

INTRODUCTION

The Scope of Elitelore (ELITELORE AT FORTY FIVE)

By
James W. Wilkie

How the concept of Elitelore came to be and its impact forty-five years ago merits recall.

Chapter 1, by David E. Lorey tells us how the field has grown and expanded to include Sub-fields ranging from Folklore to Cinemalore, from Operalore to Literaturelore, from Healerlore to Politicallore, and from the “I as We” to merging of individual and collective Lores, for example, but does not take up the excitement the term caused from the outset.

My presentation to academia of the concept of Elitelore in 1967 was met with delighted acceptance by some scholars, and hostile rejection by others, who immediately felt threatened.

• 1 *

At the Social Science Research Council Conference on Folklore and Social Science,¹ New York City, November 10, 1967, my identification of Elitelore as a field of study in a way challenged the very nature of the Conference, which in part was a celebration of the fact that Folklore had been finally adopted as a field in which to earn the doctorate in a number of major universities inside and outside the USA.

Who was I (as a mere historian), then, to divide the newly accepted field of Folklore (made up mainly of professors in Anthropology and English) by separating the lore of the Elite from Folklore.

¹ Sponsored by the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, Inc., a private operating foundation approved by the U.S. Department of the Treasury under Section 501(c)(3) of Internal Revenue Code to advance anthropology throughout the world. Located in New York City, it is one of the major funding sources for international anthropological research and is actively engaged with the anthropological community through its varied grant, fellowship, networking, conference and symposia programs. It founded and continues to publish the international journal *Current Anthropology*, and disseminates the results of its symposia through open-access supplementary issues of this journal. The Foundation works to support all branches of anthropology and closely related disciplines concerned with human biological and cultural origins, development, and variation.

My response to the huge auditorium of all male professors was simple: “It is the ‘common view’ that ‘all men are men,’ but this assertion leaves out women, who also deserve to be taken into account for research on experiences and ‘self-view.’” The same is true for Folklore, which we all live with, including the Elites, who also live with an additional Lore that justifies their own distinction to be leaders, and who formulate Lore to influence the folk.”

After a gasp from many, Professor Richard M. Dorson (founder in 1963 of the Folklore Institute at Indiana University) stated that he did not like the idea of making a distinction between elite and folk and he seemed to have mixed feelings about tape recording life stories of the "non-elite, or the folk." In 1972 Dorson changed his mind somewhat when he endorsed the idea of tape recordings, but he would label this type of *personal history* as "oral folk history."² Dorson saw the role of the oral interview as focusing on the *person as a carrier of culture* because—as he had reasoned, it would be a mistake to focus upon the *idiosyncratic ramble of individuals*.)

At the Conference, however, there was thinly disguised anger by some folklorists who did not like the idea of taping “stream of consciousness thinking.” Detractors saw my argument as involving “sedition,” insurrection against the newly established order of academic thought about the Folklore.

Naturally, an aversion to such narrow-minded thinking immediately emerged.

* 2 *

Among the many intellectuals who have supported my nascent Concept about the nature of Elitelore, both at the Conference and later, seven stand out:

A. Philip D. Curtin (Professor of History, University of Wisconsin) read his formal commentary on my paper, stating to the Conference assembled:

“A few years ago I published a book called *The Image of Africa* [1964] dealing with attitudes toward Africa among the British elite of the early nineteenth century. After reading Professor Wilkie's paper, I realized that this was *Elitelore*. It seems to me that this kind of work with widely-held attitudes, sentiments, badly-understood theory, and the like is an area into which historians of ideas (whatever their label) should move. “With the kind of oral-data collection that Professor Wilkie is undertaking, we could begin to look seriously at a whole range of problems that have hardly been attacked so far.

² According to Dorson, folklorists do not *interview* the folk but *collect* their lore with the least disruption possible to the way in which lore is shared. See Google Search “Dorson oral folk history.”

“[The first problem] involves the range of variation within the structure of elite beliefs. The question can be put another way: how far do individual formulations on any subject differ from those that are dominant or normal to their social class and time. The second problem deriving from the first is the role of intellectual leadership in changing the norm for an elite group. One example in Western intellectual history is the way in which the precise formulations of intellectual leaders like Marx or Freud were disseminated throughout the educated classes of the Western world--and how in the process they were misunderstood and misapplied, how, in fact, very few people who talked about them had actually read through the works of Freud or had actually read the whole of *Das Kapital*. The third problem in this general area would be to ask in what ways the general structure of beliefs impinges on the world of events--and I take this to be one of Professor Wilkie's concerns. Finally--though by no means the end of problems in this area--is the question of how events or ‘the lessons of experience’ alter the structure of belief.”

B. George P. Hammond (Professor of History and Director of the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley), provided the offices and resources (1965) for transcribing and editing the Oral History Tape Recordings that Edna Monzón Wilkie and I had made in Mexico from 1963 to early 1965. George congratulated me: “You are following in the footsteps of Hubert Howe Bancroft who assembled the basis of this Library by interviewing leaders (and common folk) to write his major volumes on the history of California and the West—tape recordings would have made the voice, emphasis, and tone of those leaders directly available to scholars today.”

C. Alfred B. Garrett (Professor of Chemistry and Vice President for Research, Ohio State University), who, when I told him about my Oral History with Elites, responded by saying that he wished he had had the Oral History of the great inventors available to him when he conducted research for his 1963 book *Flash of Genius*.³ In that famous book he shows that although many great discoveries in chemistry begin with a hypothesis, it is the observation made outside the main focus that leads to the flash of genius allowing abandonment of the hypothesis to take up the real investigation. The book treats the discovery of aluminum metallurgy, Teflon, Freon, Lead Tetraethyl, and the vulcanization of rubber.

Our fortuitous immediate mutual understanding about the role of non-linear research and analysis led to OSU’s invitation to establish my Latin Oral History Program at Columbus when I joined the faculty at OSU. Too, OSU not only funded my office space and staff (1965-1968), but provided for my research travel in Central and South America (1966-1967).

At Alfred’s invitation I made a presentation to the OSU Board of Trustees in order to highlight OSU’s role in helping to advance Elitelore as a field of study based on the importance of Oral History.

D. Howard F. Cline (Director of the Hispanic Division of the Library of Congress and Co-Founder of the Latin America Studies Association) provided me with a base of operation in Washington, D.C. (1965-1968). Howard arranged for my 1968 Conferences on Oral History

³ (Princeton, N.J.: Van Nostrand.)

and *Elitelore* at the University of Texas at Austin and the University of California at Berkeley, including travel for participants.

E. Johannes Wilbert (UCLA Professor of Anthropology and twenty-year Director of the UCLA Latin American Center) facilitated the move of my *Elitelore* and Oral History Research Programs to UCLA from Ohio State University. Johannes founded in 1975 the *Journal of Latin American Lore* (JLAL) to publish studies on *Elitelore* as well as Folklore.⁴

F. Paulo de Carvalho-Neto (UCLA Professor of Spanish Portuguese), who was (as was I) named Consulting Editor to JLAL, discussed with me at length his research on Folklore in such countries as Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Peru, Ecuador, and Chile (where he is credited with establishing the country's basis for Folklore Research). Paulo and I each published in 1973 a book on Lore, but differed on how Folklore emerges. In my book *Elitelore*,⁵ I argued that the Elite contribute significantly to the creation of Folklore.

In his book *El Folklore de las Luchas Sociales: un Ensayo de Folklore y Marxismo*,⁶ Paulo followed for a time Professor Dorson's dictum that in 1936 Stalin had "discovered" the use of Folklore to unite the masses through the use of legends and heroic songs to glorify life in collective agriculture. Thus Stalin "asked" Russian scholars to reconsider Folklore as arising from the People as its true creators and not as having arisen as a product of the upper classes, who filter their "Bourgeois Folklore" to the workers and peasants.⁷

After considering the concept of *Elitelore*, however Paulo came to agree with me that most Lore is organized by the 'Strategic Elite' *at all levels of society* (tribal, local, state, national, international) seeking to gain followers. The followers (including some middle- and lower-level Elites) spread such Lore to other masses where it is reworked in popular/folk terms. Stalin never asked Russian scholars to reconsider Folklore—he gave orders to change to his view of it.

G. Richard N. Adams (Professor of Anthropology, University of Texas, Austin) wrote in his review of *Elitelore* (1973) for the *American Anthropologist*:⁸

I suspect that [the concept] will take on its own meaning, probably somewhat broader than that assigned it by its inventor.

⁴ Articles appearing in JLAL focus on the diverse cultural manifestations of Latin American societies, and probe for culture-specific meaning. This kind of lore is associated with the (1) Elite and (2) Popular sectors of modern urban society as well as with the (3) Folk, including indigenous groups, peasant communities, and records of ancient civilizations. Also JLAL focuses on natural science, literature, life histories, theater, and film in these three types of Lore.

⁵ See James W. Wilkie, *Elitelore* (Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center Publications 1973), Book 1 in <http://elitelore.org/books.htm>; For the version in Spanish, see Jorge Balán (ed.), *Las Historias de Vida en Ciencias Sociales: Teoría y Técnica*, Segunda Parte; Buenos Aires: Nueva Visión, 1974.

⁶ México, D.F.: Siglo XX Editores.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p, 17.

⁸ Vol. 77:2, 1975.

Professor Adams had seen in his reading of *Elitelore* my implicit analysis of two broader concepts that I related in the book to the study of elites: Folklore and Popularlore—both largely created by Elites.

* 3 *

Indeed with time I began to make explicit other broader concepts which are developed in Chart 1, below: Collective and Individual Elitelores, Folklores, and Popularlores, the latter term which I have redefined several times in my VIEWS from five different years: 1973, 1975, 1978, 1996, and 2012.

As Chart 1 shows, one of my main concerns from the outset was where to place Popularlore in my changing views and how to define it.

In 1973, 1975, and 1978, I originally saw **Popularlore** as involving the *unique Oral Life Histories* of the folk told through oral history to reveal what life was about as seen by persons interviewed. From those individual stories I saw them as possibly shedding light on the prevailing lore to understand collective meaning

Since 1996 I have seen **Popularlore** as a frequent bridge to Elitelore as well as Folklore.

Thus, in 1996 I **redefined Popularlore**, placing it on an equal level with Elitelore and Folklore to argue that (if it does it not fade away) aspects of it can merge into Elitelore and/or Folklore. Dorson, who died in 1981, would have never approved.

By 2012 it was becoming clear that a NEW VIEW would have to be articulated, and Indeed, it is here shown in Chart 1.

In 2012 Popularlore is expanded in Chart 1 to include **Celebritylore, which itself can become part of Elitelore, part of Folklore, or both.**

CHART 1

WILKIE'S EXPANDING VIEW OF LORE

("POPULARLORE," IN BOLD)

I. 1973 VIEW (From the Book *Elitelore* based on Bio/Autographical Oral History)

Level of Analysis	Elitelore	Folklore*
1. General	1. Group	1. Collective
2. Unique Life Histories	2. Individual Oral Histories	2. Popularlore (oral history aspect of folklore)

II. 1975 VIEW (From: "Dimensions of Elitelore: An Oral History Questionnaire")

Level of Oral Lore	Oral Elitelore	Oral Folklore
1. General	1. Leaderlore	1. Collective
2. Unique Life Histories	2. Individual	2. Individual Popularlore (Bio/Autobiographical Oral History)

III. 1978 VIEW (From "Elitelore and Folklore ... in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*")

Level of Analysis	Elitelore**	Folklore
1. General	1. Collective	1. Collective
2. Unique (esp. Life Histories)	2. Individual (especially Bio/Autobiographical Oral History)	2. Individual Popularlore

IV. 1996 VIEW (In Wilkie's UCLA Course on Elitelore)

Level of Analysis	Elitelore	Popularlore★>>	Folklore
1. General	1. Collective	1. Collective	1. Collective
2. Unique (esp. Life Histories)	2. Individual (INCLUDING Bio/Autobiographical Oral History)	2. Individual	2. Individual

V. 2012 VIEW (In this Book)

Level of Analysis	Elitelore>>	<< Popularlore★★>>	Folklore
1. General	1. Collective	1. Collective	1. Collective
2. Unique (esp. Life Histories)	2. Individual (INCLUDING Bio/Autobiographical Oral History)	2. Individual	2. Individual

● **Folklore** = The enduring lore (including local & rural) which gives groups (including urban and trans-national migrants the needed "roots" meaning in life and self-identification.

●● **Elitelore includes (e.g.) Strategic-Elitelore, Counter-Elitelore, Cinemallore, Celebritylore.**

★ **Popularlore** = mass-based national and international "cultures" spread since World War I by radio and **Cinemallore**; since War II by TV, Tel/Fax, and air transport; and since the Cold War's end in 1991 by worldwide travel and **Imagelore** via Print and **Internet**). Some Popularlore may survive as part of historical heritage, thus blending into **FOLKLORE, and/or ...**

★★...some **POPULARLORE** may survive as **ELITELORE**, exemplified in the case of **Paris Hilton** who is famous for her implicitly helping to create “**Celebritylore**.” Paris, “famous for being famous,” actually has “saved” Hilton Hotel Worldwide from being sold and subsumed under another name on the grounds that the name “Hilton” had come to signify “dowdy”—Paris brought the name Hilton back to signify “ELITELORE,” even as she has become part of **FOLKLORE** (see text).

The role of Paris Hilton has expanded the meaning of Celebritylore, as we see in the following quote (CelebrityNetWorth, 2013):

“Paris Hilton [born New York City 1981] has an estimated net worth of \$100 million dollars. The great-granddaughter of Conrad Hilton, the founder of the Hilton Hotel chain, Paris Hilton was born into money. She began working as a model while in elementary school and was subsequently signed to T Management

Her hard-partying lifestyle and rumored short-lived relationships with [Leonardo DiCaprio](#) and [Oscar de la Hoya](#) led her to earn a position as a fixture in entertainment news. For her notoriety as a socialite, Hilton was hailed by the media as ‘New York's leading [It Girl](#)’ in 2001.

“A sex tape, which she tried to have suppressed, was ... released in 2003 under the title, ‘One Night in Paris’.

“[Paris Hilton] has modeled for various advertising campaigns, including work for Guess, Christian Dior, and Marciano, among others. She became a household name in 2003, when she began appearing on the reality show, ‘The Simple Life’.

“She has made guest appearances on various television programs, including ‘The O.C.’, ‘Las Vegas’, and ‘Veronica Mars’, and also played supporting roles in such films as ‘Nine Lives’ and ‘House of Wax’. She has also appeared on a number of reality series including ‘Paris Hilton's My New BFF’, and its various spin-offs, and the short-lived, ‘The World According to Paris’. She has also released one album [of songs]. Paris Hilton's family has a fortune in the billions. Paris' family money comes from the hotel business, but Paris has her hands in [many] business as well. Paris has a shoe line, perfume, CD and movie royalties, money from appearances, a book, clothes, and hair accessories.....

“Paris gets between \$25,000 and \$100,000 for a hosting fee to appear at parties/clubs.”⁹

⁹ See <http://www.celebritynetworth.com/richest-celebrities/paris-hilton-net-worth/>

Other concepts are placed and defined in my changing views of Chart 1:

By **1978** the Elitelore in Chart 1 is seen to include:

Strategic-Elitelore (the lore of the leaders of leaders)
Counter-Elitelore (the lore of leaders who seek to replace the existing Strategic Elite)
Cinematelore and Celebritylor.

By 1996 the term **Popularlore by its definition is deemed to encompass Imagelore.**

Images are transmitted around the world via print media and Internet to create **Imagelore**, which can lead to interpretation and misinterpretation that may be planned or unplanned by the transmitters.

On the one hand, for example, the Google Search Web Site includes at the top the category entitled “**Images**,” which include the following: photos, videos, maps, statistical graphs and charts, art, etc.

On the other hand, the *Los Angeles Times* has an entire Section of its newspaper devoted to “Images” defined as photos and articles devoted to “high-life” clothing, cosmetics, and perfumes as well as high-life dining, partying, and moving about the world in super-expensive vehicles, yachts, and private airplanes.

These images fall into the “Style” Section of the *New York Times*.

Both newspapers use these Sections to attract “high-end advertisers” as well as “followers” who hope someday to move up in class from an 8am-5pm routine to join the “rich and famous” and be able to live up to the advertized images and achieve their own rich estates with private film-projection theaters and temperature-controlled cellars of “exquisite” costly wines.

Such are the images and styles of **Elitism** and **Elitists** that many persons “love to hate.”

When my former student **María Herrera-Sobek** (UCLA, PHD, 1975), now Associate Vice Chancellor at the University of California at Santa Barbara) **taught a course on Elitelore at Stanford University** (1990-1991), she found many of her students to be self-styled “intellectual leftists” hostile to the idea of studying their “enemy”—the Elite.

In contrast, **when María taught the Elitelore course at Harvard University** (1993-1994 and 1996-1997) she was welcomed with open arms: “Yes, we are the Elite,” they proudly chanted. (María had tried to tell her Palo Alto students that they had already joined the Elite just by being at Stanford, but to little avail, because they claimed to “represent,” if not be, the Folk.)¹⁰

¹⁰ María Herrera-Sobek is author of *The Bracero Experience: Elitelore versus Folklore* (Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center Publications, 1979).

Yet, when those who claim to revile the concept of the Elite fall into danger or fall ill, they too want the very best Elite Police Squad, most famous physician, or most skilled pilot.

The Elite themselves recognize gradations of Elitehood.

Strategic Elites are the “leaders of the leaders” and they are most sophisticated at developing lore to influence “lesser Elites.”

Counter-Elites with their own Lore are in the meantime always waiting in the wings to lead a new paradigm shift, but only a few win the day and often at high cost especially in the fields of non-social sciences that maintain expensive laboratories. Winning may require rebellion and revolution.

Thomas S. Kuhn implicitly analyzes Counter-Elites (without calling them so) in his 1962 book,¹¹ *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.

Kuhn identified **three phases** in the creation of new knowledge, **the final phase in each case being not evolution (in which most university students are taught to believe, as I can personally attest), but rather revolution via [paradigm shift](#)**.¹²

Kuhn’s contribution is summed up by *Wikipedia*:¹³ He argued that the paradigm shift is a mélange of sociology, enthusiasm, and scientific promise that do not stimulate logically determinate procedures. This argument caused an uproar in reaction to his work.

For some commentators, Kuhn introduced a realistic humanism into the core of science while for others the nobility of science was tarnished by Kuhn's introduction of an irrational element into the heart of its greatest achievements.¹⁴

For Kuhn:¹⁵ Chronologically, the **first phase**, which exists only once in each case, is

“the *pre-paradigm phase*, in which there is no consensus on any particular [theory](#), though the research being carried out can be considered scientific in nature. This phase is characterized by several incompatible and incomplete theories.

“The actors in this pre-paradigm community eventually gravitate to one of these conceptual frameworks and ultimately to a widespread consensus on the appropriate choice of [methods](#), [terminology](#) and on the kinds of [experiments](#) that are likely to contribute to increased [insights](#), then [comes the next phase].

“[Kuhn’s] **second phase**, *normal science*, begins, in which puzzles are solved within the context of the dominant paradigm. As long as there is consensus within the

¹¹ Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

¹² A paradigm is a pattern or model, upon which there is a general agreement by the Strategic Elite.

¹³ Quoted from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Structure_of_Scientific_Revolutions

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

discipline, normal science continues. Over time, progress in normal science may reveal anomalies, facts that are difficult to explain within the context of the existing paradigm. While usually these anomalies are resolved, in some cases they may accumulate to the point where normal science becomes difficult and where weaknesses in the old paradigm are revealed. Kuhn refers to this as a crisis. Crises are often resolved within the context of normal science. However, after significant efforts of normal science within a paradigm fail, science may enter the third phase.

“[The third phase] is *revolutionary science*, in which the underlying assumptions of the field are reexamined and a new paradigm is established. After the new paradigm's dominance is established, scientists return to normal science, solving puzzles within the new paradigm. A science may go through these cycles repeatedly, though Kuhn notes that it is a good thing for science that such shifts do not occur often or easily.”

Kuhn infers, then, that the Pre-Paradigm phase and Normal Science phase are “Evolutionary,” and he states clearly that the third phase always involves Revolutionary Science,¹⁶ which, once it becomes mainstream, will eventually be ripe to be overthrown by a new Revolutionary model, and so on.¹⁷

In terms of biological analysis, “evolutionary” genetic change comes through “Mutations.” **But what are Mutations?** How do they relate to ‘Evolution’ and ‘Revolution’?

Mexicans, living in a “partially developed” nation, have tended to see political change coming through “REVOLUTION”; Americans tend to see change coming through “EVOLUTION.” Thus, Mexicans tend to view Political Revolution as involving long-term traumatic upheaval to attain economic and social change, but most Americans tend to view Political Revolutions as being only involving short-term upheavals that can then enter into long-term EVOLUTIONARY social and economic change.

But **what is “Evolution”?** As early as 1937 the *International Encyclopedia of Social Science* carried articles positing that Revolution and Evolution are two sides of the same “coin”, evolution being caused by spontaneous “Mutation”--the biological term for “Revolution”.

DNA research into manipulation of genes that cause Mutations shows that they can reverse disease, rebuild lost nerves, tendons, and limbs as well as immediately save lives, and argues that Mutations may take centuries, decades, months, and now made to occur with immediate spontaneity.¹⁸

¹⁶ Because of the huge debate about his work, Kuhn addressed concerns raised by his critics in the 1969 postscript to the second edition of his book.

¹⁷ Kuhn traces the First Major Paradigm shift back to the **Copernican Revolution**, which overthrew the [Ptolemaic model](#) of the heavens that postulated the [Earth](#) at the center of the [galaxy](#), towards the [heliocentric model](#) with the [Sun](#) at the center of our Solar System. This was one of the starting points of the [Scientific Revolutions](#) of the 16th century, as discussed at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copernican_Revolution

¹⁸ For new analysis of how a spontaneous mutation created the gene for colon cancer in one family

Hence, a major argument in my concept of Elitelore is that the academic world does not advance through linear, evolutionary hypotheses, but through non-linear and multi-linear revolutionary paradigm shifts.

With regard to the Revolution made by non-linear analysis, Richard W. Wilkie (Professor of Human Geography at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst) puts the matter succinctly in his 1972 article entitled **“The Process Method [Academic Elitelore] vs. the Hypothesis Method [Academic Folklore]: A Nonlinear Example of Peasant Spatial Perception and Behavior.”**¹⁹ He writes against the trend to exclusively use linear analyses. Most importantly, Richard Wilkie argues that the Process Method is more effective than the Hypothesis Method for isolating the occurrence of nonlinear relationships in changing and evolving communities. In examining the actual processes of peasant community life rather than trying to force life into arbitrary linear boundaries, Richard finds unanticipated relationships that would otherwise have been lost to our academic sight; and he argues that too many scholars have turned the normal research phase into a folkloric ritual.

* 4 *

It is my purpose in this book to show how the analyses developed by case studies has expanded the historiographical relationship of Elitelore (the overarching theme) to Folklore and Popularlore. Thus, I here take into account research as seen in the now sizable number of case studies (especially using Oral History and Cinemalore) that have emerged to expand the field of Elitelore since 1967, as Richard N. Adams predicted in 1973. (See p. 4, item “G” above.)

The First Objective is to present the grand gamma of Elitelore as expressed in oral memoirs, politics (speeches, tracts, humor), literature, musical theater, opera, and film, especially the creation of popular culture (some of which will become the longer lasting folklore). Indeed, an essential argument in the Concept of Elitelore is that is that leaders at all levels of society create “knowledge” that they want people to believe (or not believe).

In Chapter 1, Professor David E. Lorey (Ph.D., UCLA) puts into context 15 of the 17 the case studies treated in this book. David left his teaching and administrative position at UCLA IN

coming to the New World in the 1630s (the gene then spreading to the world), see Thomas H. Maugh II, “Early U.S. family passed down gene blamed for many colon cancer cases,”

Los Angeles Times, 1-5-2008, www.latimes.com/news/science/la-sci-colon5jan05,1,2270853.story

¹⁹ *Proceedings of the International Geographical Union Congress*, (Ed.) Maurice Yeates

(Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1974), reprinted in

http://www.elitelore.org/articles/The_Process_Method_versus_The_Hypothesis_Method.pdf

1997 to become a Program Director for the Hewlett Foundation in Menlo Park, California, as this volume was advancing.

After David Lorey departed, Professor Olga Magdalena Lazín (PHD, UCLA) joined as co-editor of this volume to herself contribute two articles.

In the meantime, this volume, which had been accepted by UCLA Latin American Center Publications in 1996, saw publication delayed because of budgetary constraints, which we have overcome by now publishing this updated book online.

In Chapter 16, Dr. Lazín writes (1995-1996) from her university undergraduate experiences in Romania of the 1980s about Eastern Europe, which takes up the bureaucratic absurdity of “Orwell's ‘1984’ and Life Under the ‘Big Brothers’ Stalin and Ceausescu.”

In Chapter 17, Olga writes in 1996 “On the Concept of ‘Meritocratic’ Elite in Making Social Policy,” especially related to elite social responsibility as seen by major U.S. authors involved in implicit debate with each other.

Further, Dr. Lazín is co-editor of Chapter 2, which offers images of Elitelore.

The Second Objective of this book is to examine how the role of Elitelore interacts with Folklore. For example Cinemalore is “invented” by film directors (who are elites because of that fact itself), and viewers are intended to be those who follow the director’s ideas, which, if successful become part of peoples’ lore (Popularlore or Folklore).

*** 5 ***

To explain to my UCLA students how to fathom a concept new to most of them, I take the following approach by stating: “Lore is everywhere, as in Folklore. Just as scholars study the lore of the Folk, they also study the lore of the Elite, hence the concept of ‘Elitelore.’”

This analogy “like Elitelore, like Folklore” may sound simple for university students to understand, but the problem arises that up to 75% of each class is not sure what Folklore involves, let alone prepared to give examples. (However, students from Mexico usually are conversant with Folkloric ideas.)

Hence, the need to explain to students what the study of Folklore involves, and I present the *Wikipedia* view because it has hyper-links that define analysis on the next page:

CHART 2

Folklore Viewed By *Wikipedia*

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Folklore#Artifacts>

[Brackets are added by James Wilkie]

“**Folklore** consists of [genres or categories such as] legends, [music](#), [oral history](#), [proverbs](#), [jokes](#), [popular beliefs](#), [fairy tales](#), [tall tales, stories], and customs that are the [traditions](#) of [a] culture, [subculture](#), or [group](#).

“[Folklore is also a field of study (often called [folkloristics](#)) including methods or sets of practices through which the genres above are analyzed. The study of folklore is conducted by ‘folklorists,’ who are interested in content as well as how it is shared within and between groups].

“The word 'folklore' was first used by the English antiquarian [William Thoms](#) in a letter published by the London Journal in 1846.

“In usage, there is a continuum between folklore and [mythology](#). [Stith Thompson](#) made a major attempt to index the motifs of both folklore and mythology, providing an outline into which new motifs can be placed, and scholars can keep track of all older motifs.

“Folklore can be divided into four areas of study: [artifact](#) (such as voodoo dolls), describable and transmissible entity (oral tradition), culture, and behavior (rituals). These areas do not stand alone, however, as often a particular item or element may fit into more than one of these areas.

“Kinds of Lore [**click on each genre to read about it**]:

- [Archetypes, stereotypes and stock characters](#).
- [Ballad](#)
- [Blason Populaire](#)
- [Childlore](#)
- [Children's street culture](#)
- [Counting rhymes](#)
- [Costumbrismo](#)
- [Craft](#)

- Custom
- Epic poetry
- Factoids
- Festival
- Folk art
- Folk belief [religion]
- [Folk dances]
- Folk magic
- Folk medicine
- Folk narrative
 - Anecdote
 - Fable
 - Fairy tale
 - Ghost story
 - Joke
 - Legend
 - Myth
 - Parable
 - Tall tale
 - Urban legend
- Folk play
- Folk poetry and rhyme
- [Folk simile:²⁰ “culture equips us with enough folk knowledge of ... highly evocative concepts to use them as short-hand ... for all manner of behaviors and complexes. Snakes, for example, embody the notions of treachery, slipperiness, cunning and charm (as well as a host of other, related properties) in a single ... ‘virtually-visible’ package. To compare someone to a snake is to suggest that many of these properties are present in that person, and thus, one would do well to treat that person as one would treat a real snake, about which they do not have first-hand knowledge,” quoting Tony Veale and Yanfen Hao, School of Computer Science and Informatics, University College Dublin, Dublin, Ireland.]²¹
- Folk song
- Games
- Holiday lore and customs
- Mythology
- Riddle
- Saying
 - Maxim
 - Proverb
- Superstition

²⁰ This genre has been removed (or moved) by Wikipedia so substitution is made here.

²¹ “Enriching WordNet with Folk Knowledge and Stereotypes,” at afflatus.ucd.ie/Papers/GWC08_WordNetWithFolkKnowledge.pdf (latest source cited is 2007).

- Taunts
 - Weather lore
 - Fax lore,
- “among other genre.”

Source: *Wikipedia*, July 10, 2012. For revisions not included here, see version dated Feb. 24, 2013.

It is important to note that in Wikipedia’s listing of Folklore genre, directly above, the world’s most ubiquitous category is missing—the genre of “Pornlore.” It is estimated, for example, that 70% of males from 18 to 34 years of age who are connected to the internet take advantage of this “new” revolution in communication to view porn and forward it or receive it daily—and 42.7% of all internet users view Pornlore.²²

In 2013 there were 4.2 million porn web sites, 12% of total websites; and there are about 1.5 billion pornographic downloads per month (peer-to-peer), 35% of total downloads; and 68 million daily pornographic search engine requests (25% of total requests).²³

In the recent past, Porn (or “Porn Creep”) was treated by Wikipedia as a genre of Folklore, but after transparent debate within the Wikipedia Elite (who seek to protect the integrity of the Wikipedia Web Site that grows daily as hundreds of authorized Wikipedia editors add, revise, and remove entries and subcategories), the term “Porn Creep”²⁴ was changed to “Pornography” and given its own article.

Although some observers have seen this change as some sort of Wikipedia “conspiracy,”²⁵ in reality Pornlore makes more sense as a category in its own right because the concept is included in Elitelore and Popularlore as well as Folklore.

* 6 *

The above discussion of Pornlore is relevant to what I wrote In *Eitelore* (Appendix B), about the famous work of the controversial American “anthropologist” **Oscar Lewis**, who temporally faced the charge of being a pornographer by one group of critics in Mexico and unprofessional (for a different reason) by two allied groups of critics in the USA.

²² See <http://www.safefamilies.org/sfStats.php>; and cited in the Wikipedia Entry “Pornography”: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Porn#Statistics>; see also the note immediately below.

²³ See <http://internet-filter-review.toptenreviews.com/internet-pornography-statistics.html>

²⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Porn_creep

²⁵ Do conspiracies abound against Wikipedia? On the “Airbrushing of History, see http://www.loosewireblog.com/2005/12/wikipedia_porn_.html
<http://www.loosewireblog.com/2009/07/journalists-citing-wikipedia-rarely-an-option.html>

Lewis had recorded poverty-stricken individuals of Mexico City speaking freely about their lives, sex and all in order to develop his Idea of the Culture of Poverty for all major cities around the world based on those oral interviews. One question he posed in his research was: “Facing the drudgery of unending low-pay work, what do you do for entertainment?”

At the time Lewis was conducting his research, black and white television was neither available nor attractive in signal quality (let alone affordable), and the poor barely were able to pay to see a film from time to time. What, then, was their “entertainment”? A Mexican so-called “street witticist” of the 1940s and 1950s summed up the answer as seen in base terms:

“Eat, quarrel, copulate as often as possible—and swear all the while.”

With the publication in 1961 of *The Children of Sánchez: Autobiography of a Mexican Family*,²⁶ Lewis found himself harshly criticized in at least two ways, both of which turned out to be ridiculous, but not until he had endured much mental anguish and physical “heart burn”.

The U.S. groups who called Lewis unprofessional encompassed “allied” vocal groups of some inflexible American academic anthropologists and sociologists. They expressed concern about Lewis having moved his anthropological research into urban territory intellectually “owned” by sociologists. Lewis had “violated” the **tacit** right of sociologists alone to study Mexico City—he was supposed to limit his anthropological studies to rural and isolated Mexico where sociologists had tacitly agreed not to enter.

Such professional Elitelore that arbitrarily divided the world geographically to limit tacitly where academic disciplines might want to conduct research could not stand, and indeed did not stand much longer—Lewis had by design or accident (or both) enlarged the foci of anthropology and sociology as well as signaled an end to the idea that disciplines could “own” intellectual topics and physical areas of study.²⁷

²⁶ New York City: Random House.

²⁷ However, in the early 1990s I faced personally the old Eliteloric idea that “**intellectual ownership**” was still alive. With a Ford Foundation grant to PROFMEX (based at UCLA) to examine El Paso-Ciudad Juárez as one metropolitan area divided arbitrarily by an international border, as PROFMEX President, I approached the presidents of 7 universities in both cities and invited them to join the Project (co-administered by the Mexican National Association of Universities—ANUIES). Initially they all declined on the grounds that each already “owned” the intellectual rights to exclusively conduct research in those two cities. Once they realized that substantial funding was available for participating in my prestigious international Project, all the universities finally decided to join the group effort even though the funds were not split seven ways—PROFMEX retained control and directly paid professors research stipends directly to keep the universities from siphoning all funds for “overhead.” The 7 presidents had argued that their professors were already being paid at their campuses. The PROFMEX response was that “under-paid professors need incentives to work with the Project because it overarches the needs of each university.”) The Ford Foundation, which had foreseen the difficulty I faced to achieve the overarching agreement, congratulated me for convincing those universities that “intellectual ownership” of geographical areas was no longer acceptable and that professors merit independent research stipends also to enhance their careers.

The Mexican group that denounced Lewis was the Sociedad Mexicana de Geografía y Estadística, which revealed immediately the organization's ignorance about the Mexican Popular Sector. When members of the Society read the translation in 1964 of Lewis' *Los Hijos de Sánchez*, they went in their Society's name to court, demanding that the book be banned as an obscene volume that defamed Mexico in a subversive manner as well as portrayed disrespectfully Mexico's Permanent Revolution under one political party.

Further, the Society claimed that Lewis had shattered the image of the "Mexican Economic Miracle", potentially diverting new foreign private investment away from Mexico.

On the one hand, the Society claimed that the Children of Sánchez could not have spoken in such repulsive, indeed pornographic, terms—Mexicans do not speak in such gross language they stated. On the other hand, the Society did not believe that the members of such a miserable family could show flashes of articulate brilliance as they revealed the complex patterns of survival in a slum.²⁸

Thus, the Society demanded that Lewis' "pornographic book" be banned in Mexico and around the world, arguing that Lewis had harmed Mexico by basing his so-called perverse interest in sex, "sexual slang, and completely filthy language" (which the Society further claimed, ridiculously, is neither common nor even heard in Mexico's popular parlance) to unfairly portray the poor in Mexico City as being "trapped" in a self-fulfilling cycle of poverty that is inescapable.²⁹

Moreover, the Society argued that the Sánchez family was not a "typical Mexican family", and that in reality the book was based upon a story invented out of thin air by Lewis to twist and distort Mexico's image inside and outside the country. (Some in the Society even muttered that perhaps Lewis was a CIA or FBI agent seeking to make Mexico evermore subservient to U.S. psychological power.)

Lewis responded that his tape recordings were indeed real, and asked the famous Mexican intellectual Jesús Silva Herzog to listen to the tapes and verify their accuracy—which Silva did. Silva Herzog also verified the use of sexually charged language by the Sánchez family stating that negative sexual feelings reflect much of the reality of the poor in urban Mexican life. Silva did not reveal that the book's Jesús Sánchez (father of the *Children of Sánchez*) was really Santos Hernández, whose name remained disguised until January 1987, when Santos died at about 90 years of age after being hit by a car while walking to work.³⁰ In any case, the Society's rhetoric finally came to be dismissed in Mexico, as it had been dismissed at the outset wherever the book was published.

²⁸ Virginia Bautista, "Los Hijos de Sánchez, un escándalo a medio siglo" (En 1961, Oscar Lewis publicó un ensayo descarnado sobre una familia del Distrito Federal, que desnudó el *Milagro mexicano*), *Excelsior*, 7 de agosto de 2011: <http://www.excelsior.com.mx/node/759087>

²⁹ Some of Lewis' critics outside Mexico were also concerned that the idea of The Culture of Poverty seemed to suggest that there was no way for the Popular Sector to escape it.

³⁰ See http://articles.latimes.com/1987-01-17/news/mn-4940_1_excelsior

Further, Lewis' Oral History tape recordings in rural Mexico had been lost from sight in the attack on the urban book, *The Children of Sánchez*. In the middle of the battle over his role in Mexico City, Lewis published in 1966 his book in Spanish on *Pedro Martínez. Un Campesino Mexicano y Su Familia*,³¹ based on his interviews (beginning in 1943) with a rural family in Tepoztlán, near Cuernavaca.

For *Pedro Martínez* (published in English in 1962),³² Oscar also called the town "Azteca" out of the misguided Elitelores of some U.S. anthropologists who claim that the privacy of towns and communities has to be respected.³³ Ironically, Oscar's original success came from his 1951 restudy of Robert Redfield's research for *Tepoztlán* that found many embarrassing errors by Redfield,³⁴ errors which implicitly called into question Redfield's scholarly reputation.

Lewis also restated, to news interviewers representing some 22 countries where his book had been translated (France, Germany, Japan, etc.) or reprinted in English, that the book represented his ideas of the *Culture of Poverty* around the world and did not involve an attack on Mexico.

To alert the world, he sought to use Mexican life stories in the *Culture of Poverty* in order to identify in a poignant manner problems of the poor that all readers would realize needed resolution. Lewis argued that problems of the "Popular Sector" cannot be ameliorated until they are identified. In Spanish-speaking counties, the term "Popular Sector" is used when referring to the poor so as not to further denigrate persons living in abject poverty.

* 7 *

I first met Oscar Lewis telephonically in 1967 (through Jesús Silva Herzog, one of my Oral

³¹ México, D.F.: Editorial Joaquín Mortiz, 1964. Pedro Martínez's real name was Juan Rodríguez.

³² New York City: Random House. 1962. I discuss this book in *Elitelores* (Appendix B) at http://www.elitelore.org/Capitulos/Elitelore_book1.pdf

³³ This notion of privacy carried into the period 1974-1978, when I served on the Editorial Board for the University of California Press and tried (unsuccessfully) to convince anthropologists to realize the error of their ways in trying to hide (usually without success) the name of their research sites.

³⁴ Oscar's 1951 restudy of Robert Redfield's 1930 book *Tepoztlán, a Mexican Village: A Study of Folk Life* revealed that Redfield's narrow kinship focus (and apparent inability to speak Spanish) led him to overlook the major event at the time of his research—a civil war between different factions of the village dwellers. Oscar tried to soften the blow by dedicating his book to Redfield. On the "Redfield-Lewis Controversy," see Susan M. Rigdon, *The Culture Facade: Art, Science, and Politics in the work of Oscar Lewis* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988, pp; 40-45.

History Interviewees of 1964),³⁵ and as part of our discussions, I told Oscar that he was really an Oral Historian (as well as an excellent innovator of traditional history because of his use of statistical data on population, geography, production and consumption according to season, etc.).³⁶

Oscar responded that he was intrigued and appreciative of my discussion of his books based on interviews as falling under the influence of the “**Oral History of Popularlore**” because that concept immediately implied linkage to **Folklore**, yet retained persons as unique individuals.

Further I discussed with Oscar my view that I saw our approaches as both involving the **art** of blending **Biography** (questions and comments) and **Autobiography** (in which our interviewees are encouraged to speak freely to tell their own life history in their own special way).

Hence I referred to my concept as **Bio/Autobiographical Oral History**—it is neither Biography nor Autobiography but rather a cooperative venture in which interviewers help stimulate their interviewees to share their **Lore** with the world. Oscar preferred to use the term “informants” (which has a negative connotation) instead of interviewees (which is a neutral term).

Art and **Lore** because the Bio/Autographic approach permits interviewees to develop their “views” (not necessarily “truths”) idiosyncratically, in contrast to the demands of most Social Scientists that each interviewee should answer the same short questions in a rigid order to permit quantitative analysis and to test for “representative responses.” But, I emphasized, we are only claiming that our ‘interviewees offer varied probes into the dimensions of the life history experiences.³⁷

As I put the matter to Oscar, the focus of our Oral Histories is on life stories is a combination of two approaches captured in tape recordings that are at once (1) biographical (based on flexible open-ended-interview questions) and (2) autobiographical (based on flexible “stream of consciousness” responses).

Oscar agreed in our conversations with the significance of the phrase “**Oral History of the Folk**” (at first my concept, not his) that helped him to understand the unique importance of individuals as he tape recorded life-history accounts that involve “Popularlore” (again, at first

³⁵ Silva’s Oral History Interview is at <http://www.elitelore.org/Voll.html>

³⁶ Traditional because of his excellent history of *Life in a Mexican Village: Tepoztlán Restudied* (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1951), in which he used local archives, maps, informant notes and psychological tests. Innovator because he used steel wire recording machines that were new to the market in the late 1940s and difficult to use in rural Mexico owing to shortage of stable electricity.

³⁷ On the life history approach, see Jorge Balán (ed.), *Las Historias de Vida en Ciencias Sociales: Teoría y Técnica* (Buenos Aires: Nueva Visión, 1974). Part 2 contains the Spanish translation of **Elitelore**: <http://www.elitelore.org/Capitulos/eliteloresp.pdf>

my term, not his). Thus, this led us to discuss my argument that Oral History is important to hear the roles of individuals themselves as well as for what they tell us about the collective Lore of small and large groups everywhere (a concept upon which he immediately agreed).

Oscar believed that my Oral History of individual Mexican leaders at the top of society helped to validate his Oral History recorded with individuals at the bottom of society.

With regard to Oscar's future, he set out to improve his *idea* about the causes of urban poverty of the masses by showing how it worked for individuals and families trapped in the triangle of prostitution (or *La Vida*) linking San Juan de Puerto Rico with New York City and Miami. From that research he produced his book entitled *La Vida; A Puerto Rican Family in the Culture of Poverty* (1966).

By 1968 Oscar had given 64 characteristics that indicated the presence of the culture of poverty, which he argued was not shared among all of the lower classes:³⁸

“The people in the culture of poverty have a strong feeling of marginality, of helplessness, of dependency, of not belonging. They are like aliens in their own country, convinced that the existing institutions do not serve their interests and needs.

“Along with this feeling of powerlessness is a widespread feeling of inferiority, of personal unworthiness. This is true of the slum dwellers of [Mexico City](#), who do not constitute a distinct ethnic or [racial group](#) and do not suffer from racial discrimination.

“In the [United States](#) the culture of poverty that exists in the Negroes has the additional disadvantage of racial discrimination.

“People with a culture of poverty have very little sense of history. They are a marginal people who know only their own troubles, their own local conditions, their own neighborhood, their own way of life. Usually, they have neither the knowledge, the vision nor the [ideology](#) to see the similarities between their problems and those of others like themselves elsewhere in the world.

“In other words, they are not [class conscious](#), although they are very sensitive indeed to status distinctions. When the poor become class conscious or members of trade union organizations, or when they adopt an internationalist outlook on the world they are ... no longer part of the culture of poverty although they may still be desperately poor.”

³⁸ Oscar Lewis, "The culture of poverty", *Society*, 35:2 (January 1968), pp. 7-9, <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2F02838122> quoted in http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_poverty

“Lewis’ theory attracted academic and policy attention in the 1960s, survived harsh academic criticism” around 2000 and then, by 2010, as Patricia Cohen writes, “regained academic respect and policy influence.”³⁹

* 8 *

Meanwhile, in 1968 Oscar was establishing his planned “Cuba Project” to focus on individuals living across all social strata rather than only those living in the Culture of Poverty. By 1969 he obtained funding from the Ford Foundation supposedly to examine the Culture of Poverty,⁴⁰ but really he went to conduct research implicitly as an **Oral Historian**, which embraced our conversations about the need to tape record the Oral History of individuals and families. After he explained his conditions to accept Fidel’s invitation to Cuba, Fidel assured him that the Cuban government was not interested in the particular individual families but wanted to gain a general idea for the historical record of how people felt and thought about the country’s progress of having lived his Revolution at the ten-year point.⁴¹

Oscar undertook his Cuba Project with the necessary blessing of Fidel Castro to understand the extent and ways in which the Cuban Revolution (1959--) was affecting individuals. Fidel had read and learned much from the *Children of Sánchez* and found that book to be more revolutionary than “50,000 political pamphlets.” (See Ruth Lewis account of how she and Oscar accepted Fidel’s invitation to conduct research in Cuba and worked for 16 months, March 1 1969-June 24, 1970, before being shut down by Castro.)⁴²

Fidel’s decree closing Oscar’s Cuba Project was dated June 24, 1970, the eve of June 25th, an important date in the History of the Americas (and the Spanish Empire including the Philippines)—the expulsion of the Jesuits by Carlos III, who effectively saw the Jesuits as a “Counter-Elite.”⁴³

Although Oscar foresaw a multi-volume Oral History Series when he began his research in Cuba in 1969, he also began to develop an accompanying volume on statistics to be gathered in

³⁹ Patricia Cohen, “Culture of Poverty Makes a Comeback”, *New York Times*, October 17, 2010: http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/18/us/18poverty.html?_r=0 (For the impact of the Culture of Poverty on the USA, which Lewis saw as having less poverty than other parts of the Developing World, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_poverty).

⁴⁰ Lewis quoted in Rigdon, *The Culture Facade: Art, Science, and Politics in the work of Oscar Lewis*, p 275. For this book, Susan had full access to Lewis’ research records and papers.

⁴¹ Lewis, quoted in *ibid*, Rigdon, p. 277.

⁴² Ruth M. Lewis, “Prefacio”, *Cuatro Hombres, Viviendo la Revolución* (México, D.F.: Editorial Joaquín Mortiz, 1980).

⁴³ In the New World the Jesuits were rounded up June 25-26 for shipment to Spain. In Europe, the Jesuits had already been arrested on April 2 for shipment to Corsica.

the traditional anthropological style of ethnographic “participant observation,” development of questionnaires, and psychological tests).⁴⁴

Oscar’s oral interview style, developed in Mexico and Puerto Rico, continued in Cuba as he tape recorded his questions and the answers by his interviewees. By planning later to eliminate his questions in the published work, he foresaw the same novelistic type of impact for Cuba that he had become famous for achieving. Indeed he was a master in allowing persons to speak for themselves.

However, in Cuba, Oscar openly shifted to call this famous interview format a form of art (as opposed to Social Science, which he had come to see as too limiting in its approach).⁴⁵

“Expelled” by Castro after almost a year and a half’s work, Oscar was devastated by the arrest of one of his interviewees, who Fidel had come to see as a disloyal Cuban speaking too frankly about the problems of the wonderful Cuban Revolution.”

It is my belief that Oscar’s weak heart was fatally broken by the arrest of that key person and by Fidel having violated his promises to protect the Project and its participants. Had he known about the number of interviewees who were arrested or harassed after he left Cuba in mid-1970, he would have felt even more betrayed by Castro. But neither he nor anyone but a select few in Cuba knew until 2011 about the State Secret (see below) that Fidel had caused many to people to suffer for having “cooperated” with Oscar.

Because when Oscar accepted Fidel’s invitation to conduct Oral History interviews in Cuba, he had discussed his hypothesis that the **Culture of Poverty could not exist under Cuba’s Revolution (or for that matter any socialist revolution)**,⁴⁶ in my view Fidel felt confident that Oscar would find persons who would testify completely in favor of the Cuban Revolution, thus helping Fidel’s worldwide propaganda as well as his internal situation. Thus when Oscar negotiated his conditions protecting his interviewees and his Cuba Project, Fidel felt free to make his promises, which in any case would not be kept if Oscar’s interview results were not what Fidel wanted to hear. For Fidel, all his promises were always made to be broken if he saw the need.

⁴⁴ An ethnography is a means to represent graphically in film as well as primarily in writing (and--beginning with Lewis—tape-recorded oral history), the culture of a family or self-identified group or community of people. Ethnography, based on observable data of rural and poor or “primitive” persons, was pioneered in the biological, social, and cultural branches of anthropology, but has also been adopted in the social sciences especially sociology, which was originally focused on urban communities. A typical ethnography includes a short history of the culture being studied, overview of the “landscape,” climate, nexus with outside communities, means of livelihood, and status of health, education, and welfare of the community. Compare and contrast http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnography#Cultural_and_Social_Anthropology

⁴⁵ See Susan M. Rigdon, *The Culture Façade: Art, Science, and Politics in the work of Oscar Lewis* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

⁴⁶ Oscar had hypothesized before arrival in Cuba that the Culture of Poverty would mostly vanish in classless societies, but he soon realized in Cuba that that hypothesis was wrong. See Rigdon, *The Culture Façade*, pp 99-102 and pp. 274-278.

How Oscar came to be expelled from Cuba is itself the tale of a spy novel. We know only since 2011 the first-hand account of a former Cuban “government” spy who worked closely with (and against) Oscar. **Maida L. Donate**, the lead Cuban assistant who had been assigned by the Cuban government to help the American Team carry out Oscar’s research. Maida recounts how she and all of the Cuban assistants considered Oscar to be a CIA spy and that their job for the Cuban Revolution was to report to several Secret Cuban Spy groups what Oscar and the whole Team were finding out each day about the how Oscar’s interviewees saw Fidel’s Revolution.⁴⁷

Fidel knew almost immediately that Oscar was working with his Team to select interviewees who were neither extremely pro- nor anti-Castro,⁴⁸ a worrisome sign for Fidel because he wanted only to hear that strong defenders of the Revolution were being selected to tell their stories.

The extent of the Spy Operation to help Cuba protect itself from the CIA is only now in 2013 being written by Maida, who (after the Lewis’ expulsion from Cuba in June 1970) continued working for the Cuban government to assess living standards and serve in other agencies.

Maida told me in telephone conversations,⁴⁹ that it was not until 1983-1984 that she seriously questioned in her own mind Fidel’s devious policies, which were exposed on the U.S. governments newly established Radio Martí designed to open Cuba to objective information.

In 1984 Fidel worried Cubans be claiming that the USA was about to invade and occupy Cuba, as Granada had been “occupied” by U.S. forces in 1983. In my view, Fidel may have been trying to distract Cubans from their access to Radio Martí as well as events in Angola.

In 1984 Fidel failed to take advantage of a negotiated recall of the thousands of Cuban troops that had been sent to Angola beginning in 1961 to create “a second Vietnam” in a long complex civil war between Non-Communists and Communists. Perhaps Fidel believed that the USSR had failed to fully support the True Angolan Revolution or did so with the wrong strategy. (The Cuban forces were not recalled from Angola until 1991 as the USSR was collapsing and the end came for the Soviet’s famous \$5 billion yearly funding for Cuba, which served as Moscow’s “aircraft carrier” floating 90 miles off the U.S. coast.)⁵⁰

⁴⁷The 2011 breakthrough in our knowledge about how Oscar’s Project came to suffer more arrests and harassments than Oscar or anyone ever knew is revealed by **Maida L. Donate**, who broke the Cuba’s State Secret About The Plan Against Lewis. Maida’s first-hand account is in two parts dated (1) June 30, 2011, and (2) July 4, 2011; and it is entitled “Oscar Lewis: Proyecto Cuba, Un artículo en dos partes sobre una investigación rodeada del secreto más hermético por muchos años”: See (1) <http://www.cubaencuentro.com/cuba/articulos/oscar-lewis-proyecto-cuba-1-264788>, and (2) <http://www.cubaencuentro.com/cuba/articulos/oscar-lewis-proyecto-cuba-2-264920>. Both parts also available at <http://www.cubaencuentro.com/cuba/articulos/oscar-lewis-proyecto-cuba-2-264920>.

⁴⁸ According to Rafael Rodríguez Castañeda, Telephone conversations, March 25-26, 2013.

⁴⁹ Maida Donate, March 25-26, 2013.

⁵⁰ After Cuba had lost its place on the world stage in the 1962 U.S.-Soviet-Cuban missile crisis, Fidel set his sites first on Africa (via Angola, supposedly America’s Vietnam No. 2) and then South America (via Bolivia, supposedly Vietnam No. 3). “Che” Guevara’s role in both was a miserable failure, but his death in the latter helped create Cuba’s role as a Revolutionary leader in the world

In the meantime, Cuba's admission of the deaths of at least 10,000 Cuban soldiers in Africa was shattering to many Cuban families who were living in ever poorer conditions. Fidel's African imbroglio brought to the fore General Arnaldo Tomás Ochoa Sánchez, the "heroic leader of the African Expedition," who had become the only threat to Fidel's continued rule.⁵¹ Ochoa was executed in 1989 on spurious charges and his family was "vanished" by Fidel, much to the consternation of much of the Cuban population.

Maida was so upset by the execution of General Ochoa and three of his comrades that while in Spain in 1993 on an official passport from Cuba, she defected and won political asylum and then Spanish citizenship.⁵² In 1995 she moved to the USA, and became a U.S. citizen in 2004.

Maida's account of Cuba as she saw it from various government posts confirms how Fidel manipulated the bureaucracy by subjecting each state employee to surveillance by competing Spy Groups—hence employees did not know who to 'trust' and feared falling victim to the quota of number of spies that the competing Spy Groups had to "find" and turn over to the government for prosecution.⁵³ (Who said that there was no real competition in Cuba!)

Maida argues that Fidel had set in motion in 1969 several major groups of the Cuban Security System to monitor Oscar Lewis's so-called "CIA Project" in Cuba while letting it go forward--for reasons that the Cuban Team of spies working for Oscar did not even expect to understand. Nor were they expected to understand why at first Lewis' Cuba Project seemingly could do no wrong in Fidel's eyes and then could do no right. Each of the spies was told only to report to one of the several Spy Groups overseeing the "watching" of Oscar and his American Team, and each member of the Cuban Team was careful not to discuss matters of State policy with anyone but their supervisor of the Spy Group to whom they reported.

(This description of Fidel's control system based on competing Spy Groups is in accord with what Edna and I discovered during our 1983 visit to Cuba as explained by our hosts host,⁵⁴ otherwise we would never have known that we were being watched, as were all Cubans. For example, when we drove to a private home for a lunch or dinner invitation, spies on each block would lurk near us from the two competing groups within the CDR--Comités de Defensa de la Revolución. One Spy Group represented the "civic" sector and one the "military" sector), and both sought to identify any 'Un-Cuban Activities' that might take place. Further, if one of the competing groups did could denounce the other for failing to have someone on duty, that

while putting Che Guevara on his path to "heroic" death, thus ending any Che threat to Fidel's continued power.

⁵¹ Fidel had headed-off any challenge to his power by Ernesto "Che" Guevara by sending him to certain death (which came in 1967) in a hopeless guerrilla attempt to overthrow the U.S.- backed Bolivian government.

⁵² Telephone conversation with Maida Donate, March 25, 2013.

⁵³ Ibid., March 25-26, 2013

⁵⁴ Our 12-day visit came about under a U.S.-Cuban accord that allowed the diplomats of each country to invite friends from abroad to help relieve their isolation and continual surveillance that made it difficult for both countries to find diplomats willing to serve in either of the two countries. In my case, the Wilkie Family visited the Smith Family but could not overtly conduct research.

meant a reward was due. The prize for reporting even minor deviant activity could potentially enable the reporting spy to be able to take over the car or refrigerator of the denounced person, cars and refrigerators otherwise not being available except to the Spy Masters and high level officials.)

Oscar, who had suffered from a weak heart for some years,⁵⁵ had a fatal heart attack in New York City on December 16, 1970.

Ruth (his wife, who had been in effect Oscar's uncredited coauthor since at least 1943 when they began interviewing and studying the family life of Pedro Martínez in Tepoztlán), then, continued their work. As in Mexico and Puerto Rico, she organized Oscar's Oral History interviews in Cuba into three important books, which (even with the help of Susan M. Rigdon) took more than six years.

A great amount of Oscar's material for his ethnographic volume (accumulated during his 16 months of research in Cuba that began in February 1969) was confiscated by Cuban police at 5 PM on June 24, 1970, when the Cuban Government permanently closed the Oscar Lewis Research Project Office.

Fortunately, almost all of the Oral History tapes and transcripts had been moved to the University of Illinois—Oscar made four trips out of Cuba during 1969 and early 1970, carefully taking with him for safe-keeping the major Oral History tapes and some 30,000 pages of transcripts, translation, and notes. Clearly Oscar thought of getting those materials out of Cuba to prevent any "loss" that might harm the Project's Cuban interviewees and the Project's publication plans.

Even without the major share of Project materials, however, Fidel and Company knew from their spies working with Lewis which interviewees they could claim were "**counter-revolutionary informants,**" violating Fidel's pledge to Oscar that the interviewees would neither be prosecuted nor persecuted for telling the "truth" as they saw it from all levels of society.

In my view, Fidel had been regretful that he had let Oscar lead his team to Cuba because this was the first time he let his guard down. Previously and subsequently, Fidel reminded his listeners why he did not release his political prisoners until they were mentally and physically broken .

Thus the following statement, question and answer by Fidel says much:⁵⁶

"Batista released from one political prisoner who was dynamic man in good health and it was he who made the Cuban Revolution. Who was it?

"Yes, me."

⁵⁵ On Oscar's many health problems, see Rigdon, *The Cultural Facade*, p. 76.

⁵⁶ The quote is found in *Elitelore, Popularlore, and Folklore about Fidel*--and certainly is by Fidel, if in slightly different words.

Because Fidel himself was that one dynamic leader, who was once upon a time a Counter-Elite, he realized the danger of releasing political prisoners, any one of whom could try to replace him.

The three volumes that finally emerged from the Cuba Project are by Oscar Lewis,⁵⁷ Ruth M. Lewis and Susan M. Rigdon (who joined the Project in 1972 after Oscar's death and soon became Ruth's best friend).

Thus, "Oscar's" **Oral History of the Cuban Revolution** resulted in three volumes,⁵⁸ all published in 1977 by the University of Illinois Press:

Four Men, Living the revolution: An Oral history of Contemporary Cuba, Vol. 1

Four Women, Living the revolution: An Oral history of Contemporary Cuba, Vol. 2

Neighbors, Living the revolution: An Oral history of Contemporary Cuba, Vol. 3 1977

The first book was reviewed strangely for the *New York Review of Books* by Harvard Professor John Womack,⁵⁹ who wanted to link *Four Men* back to the collective view of Oscar's Culture of Poverty (extrapolated from Lewis' interviews in the Mexico, especially in the 1950s) rather than to review **Oscar's goal of capturing the Oral History of individuals and their insights into the Cuban Revolution—warts and all.**⁶⁰

The Ruth Lewis - Susan Rigdon response to Womack articulated the implicit debate with Womack (and impliedly Fidel) that emerged in the *New York Review of Books*,⁶¹ November 10, 1977. This "exchange" with Womack pitted two irritated, articulate women against one innocent man—"innocent for not realizing" that he had reviewed a "book" that Oscar had never written entitled "The Theory of the Culture of Poverty." Oscar only had spelled out

⁵⁷ Oscar had conceived of a fourth volume based on analysis of statistical data accumulated during the year in Cuba, but that data was confiscated by Cuban police at the time the Lewis Research Project Office was permanently closed by the Cuban Government at 5 P.M. on June 24, 1970.

⁵⁸ Subsequently, Douglas S. Butterworth, one of Oscar's Team Members, published in 1980 a volume based also on his own research while helping Lewis in Cuba. The book is entitled *The People Of Buena Ventura: Relocation of Slum Dwellers in Postrevolutionary Cuba* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press). It is not part Oscar's Series because its focus was neither on the impact of the Cuban Revolution nor on the Culture of Poverty—see Rigdon, *The Culture Facade*, pp. 100-102.

⁵⁹ See Womack, "An American in Cuba," August 4, 1977:

<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1977/aug/04/an-american-in-cuba/>

⁶⁰ Perhaps Womack missed the Series' promotional statement written by the University of Illinois Press: **"Extended interviews with men, women, and families provide insight into the impact of the Cuban revolution on the island nation's urban slum dwellers, the roles of its women, and home life.**

⁶¹ "Cuba and Oscar Lewis: An Exchange," Ruth M. Lewis, Susan M. Rigdon, and Alvin W. Gouldner, reply by John Womack Jr., *New York Review of Books*, November 10, 1977:

<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1977/nov/10/cuba-and-oscar-lewis-an-exchange/?pagination=false>

impressionistically his ideas about that Culture through a limited number of individual Oral History case studies.

The Womack review was fortuitous because it sparked Ruth and Susan to confront their reviewer in extended analysis.

To remind us (and Womack) what Oscar and Ruth had done in Cuba, Susan quotes Ruth's Introduction to *Four Men* in the setting of 1970:⁶²

“[The] general purpose of our project in Cuba was to study the impact of a revolution-in-progress upon the daily lives of individuals and families representing different socioeconomic levels in both rural and urban settings.... We also hoped to observe the mass organizations and revolutionary institutions as they functioned at the local level and to evaluate, albeit tentatively, the degree of success or failure in achieving some of the goals of the Revolution.”

It has long been my belief (corroborated by Susan Rigdon in her 1988 *The Culture Facade*) that once Oscar's ideas about the Culture (or Subculture, as he sometimes put it) caught on as a “Theory” in the news and in academia at large, he found it a convenient, “catchy” shorthand that in the end required information that could only have come by planning and carrying out a very different kind of Project.

In tracing the origination of Oscar's “theory” back to his 1959 book *Five Families: Mexican Case Studies in the Culture of Poverty*,⁶³ Susan was saddened to see that the “theory” was based mainly on Oscar's 1959 book title that only implied that there was a theory.

In her book, *The Culture Facade*,⁶⁴ she sees Oscar as more of a humanitarian and artist (indeed “passionate ethnographer”) than a social scientist. She emailed me on March 25, 2013: “If someone asked me to describe Oscar's work, ethnographer and economic historian would come to mind well before oral historian. But I am looking at 30 years of field work, not the last ten--the whole body of his field data and objectives as stated in his research proposals. In the early years he did a good deal of work in archives.”

Rigdon argues that it is impossible to analyze Oscar's theory (which only involves Oscar's 1965 inconsistent and overlapping List of 64 Traits of the Culture of Poverty)⁶⁵ because in the end, effectively, “there is—as Gertrude Stein said of Oakland—no there, there.”⁶⁶

Where some critics see all of Lewis' interviews arising from his “theory,” I see his “idea” of the Culture of Poverty arising from the variety of interviews with the Popular Sector that he

⁶² See <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1977/nov/10/cuba-and-oscar-lewis-an-exchange/?pagination=false/>

⁶³ New York City: Basic Books.

⁶⁴ Rigdon, *The Culture Facade*.

⁶⁵ The List was finalized in 1965 but not published until 1969, writes Rigdon, *The Culture Facade*, pp. 113-115.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p, 177.

conducted in Mexico and Puerto Rico. Oscar was always looking for more dimensions to expand his Idea, not to develop constrained scientific theory.

Scientific advancement of theory requires (theoretically, and I add Elitelorically) the accoutrements needed to articulate fully and to permit others to test fully replicable cases, which is beyond the possibility of Oral Historians (in this case Oscar Lewis), who develop the study of unique persons to gain unique insights into historical processes.

(Let me clarify here that my own research is on the Concept--not theory--of Elitelores, but too often my audiences overlook the distinction. The Concept of Elitelores arose from interviews with my Oral History interviews with Mexican political leaders from left to right on the political spectrum. In the meantime, the interviews have their own meaning to understand the varying vantage points of leaders as well as the unique role of each in Mexican history.)

Meanwhile, some Social Scientists continue to believe that they have to criticize Oscar's "Theory of the Culture of Poverty" because, as a "theory", it omits too much.

Thus, too often the sociological stance on Lewis' "Theory of Culture" appears to follow the the *Sociology Index*,⁶⁷ which sets up the following dichotomy:

"The theory [is] that certain groups and individuals tend to persist in a state of poverty because they have distinct beliefs, values, and ways of behaving that are incompatible with economic success.

"The [Oscar Lewis] thesis is controversial and is opposed by situational theory, which locates the genesis of poverty in economic and social structures of society rather than in the value orientations of individuals or groups.

It is similar to '[low class culture theory](#)', where it has been argued by some that the lower class have developed and transmit to their children a different set of cultural values and expectations. They also argue that this culture is a barrier to their success in society.

But the two parts of dichotomy outlined by the Sociology Index are not mutually contradictory.

Another approach was presented to the American Sociology Association Meeting in Atlanta and published in 2008 by Paul Gorski of the Graduate School of Education at Hamline University. Gorski argues in an interesting manner that Lewis' Culture of Poverty has become a generalized myth that has to be dispelled among **educational leaders** who have not gotten that message.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ See http://sociologyindex.com/culture_of_poverty_thesis.htm

⁶⁸ See Gorski, "The Myth of he Culture of Poverty" at <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/apr08/vol65/num07/The-Myth-of-the-Culture-of- Poverty.aspx>

* 9 *

To finalize this Introduction and tie its scope back into Elitelore, let us consider the view of Alan Dundes, Professor of Folkloristics at the University of California, Berkeley, who in 1980 delivered perhaps the most controversial presidential address in the history of the American Folklore Society (AFS).

As he told me, it was perplexing to him how he, as a known Counter-Elite academic provocateur could become the Elite, yet when he delivered his controversial address ("Life is Like a Chicken Coop Ladder"),⁶⁹ immediately be so attacked that he did not return to the AFS meetings until 2004. He wondered out loud if he was a victim of Elitelore--we laughed.

In contrast to the rigid views about how fields are defined as promulgated by Professor Richard M. Dorson (who we met at the outset and encountered throughout this Introduction), Alan was expansive in his views when we discussed Elitelore and Folklore.

Indeed Dundes' view of Folklore was that it is not about peasants or remote cultures--which he saw as a "misguided and narrow concept of the folk as the illiterate in a literate society." For him the field of Folkloristics denotes a specific field of academic study that applies instead what he called in 1969 a "modern" flexible social definition for *folk*: **two or more persons who have any trait in common and express their shared identity through traditions.**⁷⁰

Further, for Dundes "A folk or peasant society is but one example of a 'folk' in the Folkloristic sense. Any group of people sharing a common linking factor, e.g., an *urban* group such as a labor union, can and does have folklore. 'Folk' is a flexible concept which can refer to a nation as in American folklore or to a single family. The critical issue in defining 'folk' is: what groups in fact have traditions?"

Dundes and I agreed that, in the study of Lores from our respective view points, we remain open to new dimensions, as was Oscar Lewis. In any case, what do academic disciplines have in common but different approaches to understanding the same issues from different perspectives.

We are all now involved in interdisciplinary studies. In the field of History, for example, we find economic history often taught by a professor with joint appointment in the Departments of History and Economics. The same is true for religious history, psychohistory, military history, medical history, art history, language history, music history, legal history, etc. All fields study

⁶⁹ See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Folkloristics>

⁷⁰ Dundes, quoted in <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Folkloristics>

their own history and do so either by encouraging one of their faculty to teach it or join forces with a Department of History to carry on with research by knowing their own specific past. One does not have to be located in a Department of History to conduct research by using oral history.

Oscar Lewis and I knew that he was an **Oral Historian** of many Cultures, but he recognized in 1967 that he had enough professional problems dealing with the “theory” of Anthropology that the time was not ripe to begin to think about how to redefine Ethnography to include the methodology of Oral History that I was advocating: Bio/autobiography. He had immediately accepted my argument in 1967 that his Oral History was like mine--Oral History focused on life histories is a combination of two approaches captured in tape recordings that are at once:

- (1) biographical (based on open-ended-interview questions) and
- (2) autobiographical (based on “stream of consciousness” responses).

I suggested to Oscar that he adopt my concept of Bio/Autobiography developed through tape-recorded Oral History interviews, at least implicitly, as a way to escape debate about the Culture of Poverty, which Oscar and Ruth were ready to leave behind when they moved to Cuba in March 1969.

Rafael Rodríguez Castañeda considered Oscar to be an Oral Historian. It was Rafael who organized and prepared the Spanish-language edition of Oscar’s *Pedro Martínez: A Mexican Peasant and His Family* (1966), with the original transcriptions from Oscar’s tape-recorded Oral History interviews in Spanish, modeled on the structure of the English-language edition (1964). As uncredited General Editor of the Spanish-language edition (1966), then, Rafael faced a kind of puzzle. He needed to look for the pieces scattered among hundreds of pages in the original language of the transcripts of the Bio/Autobiographical interviews and stitch them together.

In this small world, Rafael contacted me in August of 1994 to seek permission for the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana (UAM) in Mexico City to publish a new edition of the volume of Oral History that Edna Monzón Wilkie and I had published under the auspices of Jesús Silva Herzog in 1969 as *México Visto en el Siglo XX: Entrevistas de Historia Oral* with seven leaders.⁷¹ Rafael’s idea was that this book would play a major role in the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of UAM’s establishment in 1974.

(For that volume, and given the tension in Mexico after the government massacre of protesters against the one-party dictatorship in 1968 at the Plaza of Tlatelolco, our publisher Jesús Silva Herzog had asked that we wait to comment on the interviews because we could expect a scandal. Let the interviews by learned Mexican leaders speak for themselves, he said. Indeed, like Oscar, we were criticized as CIA agents working day and night to disrupt the psychological peace of Mexico.” Jesús found himself testifying (again, as he had for Oscar’s *The Children of Sánchez*) that he could reassure our Mexican critics that we were not CIA agents, that the tape

⁷¹ (Mexico, D.F.: Distributed by Cuadernos Americanos for the Instituto Mexicano de Investigaciones Económicas, 1969).

recordings were real, and that *México Visto en el Siglo XX* constituted a major contribution to the history of Mexico.)

I responded by telling Rafael about ten more Oral Histories that Edna and I were ready to prepare for publication, and if he agreed to become our General Editor, we could immediately proceed to begin to prepare *Frente a la Revolución Mexicana: 17 Entrevistas de Historia Oral* (4 volumes, 1995-2004),⁷² which incorporated the original seven amid the ten unpublished interviews that Edna and I had recorded in the early and mid-‘1960s. Further, Rafael became General Editor all of my subsequent publications in Mexico.

*** 10 ***

In reflecting back on how ideas develop such as Oscar Lewis’s Theory of the Culture of Poverty and my Concept of Elitelore, it is gratifying to realize how far we have come.

The process of forging new knowledge involves constant rethinking and redefining what we are doing. In this process, we can expect inconsistency because we are constantly taking into account new research approaches and findings. If we were to be consistent in our thinking we could not learn from our experiments. Chart 1 (pp. 5-6, above) shows how my Concept of Elitelore, Popularlore, and Folklore has changed over time (viewed in 1973, 1975, 1978, 1996, and 2012), I can only wonder when the next view will come and how it will change Chart 1.

In the 1973 review of my book entitled Elitelore (based on my 1967 presentation at the Conference on Folklore and Social Science), Richard N. Adams wrote:

“I suspect that [the Concept of Elitelore] will take on its own meaning, probably somewhat broader than that assigned it by its inventor.” (p. 4, above.)

In the meantime, let me say how much I have enjoyed reading once again about the many types of Elitelore as seen from the vantage points of the contributors to this book.

No one person could have “scientifically” imagined the breadth and depth of the Lore found in this volume, and I thank the scholars here for what I have learned from their excellent research findings presented in this volume. We are only beginning to assess the boundaries and types of Elitelore.

⁷²Thanks to the publisher, the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana in Mexico City, this Series has been posted online and is available for downloading free of charge at http://www.elitelore.org/Oral_History_Book_Series.html.