Topic for discussion: How lived experience, phenomenological ways of being, can differ across cultures

- Is it true to say that those who are living in a particular social context have similarities in how lived experience is understood and represented?
- Bourdieu: social scientist who studied different ways of understanding the other
  - Pg. 127 – can apply Bourdieu’s model
  - Emphasized rational systematization and logical criticism
- What does one need to do to experience cross-culturally?
- Concept of ‘trope’ introduced. How information is elicited (ie the type of question asked, phrasing) can influence what responses are obtained
  - For example, asking what senses are given privilege could be a primarily Western convention that could elicit incorrect information in a social context where the term ‘sense’ has a different social construction
- Bourdieu’s notion of habitus: the idea can be used to analyze how people ‘sense’ their world
  - Habitus is not culture. A person is born into a certain place in society through whose conventions of reality he learns a particular way to see, how to perceive, what aspects of environment to attend to. The habitus of a person shapes identities, preferences, ways to move through space (example: the socialization of nuns in The Nun’s Story)
- Does culture exist as an ontological reality? Is there an innate reality to lived experience, or is everything an interpretation?
- Do people from different cultures/ habitus experience things differently, or is it just conventions of language that are different? In other words, are the perceptions of reality truly different, or is there actually a universal experience that is obscured by different language?
- People’s perceptions are shaped by the social order they live in, but also shape, or reproduce, that social order
- What does it mean to be Anlo? If an Anlo person moved away for 20 years, would he/she still remain Anlo? What is it that retains identity? Is it geographic proximity to community, for example?
- There is no existence without a pre-existing structure, which is imprinted upon a person through the process of socialization
  - Likes and dislikes, usually considered markers of individuality, can be a patterned response to social conditions, not truly an ‘innate’ capacity
- What role does history play? Does culture an embodiment of history? How does identity endure?
- Ex. Puerto Rican identity: Puerto Ricans in New York not considered “from the Island” although they may consider themselves Puerto Rican
In that sense, is Anlo identity based on residence in Anlo land? Or is there a deeper identity that has nothing to do with geographic location, but identity based on shared concepts, beliefs, cultural identity
  o For example, a Haitian boy who had been born and raised in the United States (never went to Haiti) was possessed. In this sense, what does it mean to be Haitian?
• Three categories of moral offenses in Anlo society: interpretations and perceptions about them reveal how individual is not considered to be an autonomous being outside of community and family. Person is inextricably linked to family.
  o Worst moral offenses punished by live burial
  o Second worst moral offenses (witchcraft, dirty money) are punished by having the family send a girl to serve at a shrine for the rest of her life.
  o How is witchcraft constructed in this context? How does divination link to notions of guilt and punishment?
• Geurts claims that it is impossible to separate cognitive, sensory, and fields of perceiving – they are all interconnected
  o Sensorium, or body of sensory knowledge and ways to perceive it, are cultivated in children through various practices that the children internalize and in turn reproduce
• Birthing practices? What is the purpose of birthing rituals?
  o Birth dirt: vernix caseosa. What is the cultural significance, and meaning behind this phenomenon? What is it caused by?
  o Birthing rituals highlight the emphasis placed on cleanliness as a moral activity. Maintaining good hygiene is seen as a way to establish good moral character, much like European explorers used hygiene practices to distinguish themselves as superior to African natives (Fabian)
  o Placenta is seen as a form of stool (Janzen)
• Notions of stigma:
  o There is the idea that the baby is not whole at birth, need to use ritual to completely include the baby in society
• What is the role of history in forming identity, social structures, ways of being? What is the role of using archetypal images to shape identity?
  o Migration story is a mythic story
• Conclusion: Physical motions are at the center of the way Anlo view themselves. Kinaesthetic considerations form a major part of sensorium that strongly influences their sense of identity, notion of moral community. Culture is lived and reproduced through socialization processes of children, and identity is actively created.