

Charles Wagley: mentor and colleague Charles Wagley: mentor e colega

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Abstract: Professor Charles Wagley was my mentor at Columbia University, my colleague at the University of Florida and a dear friend. His influence on me can be summarized in one word: Brazil. From the time I took his course, "Peoples of Brazil", as a first semester graduate student at Columbia I was captivated and most of my subsequent field research and publications have had Brazilian themes. Under Dr. Wagley's direction I did field research for my dissertation in the coffee region of northern Paraná and focused on the shift from coffee cultivation to cattle ranching and the social and economic consequences of that change. My subsequent research in the area involved the impact of frost on this shift in economic base as well as one of its results: the flight of poor Brazilians to Paraguay. Then starting in the late 1980s my research shifted and I began focusing on Brazilian immigrants in New York City. This was part of a growing movement of Brazilians arriving in New York, elsewhere in the United States and in Europe and Japan. Since then most of my subsequent research and publications have been on this new wave of international migrants.

Keywords: Brazilian frontier. Brazilian emigration. Brasil.

Resumo: Professor Charles Wagley foi meu mentor na Universidade de Columbia, meu colega na Universidade da Flórida e um querido amigo. A influência dele sobre mim pode ser resumida em uma palavra: Brasil. Desde que frequentei o seu curso "Povos do Brasil" na Universidade de Columbia, como estudante de graduação de primeiro semestre, fui cativada e a maior parte da minha subsequente pesquisa de campo e de minhas publicações teve temas brasileiros. Sob a orientação do Dr. Wagley, fiz uma pesquisa para a minha dissertação na região cafeeira do norte do Paraná, concentrando-me na transição do cultivo de café para a criação de gado, e nas consequências sociais e econômicas dessa mudança. Minha pesquisa seguinte nessa área envolveu o impacto da geada nessa transição em uma base econômica, assim como um de seus resultados: a migração de brasileiros pobres para o Paraguai. Mais tarde, no final dos anos 1980, comecei a estudar os imigrantes brasileiros na cidade de Nova Iorque. Na época, havia um movimento crescente de brasileiros chegando a Nova Iorque, em outros lugares dos Estados Unidos e também na Europa e no Japão. Desde então, a maioria de minhas pesquisas e publicações tem sido dedicada a essa nova onda de migrantes internacionais.

Palavras-chave: Fronteiras brasileiras. Emigração brasileira. Brasil.

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I believe that I am in the unique position in this volume having been Charles Wagley's doctoral student at Columbia University where he taught for a quarter of a century and later, his colleague at the University of Florida where I was on the faculty in the Department of Anthropology and where Dr. Wagley moved in 1971 to serve as Graduate Research Professor of Anthropology and Latin American Studies until his retirement in 1990. Before describing Dr. Wagley's academic influence on me and on my own research career, I want to share with readers of this volume how I first came to know him at Columbia University and then why and how he eventually became my colleague at the University of Florida.

In my first semester in graduate school I took Dr. Wagley's course, "Peoples of Brazil". The following summer gave me the opportunity to do field work in either Brazil or Colombia. But after taking Dr. Wagley's course and seeing the film "Black Orpheus" there was no question what my choice would be: Brazil. That summer I made my first trip to Brazil – to the Recôncavo region outside of Salvador, Bahia. I did research using my then extremely rudimentary Portuguese analyzing the social structure and well defined employment hierarchy of a sugar mill (*usina*). That research eventually resulted in a published article (Margolis, 1975).

After the summer I returned to Columbia and continued my graduate study. Dr. Wagley agreed to serve as co-chair of my dissertation committee along with Dr. Marvin Harris. When I began considering a dissertation topic and thought I might return to the Recôncavo, Dr. Wagley advised me: "There are a number of studies of sugar in Brazil, so why not study coffee?". And so I went on to do field work in the coffee region of northern Paraná accompanied during my first trip there by Cecilia Roxo Wagley, Dr. Wagley's Brazilian spouse. As a young single woman, Dr. Wagley did not want me traveling alone to the interior of Brazil!

My dissertation research focused on the change from coffee cultivation to cattle ranching and the social and economic consequences of that shift. This resulted in my first book, "The moving frontier: social and economic change

in a Southern Brazilian community" (Margolis, 1973). My subsequent research in the area involved the impact of frost on coffee cultivation as well as the flight of poor Brazilians to Paraguay due to the unemployment and landlessness caused by land consolidation under the new cattle regime (Margolis, 1979, 1980; Margolis *et al.*, 1989). This proved to be a good example of the Brazilian saying, "Where cattle enter, men exit" ("Onde o boi entra, homens sai").

So on to the University of Florida: in the late 1960s the Dean of the Graduate School at the university sought a specialist on Brazil and offered Dr. Wagley a position as Graduate Research Professor of Anthropology & Latin American Studies. Dr. Wagley – who had spent his entire career at Columbia – wanted to accept the position on a provisional basis. He told the Dean who offered him the job that he would take the position for a year to see how he and his wife liked living in Gainesville, Florida. But the Dean essentially told him "to take it or leave it" and so he decided to leave it – at least for the time being.

While Dr. Wagley was not hired at that time, the University of Florida still sought an anthropologist with an interest in Brazil. And so I was invited there for a job interview. Although I had no intention of leaving New York City, Dr. Wagley persuaded me to accept the position, if offered, saying that the Center for Latin American Studies at the University of Florida was the oldest and one of the most respected centers specializing in Latin American area studies in the United States. And, in fact, the Center celebrated its 80th anniversary in 2010. I was subsequently hired that fall as an Interim Assistant Professor of Anthropology – Interim because I had not yet defended my dissertation at Columbia which I did defend the following year.

To back track slightly: recall that the late 1960s and early 1970s was a time of turmoil on many campuses in the United States. At Columbia University there were sit-ins and teach-ins against the Vietnam War and the police were

called in to arrest student protesters who had taken over the university president's office. Many Columbia University faculty refused to hold classes on campus in protest of the police presence there. In sum, it was a very stressful time for most of those associated with Columbia. Then to make matters even more unsettling Dr. Wagley was robbed in the elevator of his apartment building near Columbia.

Soon thereafter Dr. Wagley's daughter, Betty Wagley Kottak, told me in a phone conversation that her father seemed to regret his decision not to have accepted the job at the University of Florida. Hearing this, I immediately got in touch with a close friend and colleague who was an assistant dean in the university's graduate school and shared this news with him. As a result, Dr. Wagley was again offered the position of Graduate Research Professor and this time he accepted the university's offer. And that is how Charles Wagley came to the University of Florida where he taught and guided graduate students for nearly 20 years. Parenthetically, it took me almost two years after the Wagleys arrived in Gainesville before I could bring myself to call him 'Chuck' rather than 'Dr. Wagley'.

In 1980 Marvin Harris – arguably Dr. Wagley's most influential student – also left Columbia after nearly three decades and accepted a position as Graduate Research Professor in Anthropology and Latin American Studies at the University of Florida. I was delighted to now have two members of my doctoral committee at Columbia as my colleagues at Florida.

Other contributors to this volume will discuss Dr. Wagley's scholarly and administrative contributions at the University of Florida, most notably his founding in 1980, along with Dr. Marianne Schmink, of what was originally called the Amazon Research and Training Program and today is the Center for Latin American Studies' widely lauded Tropical Conservation and Development Program. And, of course, he trained many graduate students; by my count, Dr. Wagley chaired twenty PhD committees and served on many more graduate committees during his time at the University of Florida.

As I implied at the start of this piece, Professor Wagley's personal academic influence on me can best be summarized in a single word: Brazil. From the time I took his course on Brazil as a first year graduate student I was 'hooked' and most of my subsequent field research and publications have had Brazilian themes. Beginning in the late 1980s my research focus shifted away from topics concerning agricultural change in northern Paraná, Brazil. Yet it still involved Brazil only this time my field work was in New York City and it concerned Brazilian immigrants who were living there.

To provide you with some context for this shift in my research interest: I am a native Manhattanite and an incurable New Yorker, despite having lived in Florida and having taught at the University of Florida for over three decades. During periodic visits to the city in the late 1980s – for what I call my 'New York fix' – I began noticing that more and more people there were speaking Portuguese. I heard it not only in the midtown areas usually frequented by tourists, but also on city subways – a form of transportation that, at the time, non-English speaking tourists tended to avoid.

While the soft nasal sounds of Brazilian Portuguese were often heard on Little Brazil Street, West 46th Street in Manhattan that has long been lined with Brazilian restaurants and other businesses catering to Brazilians, it slowly dawned on me that the location and extent of the Brazilian presence in the city was of a different order than what it had been earlier. A chance conversation became the final catalyst that inspired my research on Brazilian immigrants in New York City and then, more broadly, on Brazilian emigration in general. During one trip to New York around this time I had lunch with a cousin who lives in Boston. Knowing of my interest in Brazil, she mentioned that she was very pleased with the Brazilian woman she had hired as a housekeeper. "A Brazilian?" I asked, "Was she certain that she is Brazilian?" Despite my long familiarity with Brazil and Brazilians, I had never heard of Brazilians

being employed as domestic servants in the United States. “Yes”, she replied, “a lot of my friends employ Brazilian women as housecleaners and nannies”.

It soon became apparent to me that despite the growing presence of Brazilians in New York, Boston, Miami and other cities in the United States, this newest wave of immigrants was being overlooked by researchers. Eager to fill this lacuna I began field work on Brazilian immigrants in New York City and in 1994 my first book, “Little Brazil: an ethnography of Brazilians immigrants in New York City”, was published on this new ingredient in the city’s intricate ethnic *mélange*. That same year the book was translated into Portuguese and published in Brazil. And my New York-based research has been ongoing. Over more than two decades, in the words of my husband, I have been “trolling for Brazilians” in the city’s restaurants, shops, and public spaces. In short, I have been researching and writing about this new immigration stream ever since.

My interest in Brazilian immigration, however, has never been limited to the Brazilian community in New York City. I have always tried to generalize about the Brazilian immigrant presence in the United States by visiting Brazilian communities in Boston and Framingham, Massachusetts, Danbury, Connecticut and Newark, New Jersey and by talking with immigrants and community leaders there. On trips to visit friends in South Carolina I was able to interview a few members of the small Brazilian enclave in Goose Creek and while on vacation in Portsmouth, New Hampshire I talked to a number of Brazilians employed at the resort where we were staying. From Philadelphia, Washington, Chicago and Atlanta to Miami and San Francisco – no matter where I traveled in the United States – I always sought out Brazilian restaurants, stores selling Brazilian products and locally published Brazilian newspapers and I spoke with Brazilian immigrants I met along the way.

Emigration was also the focus of my field research in Brazil on two occasions. In the early 1990s I visited Governador Valadares, in Minas Gerais, Brazil’s famous ‘immigrant sending community’ and spent time there

interviewing residents about friends and relatives living in the United States. I also talked with ‘well informed informants’, the town’s mayor and other city officials as well as travel agents and the owners of remittance agencies. Then in 1997 I spent a semester in Rio de Janeiro on a Fulbright Fellowship. There I interviewed a few dozen returned immigrants, some of whom I had known previously when they lived in New York City. My focus in this research was the impact of the immigrant experience on these individuals and their readjustment to life in Brazil (Margolis, 2001a).

Some of my writing on Brazilians in the United States uses the key concept of “transnationalism”, a process through which international migrants maintain their ties to the home country – despite its geographical distance – while living in the country of settlement. The term is used to indicate the ease with which people, objects, and ideas flow back and forth across international borders (Glick Schiller *et al.*, 1992). While immigration was once viewed as either a permanent break with the migrant’s homeland or a temporary stay in the host country for short-term economic gain, scholars now recognize that migrants often have their heads (and hearts) in two societies at the same time. It is this phenomenon that I use in my analysis of the behavior and ideology of Brazilian immigrants in the United States who see themselves ‘here’ and yet ‘not here’. That is, while they put down roots in the United States they never stop thinking of themselves as Brazilian or longing for the day they can return home. As such, many immigrants keep up with the politics, soccer scores, popular music and latest telenovelas of their homeland via the internet, e-mail, Skype and phone conversations with relatives and friends in Brazil as well as the programs on TV Globo which has been available in the United States since the late 1990s (Margolis, 1995, 2001b).

Then, too, I have used the concept of transnationalism to analyze the impact of the events of September 11, 2001 on Brazilian immigrants in the United States. Although international migration has never meant an unimpeded flow of immigrants crossing international borders at will, the attacks in New York and Washington D.C. led many

industrialized nations, including the United States, to increasingly restrict immigration and place ever greater obstacles in the way of the free movement of transnational migrants. I draw on Brazilian immigrants in the United States as a case study analyzing the ways in which they and presumably, other immigrant groups as well, have been impacted by post-9/11 constraints. My specific focus was on the attacks' consequences for bodily transnationalism, the greater difficulty of crossing international boundaries as a result of the tightening of visa requirements and the militarization of borders (Margolis, 2008).

Another major subject in my writing on Brazilian emigration is the conundrum of ethnic identity (Margolis, 2007, 2009b). In their effort to retain a distinct national identity Brazilians abroad routinely reject being subsumed under other immigrant groups, most especially Spanish-speaking groups. In many cases this makes Brazilians invisible to census takers and immigrant organizations and, thus, can negatively impact their political influence and political participation.

In due time I was no longer alone in my interest in Brazilian emigration to the United States. As this fresh wave of immigrants grew, more and more researchers – academics as well as journalists – began documenting various aspects of this new migration stream. Books have now been written on Brazilian immigrant communities in Boston, Los Angeles and New Orleans and edited volumes report on Brazilian communities elsewhere in the United States (Sales, 2003; Martes, 2010; Beserra, 2003; Gibson, 2012; Reis and Sales, 1999; Martes and Fleischer, 2003). With the explosion of research and researchers interested in Brazilian emigration, a seminal conference on the topic, the first National Congress on

Brazilian Immigration to the United States, was held in 2005 at the David Rockefeller Center of Latin American Studies at Harvard University (Jouët-Pastré and Braga, 2008). Over fifty scholars, community organizers and immigrant activists gave presentations at the conference where I was the keynote speaker.

I have also guided several graduate students who have had varying research interests in Brazilian immigration to the United States. One of my doctoral students at the University of Florida, Dr. Rosana Resende, compared two Brazilian communities in south Florida and analyzed their interaction in terms of ethnicity, self-image, community building, social class and gender roles. Another former doctoral student, Dr. Viviane Assunção, a Brazilian doing research in the United States on a 'sandwich scholarship' (*bolsa sanduíche*), was interested in the 'food ways' of Brazilian immigrants in Boston where she researched, among other issues, the manner in which the daily eating of 'Brazilian food' by immigrants helped them (re)create the ambience of the familiar, of the home they had left behind. A third former student, Dr. Natalia Coimbra de Sá, also a Brazilian on a *bolsa sanduíche*, analyzed the annual Brazilian Independence Day Street Fair in New York City in terms of the official and unofficial representations of Brazilian culture and discussed related issues of identity, community and globalization. Finally, Maria Zenaide Alves, yet another Brazilian who I directed while on a *bolsa sanduíche* in New York, focused her research on the impact of emigration on young people in a small immigrant-sending community in Minas Gerais (Resende, 2009; Assunção, 2011; Sá, 2011)¹.

Soon the United States was not the only area of interest to researchers of Brazilian immigration. Journalistic accounts, academic articles, theses and dissertations also now exist on Brazilian communities in Paraguay, Portugal, Spain, Italy, England, Ireland and Australia. These interests were highlighted in a 1997 gathering in Lisbon in which

¹ See also Alves, Maria Zenaide. "Youth and transnationalism in a rural Brazilian county". Paper presented at the Brazil Seminar, December 13, Columbia University, 2012.

I took part, the Conference on the Brazilian Diaspora: immigration in times of globalization. As yet, however, there are few of the sort of lengthy, detailed studies published on Brazilians in these regions that exist for Brazilian *émigrés* in the United States.

One country that is an exception to this statement is Japan. A great deal of scholarly research has been done on Brazilian immigrants in Japan, the so-called *dekasseguis* – Brazilians of Japanese descent who began emigrating to the land of their ancestors in the early 1990s. Here, too, there are ethnographies detailing the Brazilian experience in Japan (Linger, 2001; Roth, 2002; Tsuda, 2003). And a gathering which I attended that touched on the topic, the Conference on Latin American Emigration in North America, Europe and Japan, was held at the National Museum of Ethnology in Osaka, Japan in 2001 (Yamada, 2003).

Since my 'discovery' of Brazilian immigrants in New York City in the late 1980s most of my subsequent research and publications have been on this new wave of international migrants. I have published over thirty articles and book chapters on the topic as well as three books, the aforementioned "Little Brazil" (Margolis, 1994a, 1994b) and "An invisible minority: Brazilians in New York City" (Margolis, 2009a [1999]). A third volume which was published in both English and Portuguese focuses on Brazilian emigration worldwide and is the most comprehensive treatment of the subject to date. The book, "Goodbye, Brazil: emigrés from the land of soccer and samba" (Margolis, 2013a, 2013b), has chapters on Brazilians in North America, Europe, and Asia as well as on Brazilian *émigrés* living in several countries that border Brazil, most notably Paraguay. There is also a chapter on Governador Valadares as an example of a much studied 'sending community' as well as discussions of who these immigrants are, why they emigrate, how they travel abroad and the communities

they form once there. Both religious and secular activity and institutions are analyzed along with Brazilian identity outside Brazil. A final chapter looks to the future: Will Brazilians remain abroad despite the turnaround in the Brazilian economy? Or are they here today, and will they be gone tomorrow?

Although Dr. Wagley passed away in 1991 before my first book on Brazilian immigration was published, that book, "Little Brazil", is dedicated to him. The dedication reads: "In Memory of Charles Wagley, student of Brazilian culture, mentor extraordinaire, colleague and dear friend".

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