.

Abstract

The paper develops data from three different societal levels (e.g., the
community, the nation, the international) into a theory on intellectual imperia-
lism. The basic assumption is that learning and schooling are two different
and often incompatible approaches to education. Assuming that education is
a process which has as its outcome, learning, the discussion of education
from a multiple socio-cultural level can provide valuable insights into
individual learning.

Language learning in a poor South American barrio is the focus of the
paper. Specially, the language learning of individuals in the community will
be contrasted with the schooling approach of a major educational institution.
Within the context of national goals and international relations, language
learning becomes a form of cultural imperialism.

After the presentation of data, a theoretical framework is provided
that could give impetus to further research and discussion. The focus upon
learning can provide new insights into our knowledge and understanding of
culture.

Introduction

The research for this paper was concentrated in a poor barrio which we will call San Martinez. The purpose is to discuss learning in a poor urban community. I will use the ethnographic example of a small community to illustrate the larger socio-political impact of the United States' policy and position implication for Colombia. The account is highly personalized, based upon a participant-observation approach, supplimented with survey data. A second section discusses language learning at a major Colombian educational institution. The contrast between the two is the substance of the paper. It is also the lesson for tommorrow.

Approaches

Recently, John Singleton (1974: 326-330) provided us with an excellent review of approaches to the anthropolocal study of education. Essentially, Singleton outlines six possible investigative routes.

First education can be thought of as an instrument for sociolozation or enculturation (depending on your academic training as being either a sociologist or anthropologist, respectively). Basically this view involves three levels of socialization: a) primary, which is the intimate learning relationships between child and family; b) secondary, which involves learning attitudes and beliefs from schools, peers, religion, the community; and c) tertiary, which allows for adult learning in vocational, social, political or social roles. Education can be studied at one or at all of these levels.

Second, education can be thought of as the culturally different aspects of a society in terms of its language, conceptual style, behavior, and learning processes. Here the argument is that variations exist between groups within all societies. These differences are not deviant, deficient, or defective but are based on other cultural norms, rules, and roles.

Third, education can be seen as a ritual or series of "rites de passage," in which the adolescent is initiated, giving him or her an identity, a place, and a sense of security. The study of such rituals focuses upon the educational barriers a society sets-up to mark individual maturity and growth.

Fourth, the degree and depth of participation by people in the educational process is marked by differential patterns. Clearly there is a school culture and a home culture. Each has its own norms, rules, and roles. One school culture may have to accommodate several dozen home cultures.

Fifth, institutions of all kinds provide out-of-school education. From religious organizations to political groups, education need not be confined to schools.

Finally, education can be viewed from a diversity of management perspectives. The educational practices of a society must be viewed in the context of what the leaders (elites) want and how they provide the institutions and structures for learning.

The approach which we will follow here combines all six of these viewpoints. Education is a process. Learning is an outcome which combines the acquiring of knowledge through experience with mental growth and change. Schooling, as Illich (1968), puts it, is but one form; the school unfortunately, is a child-care institution set up to provide children with obstacles (rites de passage) to learning. The school functions to meet the needs of the industrial state (or as Daniel Bell says the "post-industrial state"); maintain the status quo; and undermine the cohesiveness of the community. According to Illich (1968), the Greek work for school (schole) has lost its meaning by not providing for "leisure in the pursuit of insight."

Carnoy (1974) has gone even further in postulating that education serves as an important weapon and tool in cultural imperialism. The notion of socialization,

enculturation, and more recently in anthropology, cultural transmission is a perversion of what education and learning should be.

The issue can be put another way: if the purpose of education is cultural transmission, what are the empirical and normative results? Can a social scientist measure or show that cultures have been transmitted? or that students have been socialized? In a narrow sense, one can show that the content (reading, math, spelling, writting, etc.) of the educational endeavor can be measured. As Young (1958) hypotheses, the rise of the meritocracy is based on that assumption. However, the process of education has been lost.

Our concern here is with one such process: language learning. How do people learn languages? What are the differences between a school-based language acquisition program and a community-based approach? Is there a measureable empirical result? What are the implications for institutionalized language learning processes?

Community Field Work

> "Latin America is backwards; it's a developing area. It will never be as modern as the United States."
>
> "What makes you say that?" asked the student.
>
> "Just look at how many Noble Prize winners they have compared to us."

The exchange is between a political science professor, who is a noted scholar of Mexico, from a well-known North American University, and a graduate student who objected to the initial remark in a graduate seminar. I was the student. The professor will remain unnamed.

My first exposure to the study of South America was colored by this kind of ethnocentric academic objectivity. The semester wore on with more repeated so-called "knowledgeable" statements. A native Colombian in the class and I became good friends over our critical discussions of the seminar. The course readings were no better.

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However, my interest in South America became hightened. I had studied Africa and Afro-American society in the United States. I wanted to expand my understandings of people and cultures to include South America. After-all I was pursuing my anthropological doctorate at one of the leading North American universities specializing in South America. Repeated courses of this type quickly made me suspicious about what was happening "south of the border."

The ritual of anthropological graduate studies dictates the choice of an area and the selection of a theory prior to doing field-work. I did both for convenience sake (and to satisfy my professorial elders): South America mixed with Levi-Strauss structuralism. So in 1970, I packed up and left to apply structure to South America. Bogota was my target. My South American friend had gotten me interested in Bogota since he lived near-by. My particular structural interest was politics in a modern society (or was Colombia a "developing society")?

Equipped-with knowledge (but little Spanish ability) from my friend and little formal course work or departmental advice, I got a small university grant and left for Bogota. My friend's brother met me at the airport and I got settled. I had no other prior contacts arranged, no agency leads, and no governmental entanglements. Instead I had decided to : 1) find a place to live, 2) establish contact with the National University, and 3) attempt to do field work in a poor barrio. Nothing had been worked out in advance.

I accomplished all three goals. Although I moved four times in four months, I did get settled (in the sense of unpacked). My first quarters were an English speaking residential home which I left soon because of the high prices and ghetto (non-Colombian) atmosphere. The next move was with a middle-class Colombian family near the University. That stay ended for the same reasons. The apartment

that I then rented was not far from the University but soon ended also, since now
I had no contact with anyone. Finally, I lived in a Spanish-speaking residence in
a working class neighborhood.

Throughout all this, I tried to rent a place in or near the poor barrio in
which I worked. I found that impossible for three reasons: 1) the lack of
"rentable" space in the barrio; 2) the general suspicion and distrust of North
Americans; and 3) my own conviction (developed quite later) that one need not
live in a community in order to study it (recall my purpose: to study political
structures in Colombia -- not just one barrio!).

I made contact with the Anthropology Department and the Social Work Depart-
ment at the University. The recent elections and the strong anti-Yankee feelings
by both staff and students placed me under a great deal of suspicion. However,
my "clean" funds and, I believe, my sincerity were important factors in gaining
the trust of the staff and students alike. I was accorded the privilege of
sitting in on Anthropology classes. Later I was even invited to apply for a
teaching position the following year since their urban expert would be on leave.
In Social Work, which is more akin to Urban and Political. Anthropology in the
U. S., I was able to make contact with a former student who said I could do field
work in her barrio through the Community Center.

She set up an appointment for me with several other people who turned out
to be radical students interested in screening North Americans before they
"researched" native Colombians. I agreed. Permission would then be obtained from
the Community Action Center leadership. The entire process went smoothly. I
presented myself, my research goals, and a list of things that I could do for the
community. Modified slightly in retrospect, the tasks included:

1. Working with some young boys in the community, ages 10-20

2. Teaching young people English.

3. Tabulating a University questionnaire that had been given in 1969 and never tabulated.

4. Developing new youth programs.

5. Finalizing and reporting back any research reports to the community.

Of interest here primarily, is item two. I was to teach English and learn Spanish from the barrio youth. The questionnaire results are reported below only as to those items pertaining to education, schooling, and learning. I accomplished all the tasks.

The Barrio

Theoretically, I understand cities as collectivities of villages. Within any city, there are sections in which people aggregate based on some common interest: classness, ethnicity, culture, etc. The same is true of San Martinez. The barrio is one of Bogota's oldest; established as a municipality in 1954.

Throughout Colombia, the prolonged periods of violence (la Violencia) caused people to leave the rural areas for the cities (Fals-Borda, 1969, Fluharty 1957, and Guzman, 1968). The condition became acute in the post World War II days with the assassination of a popular radical-labor leader (Gaitan, 1968). In San Martinez, people (n=3000 respondents to the questionaire, See Appendix A) listed three reasons for settling there:

1. Job opportunities 64%

2. Violence in rural areas 12%

3. Better educational opportunities 10%

4. Other (relatives, health, etc.) 14%

However, the data is misleading. Over 77% the respondents moved to San Martinez within the last ten years (since 1960). This was during the National Front era and at least 6-8 years after the most violent civil war period. The average number of years in San Martinez was 9.6 years.

Clearly the barrio, while relatively young, has been an attraction for peo-
ple from rural areas throughout Colombia. This is not a unique finding. The
poorer barrios throughout the city serve the same function: the "melting pot"
of the barrios in Colombia is distinctly unique to each individual urban villages
(Ray, 1969). The settlement patterns developed primarily based upon the earlier
friends and relatives who migrated to the barrio.

Within the barrio, a class structure exists (Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1961).
The geographical boundries of San Martinez are established by the major bus routes.
Class distinctions are often blurred because the poverty stricken live close to
the working class. Most barrio working-class residents, however, see themselves
as members of the middle - class.

In the streets, the class distinctions become pronounced since the lower-
working class do not associate with the poor. Community projects (e.g. building
a house, repairing the Community Center, or fixing the one small park) are the
function of the particular class involved. The working class residents main-
tain tight security from the poor in their homes against possible theft.

Interestingly enough, it is barrios like San Martinez that are seen as a
whole by those in the rich residential areas of Bogota as being a threat to
life and property. The middle class Bogota residence fears everyone in the
San Martinez barrio from rising up to overthrow the government.

Education

Over 62% (n=1774) of those surveyed (n=3,000) have had some schooling in
San Martinez. Six went through commercial school or the university. Another
184 achieved some level of education beyond five years. As expected, but
not unusual, the greatest concentration of schooling beyond the elementary
level (K-P5) into the secondary level (B1-commercial or university) was for males.

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Almost two boys-to each girl got a higher level of education at B6. The new

Colombian President intents to correct that situation since his successful

campaign was run partly on the issue of "equal rights for women " (1974).

Schooling, as noted earlier, is only one approach to education. Consider

the following approach to informal education through language learning.

As part of my field-work in San Martinez, I had agreed with the Community

Action Center leadership to teach English to whoever wanted to learn. As part

of the arrangement, I pointed out that I could be learning Spanish also. In

fact, when the suggestion came up, I suggested to the Colombian community workers

that we make it an experiment (Cole et al. 1972) and use me as the guinea pig.

I would learn enough Spanish to be able to converse adequately by telephone

by the end of four months. That suggestion won over whelming approval and

demonstrated my sincerity. A "trust" was established; perhaps the most significant

accomplishment any ethnographer could make while doing field work in a community.

I set to work with initially three young teenage boys. The group varied

in size; we meet daily for about 4-5 hours. My knowledge of Spanish was not even

at a basic level. My seminar friend in the U.S. had to make the arrangements

above when he made one quick visit from the United States.

The teenagers and I were in a state of ready learning together. Our mutual

task was to learn each other's language. I established four broad goals based

on the language acquisition studies by Chomsky, Postal, McCawley, Filmore,

Lakoff, et al:

1. Use of informal (non-schooling) learning environment. The teenagers

and I would meet at the Center, play basketball, go places, or just talk.

We used paper, books and newspapers articles as props.

2. Identification of syntactic characteristics across languages that are

universal. By exchange and use of language, we identified some syntactic commonalities

between the languages.

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3. Developed semantic and phonological knowledge of language. The understanding of basic syntactic structures allowed for an exponential increase in vocabulary and pronunciation.

4. Focused upon ideas. Each learning session was geared to a topic of mutual concern. The topics varied. We were able to exchange basic concepts, ideas, and understandings about each others'cultures -- and therefore languages.

Each of the goals was accomplished. My final test came three months later when I had to telephone several people in Spanish. I could also listen (overhear) private conversations in a line, or on a bus and be able to comprehend what was being said. A second indicator was my ability to speak quite well to individuals or groups. Thirdly, I was later able to write letters and receive same in Spanish. The final proof came with my successful passage (rite de) of my language requirement for my doctorate.

As for the teenagers, their progress was slower. They were able to understand and speak some English. However, the basic cultural conditions for learning English were not present. The failure of the teenagers to be fluent English speakers relates directly to the second segment of data collected: the teaching of English at a major educational institution.

English as a Second Language

While doing my field-work in the poor barrio, I became interested in how others learned language, especially English. I had meet several people who suggested that I inquire at the Colombian-American Center in downtown Bogota. The Center was built with United States' funds and maintained by the U.S. Government. I decided to examine the role of the U.S. government in language learning. In this case, the teaching of English to Colombians. I discovered a pattern of intellectual imperialism. (see Diagram). Aside from other United

States' influence in the activities of Colombian life, let me elaborate only upon the language learning paradigm.

The Center is the focal point. I discovered that the Center has, as one of its major functions, graduated thousands of Colombians who are certified to speak and write English. Over 3/4ths of these graduates are secretaries, trained to work for North American businesses. I had talked with several such graduates and noticed two categories of English speakers. One was very poor in comprehension and ability to carry on a conversation. The other was quite fluent and articulate to the point of being natural and relaxed. The difference rested in the later groups having either gone to an English speaking school or been in the U.S. for a length of time. Within this category, those in English speaking schools learned English while at play or in some other informal manner. None learned English in a classroom, and especially not at the Center. A few even told me about the Center's attempts to "unlearn" their English.

My curiosity about the Center grew. Again I decided to be the "experimentee". I enrolled in a class for future English teachers. The class was composed mostly of young North Americans and a few Colombians. The purpose of the four-week class was to teach the English teachers the proper way (method and theory) to teach native Spanish speakers English.

From the beginning, I felt strange. The theory was that of Drs. Lado and Fries developed over 40 years ago as the "oral-auriel" method to language acquisition. They had/do argue that language is a series of patterns which the learner must memorize in order to know. The "patterns" approach is taught through rote repitition and is devoid of any contextual or semantic under-standings. The learner is never exposed to the basic syntax of the English language but is instead expected to respond, upon command, with memorized patterned phrases. The explanation for the two categories of English speakers that I met was complete.

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I went through the whole program but was not allowed to become a teacher because of a technicality. The real reason is explained below. During my enrollment in the English teacher's program, the annual meeting of the Association/of English Teachers (ASOCOPI) in Colombia was convening in Bogota. None other than Dr. Lado himself would be there to give several talks. I decided to attend. The convention was typical: small meetings, the guest-main speaker, book displays, and lots of drinking.

What distinguished this convention from others was the overwhelming presence of United States government propaganda matched by the volumes of books based on the "patterns method" to English learning. One could only summarize that the "U.S. --Colombian Connection" was in full force.

One incident, in particular, lead me to conclude that the whole affair was a put up job sponsored solely by North American interests. During Dr. Lado's main speech (he gave two), he asked for questions from the audience. A few people asked polite questions. Then I asked him a clarifying question about his theory in regard to Chomsky. He went into a long tirade. Without repeating the whole harangue, let me briefly summarize by saying that Chomsky was the enemy. However, Lado was not a post-Chomskian (in the sense of a Lakoff, McCawley, or Filmore) but a pre-pre-Chomskian. The Lado "patterns approach" was developed in the early structural linguistic days. Now Lado was defending it more than ever as he extolled his audience (modern users) on its virtues and purity.

My second question, twenty minutes later, was met with such hostility that the Convention Co-Director (a native of Venezuela, who now ran the Center in Bogota), joined the attack. Later, I was told that this man claimed the Lado approach was the only way and that he claimed expertise because 1) his daughter attended school in the U.S. (a logical fallacy in his argument), 2) he was trained

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in the U.S. in this approach, and 3) he attended a recent (1969) conference in the U.S. where Chomsky was attacked. As one British govermental observer said to me: "No one challenges Dr. Lado. He is the formost linguist and teacher in the world according to some of these people." This gentlemen did not believe a word of it however.

Needless to say, I was denied a teaching certificate from the Center soon thereafter. Yet the pieces of the puzzle fit neatly in place. Still, a good ethnographer looks for some more evidence before drawing conclusions. So I did.

The Center sponsored week-end junkets to small isolated barrios. Usually the same ones were visited with about a dozen Colombian volunteers who would play, teach, build, or socialize with the residents. The group went in buses and stayed from about 9 a.m to 3 p.m. The experience was the equivalent of Red Cross visits or the Boy Scouts doing their weekly (or monthly or yearly) good deed. The frequency of one's going depended on one's need to "feel good."

I went three times to see what the Center did "in the Community." Without lengthy detail, let me summarize what I discovered in four points.

1. The barrio chosen for "help" was extremely poor without water, electricity, or any public services. The conditions were far worse than San Martinez. The barrio was high on the hillside overlooking Bogota. The choice was based on two important factors:

a. strategic location -- the barrio next to it had voted heavily for the communists in previous elections; and

b. visibility -- the barrio itself had just been given (built) a large school house which had a large neon sign shining over Bogota proclaiming how the U.S. Government's friendship built the school for the Colombians.

2. The barrio leadership was controlled by the National Front. In fact, the head man had been given vocational training at Seno (a nation-wide vocational training institution) as an award for his loyalty.

3. The school was never used. There were no materials, teachers or utilities to operate it. Therefore the Center sent its team up to the barrio to insure at least some usage. The use of American gifts is kept on file by the U.S. government.

4. The Center group spent over half of the time there socializing -- with each other. Their view of the people in the barrio was demeaning and rampant with prejudice. The class differences were pronounced as the volunteers sneered and paternalized the local inhabitants.

Conclusion

The aforementioned Diagram illustrates the relationships observed at the Center and in both barrios. Clearly the connection between language learning (out-of school, informal, or in school) and foreign policy takes many routes. As the data suggests, I decided to look into the learning of language in one barrio and then examine the broader implications of language learning as intellectual imperialism.

I have deliberately focused upon the learning of language because of the clear examples provided at the community, national, and international levels. The continuity is striking. Other areas of concern and research are just as fruitful. Education itself is a broader topic than language learning.

At this point, the question can be raised about theory. Using Strauss and Glaser (1969), the theory is grounded in the empirical data. Throughout the paper, I have presented material which builds upon basic assumptions (hypotheses). The theory itself remains in a developmental mode as I gather more cross-cultural data. However, certain elements are worth mention.

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First, the theory will be societal and encompass varying levels of a culture (Stewart, 1955).

Second, the theory will focus upon relationships between aggregates and individuals. The specific concern will be upon power (Adams, 1970) and conflict (Clark, 1969).

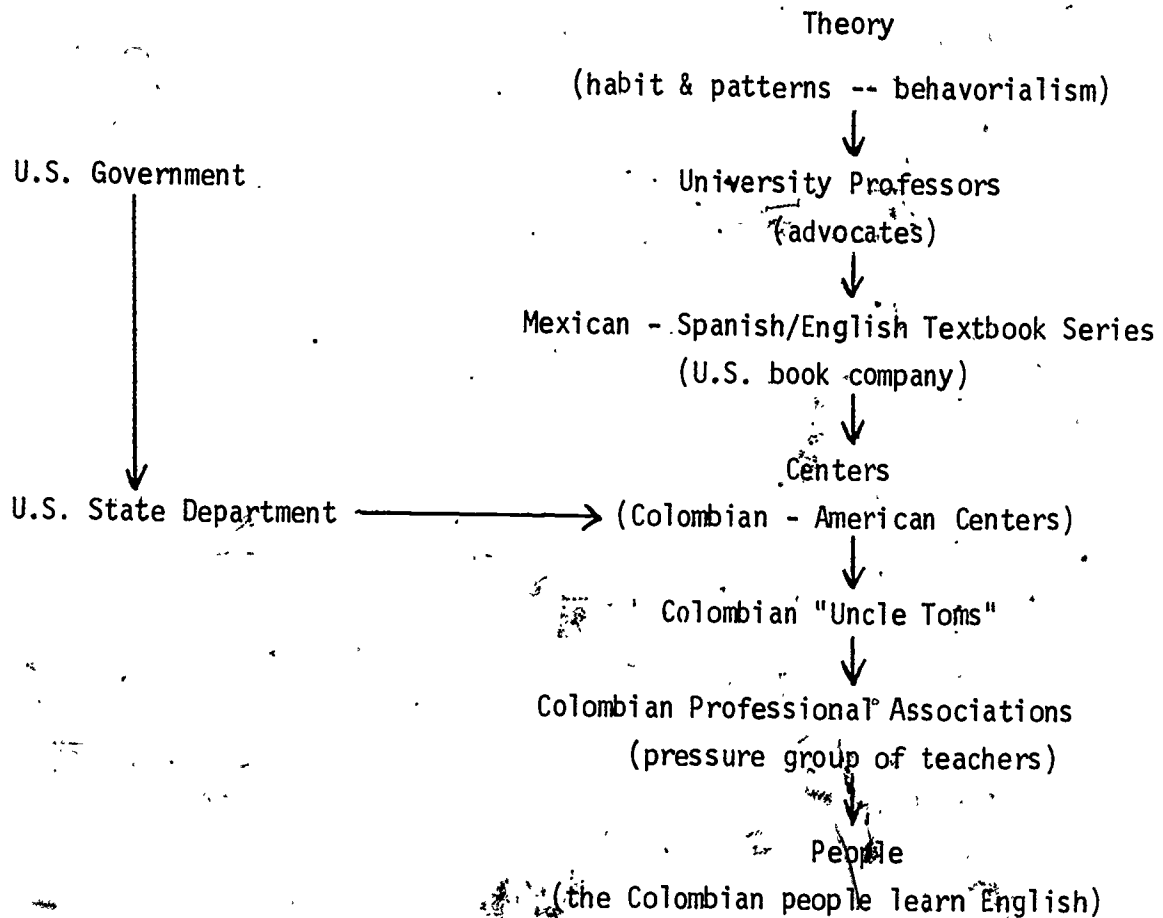Third, the notion of "studying up the organization" will prevail (Nader, 1972).

Fourth, the examination of learning in all contexts provides a social-psychological context from which to study status, role, and power (Ofshe, 1974).

Fifth, the historical perspective of philosophical issues in phenomenology will provide insights into new theory description, and data explanation (Hymes, 1972).

Finally, rules will be derived in which explanation and prediction of behavior can be made (Clark, 1974).

Hopefully the paper has made some attempt at presenting issues about learning within a cultural context. The methodology is somewhat unique but worth exploring further. The conclusion about "intellectual imperialism" raises more questions and certainly provides a stimulus to further theoretical thought.

Diagram: Intellectual Imperialism

Theory
(habit & patterns -- behavorialism)
↓

U.S. Government

University Professors
(advocates)
↓

Mexican - Spanish/English Textbook Series
(U.S. book company)
↓

Centers
U.S. State Department ————————→ (Colombian - American Centers)
↓

Colombian "Uncle Toms"
↓

Colombian Professional Associations
(pressure group of teachers)
↓

People
(the Colombian people learn English)

CENTRO COMUNITARIO DEL BARRIO DE FATIMA - ENCUESTA SOCIO-ECONOMICA

Preguntas para todos los miembros / Para mayores de 15 años, ocupados y a socupados / de la familia / 5 años

PARENTESCO CON EL JEFE	SEXO		EDAD	APRENDIZAJE Y ESCOLARIDAD		ESTADO CIVIL					ACTIVIDAD	OCUPACION ECONOMICA PRAL.		INGRESOS PESOS $	
	H	F		Enseñanza Recibida	Curso	S	C	V	Sp	UL		Prof. LEO		Sueldo	Otros I
1 JEFE															
2															
3															
4															
5															
6															
7															
8															
9															
10															

INMIGRACION

INDUSTRIA o COMERCIO

Causa

Clase / Trabajo / Mejores / Familia — Procedencia

Ambito / Familia / Res — Tiempo que lleva en Segunda

PRODUCCION DOMICILIA / VIA — Tiempo que lleva en el Barrio Fatima

RELACION CON EL CENTRO COMUNITARIO

Ud. o alguien de su flia. ha sido / voluntario del C.C. o miembro de / alguna Asociación o Comité del ba- / rrio ? Cual ?

Habría alguien de Uds. dispuesto / a colaborar en los programas del / C.C. ? Quién ?

A que grupo de trabajo o estudio / le gustaría pertenecer ? / C.C. ? Quién ?

Qué horario tiene Ud. disponible

Nombre del Encuestador

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