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RESPONSIBILITY OF THE UNIVERSITY IN A MULTI-ETHNIC SOCIETY: A PRAGMATIC PERSPECTIVE TOWARD A GRADUATE PROGRAM IN AMERICAN INDIAN STUDIES

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Given the program goal of educating students who would have a positive impact on Indian communities, our planning for the Master's program in American Indian Studies initially included an applied program component. This component was viewed as a terminal M.A., to include a one-year internship with a community organization in lieu of the Master's thesis. As the planning for the applied program progressed, it appeared to become a contrived notion, external to our planning goals of providing a curriculum largely focused upon the acquisition of research skills.

Some of the questions arising during this searching period were: Why should an applied program be a separate program component? Would this not be an admission of the social science tendency to consider applied programs as "second-rate"? Could one contribution of the graduate level program in American Indian Studies be the development of unexploitative, as well as academically sound, field work methodologies? Such an endeavor would require intensive involvement with Indian communities to avoid the perils of "summertime research."¹

For over eight decades the quantity of research investigations concerning American Indian cultures has increased prolifically. Awareness, often painful, on the part of Indian communities that this research usually does not come back to the community either in terms of knowledge contributed or contributions toward social development has increased also. With the incidence of alcohol-related illness, suicide, and other poverty-related socioeconomic conditions arising annually, the urgency for community-based research to develop solutions is now felt as never before.

The climate for change exists now as new trends in method are becoming somewhat acceptable in academic circles. One shift impor-

tant to the possibility of reciprocal research relationships is the increased acceptance of applied research rather than the former emphasis on pure research.

One reason for increased communication between researchers and communities lies in the acceptance of new field-work methods. During the first half of this century, the common field-work practices in many of the social science disciplines involved identifying an informant to work with in studying the particular culture. A great deal of effort was spent in keeping the informant's identity a secret from his tribe, to protect his safety and position in the community. Researchers often believed that keeping the collected data filed away or hidden away for a period of up to fifty years would protect the informant during his lifetime. How little of this data ever reached Indian communities, let alone other researchers!

During the last twenty years, and more so during the past decade, a trend in establishing community advisory committees is emerging. That is, once a research project is funded the researcher locates a group of representative members of the community to advise on the progress of the project. Although this approach is an improvement toward gaining community input, it usually falls short of guaranteeing input at the critical stage of problem definition. For applied research to come back to the community in a useful form the researcher must collaborate with community members on the formulation of a defined problem and methodology. The communications gap between researcher and community is being slowly bridged by the educating of Indian researchers. Now is the time for a positive redirection in research.

A characteristic of many community-related research projects, labeled *applied*, is that the projects remain external to the cultural systems of these communities. Often funded by external sources, the researcher is most obviously excluded from the economic system. Communities will support and be supportive of relevant research. Although communities are not obliged to support research, relevant research certainly is one responsibility of a university in a multi-ethnic society. The extent to which a community will support research or enter into cooperative research and development or research and demonstration contracts with a university can serve as an indicator of the degree to which the research is considered to be relevant. In reexamining hypotheses concerning Indian communities, the leaders in American

Indian Studies might continue to query the relevance of the research to the dominant society that supported the research.

Several methodological developments are expected to come from the graduate program in American Indian Studies. For example, participant observation may not be as intensive a field-work method as is needed, or may need to be regarded from a different perspective. In light of the poverty levels, health care standards, and educational levels of Indian communities, the time must be now for intensive research and community involvement. Intensive field methods such as methods for testing hypotheses from within the system could be developed. This of course is a difficult task, one that is often avoided in academic disciplines on the basis of needing to maintain objectivity. This attitude toward the study of minority peoples is often a barrier to the minority scholar in traditional academic disciplines. An alternative is to view the maintenance of objectivity as a methodological topic for immediate development. Certainly a critical examination of several research methodologies will eventually lead to the development of those appropriate for American Indian Studies.

Another research trend that is supportive of research relevant to community development is that of interdisciplinary approaches in American Indian research. Disciplinary approaches are limiting in their understanding of Indian culture owing to the holistic nature of these cultures. Through the combination of research strategies, approaches which explain yet retain the interrelatedness of cultural subsystems may be developed.

This is yet a hope for the future. We have a vision then of developing new research approaches through the research unit and of teaching these methods to a new generation of researchers through the M.A. program in American Indian Studies.

After searching for an answer to the question "Should the training of professional researchers to conduct research relevant to Indian community needs be considered a separate program facet?" we responded negatively; this graduate program is preparing for a future of relevant research.

The applied aspects of the proposed program lie in the area of education as well as in social research. The need for instructors at the secondary and postsecondary level must immediately be filled if there is to be any change in the nearly 50 percent dropout rate for Indian

students who start high school² and if this change is to be in the not too distant future. This percentage compared with a figure of 26 percent for the dropout rate of white students is a constant reminder that the educational system has failed to understand the necessary social contexts for learning. It is alarming to note the rate at which literature that is counterproductive to documenting educational needs is still being generated. For example, Bruce Chadwick's "The Inedible Feast"³ concludes that available facilities, content of curricula, and the quality of teachers are not important as precursors of Indian educational failure; but that rather the important differences are due to three factors: (1) language problems, (2) cultural deprivation, and (3) the negative self-conceptions of Indian students.

Chadwick apparently did not take time to examine such variables as the institutions where the teachers obtained an education, attitudes of teachers not revealed on a survey form, nor could he have actually seen the documented teacher's aides actually working in the school kitchen. The system that looks good on paper rarely reflects the needs for Indian education.

Another notable feature of this recent study is the concluding recommendations based on changes in the Indian student rather than on the educational system. The change of system is likely to come from Indian instructors and a few understanding non-Indian instructors at the secondary and postsecondary levels. An increase in Indian instructors would also provide the role models for improved self-concept. It is expected that some of the students enrolled in the approximately forty undergraduate programs in American Indian Studies will pursue graduate studies in this area also, and then meet the challenge of changing educational systems. Through the practical applications of research and through operating within the total community network, this change can occur.

These are examples of how the graduate program, the research unit, the Indian community, and the graduate students will interrelate to produce the learning environment.

The actual involvement of the graduate students in Indian communities will be integrated with coursework to the greatest extent possible. To date the American Indian Studies Center, an organized research unit at UCLA, has succeeded in developing a reciprocal relationship with several community organizations in Los Angeles. The potential for continuing development of this trend is excellent due to the fact

that the largest urban Indian population in the United States (approximately 50 to 60 thousand) resides in Los Angeles. As the graduate enrollment increases and additional faculty are recruited this relationship to community organizations can be extended to national organizations and to community organizations outside of the Los Angeles area.

One of the ways in which we are meeting the immediate research needs within the community is through assisting the community organization to collect data by utilizing improved record-keeping and evaluation systems. Since most funding agencies for social programs require some form of data collecting, there exists the possibility of developing intake forms, status update forms, and evaluation instruments which are appropriate to Indian programs and are part of a larger research design. By utilizing campus computing facilities the data can be analyzed and returned to the community organization for immediate use. With the participation of several similar programs (e.g., alcoholism programs) long-range research findings can be drawn from this data, if interpreted in relation to additional research. The research results would then be distributed to the participating organizations. A commitment to first access by the participating organization would increase the meeting of responsibility to community organizations.

One example of such a cooperative research project is now underway as a Research and Demonstration project funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse. United American Indian Involvement, a Los Angeles community organization, is operating the Mother Earth Drug Rehabilitation Center. This model treatment center for addicted clients incorporates Indian traditional therapies toward the redirection of a balanced lifestyle. The American Indian Studies Center, through the research component for the program, is conducting a counseling styles study, formulating a culturally appropriate evaluation methodology, and designing a data collection system for use in future Indian drug programs.

Not every cooperative effort with a community organization develops into an official research project of the research unit; however, through this approach to research development the university is contributing to community development. Also, the increasing offers from community organizations to assist the research unit with financial support for researchers and other costs, such as computer time, enhances

the possibility of further developing this relationship with the community. As the graduate program develops, these recovered funds will be applied toward student job support. In turn, the student will receive practical experience, research topics toward the thesis requirement, and opened doors toward internships or employment.

To avoid community dependency upon the University, the research unit is planning a series of short seminars for community members on such topics as (1) the importance of research in documenting community needs, (2) interpreting research results, (3) utilizing research results in program planning, and (4) research as a component of the community program. Students would participate in the planning and teaching of such seminars, thus gaining preparation for community-oriented instruction during employment.

Planning for the graduate program has also included a consideration of the availability of positions in community organizations. With the initial program foci of anthropology, history, and fine arts, the following types of positions should be available to graduates:

1. resource developers or planners in social service organizations
2. archivists working with federal records and other historical documents
3. researchers of Indian historical documents, perhaps working with programs interested in land rights or programs in Indian law
4. developers of instructional materials and teachers with Title IV Indian education programs
5. data coordinators and planners with CETA Indian Manpower programs
6. community relations analysts
7. staff with record producers, film producers, and newspapers
8. researchers with federal, local, and state agencies, producing accurate materials on American Indians

There are, however, some weaknesses of the proposed graduate program toward preparing students for employment with community organizations. Since community organizations can rarely support a person to conduct research, the research must often be conducted through other program responsibilities. Some of the skills necessary for community employment are (1) administration or management, (2) community planning, (3) resource development, (4) data processing, and (5) program design,

such as that required in funding proposal preparation. One means of meeting these needs of students interested in working with community organizations will be to offer a series of short noncredit seminars on these topics. Second-year students with applied research interests will be particularly encouraged to attend these informal seminars. Thus preparation for direct community involvement will be accessible.

In closing, I would like to mention that although the proposed community-linked goals of the program are enormous in scope and per-

haps idealistic, this is a necessary course if Indian self-determination is to become a reality.

NOTES

1. Vine Deloria, Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins* (New York: Avon Books, 1969), pp. 83-104.
2. James Coleman et al., *Equality of Education Opportunity* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1966), p. 450.
3. Bruce A. Chadwick, "The Inedible Feast," in Howard M. Bahr, Bruce A. Chadwick, and Robert C. Day, eds., *Native Americans Today: Sociological Perspectives* (New York: Harper and Rowe, 1972), pp. 131-45.