The position of the anthropologist working in North America with Native Americans today differs from that of most anthropologists working with Native Americans a few decades ago, regardless of the topic of study. This affects the kind of anthropological research undertaken, the way in which the work is done, and the results. These consequences, in turn, raise new problems but also have new effects which may benefit anthropology, as well as the people among whom anthropologists are working. There appear to be reasons both external and internal to anthropology which have contributed to the anthropologist's changing position among Native Americans. External factors include legislation and an increase in the political power of Native Americans. A major internal factor is the anthropologists' new awareness of their identification with a superordinate power imposed on native people from the outside. The result has been a change of direction and today the focus of anthropological activity among Native Americans is directly related to explicit Native American concerns. The anthropologists' employer has also changed and many now work directly for Native American groups or public agencies responsible to Native Americans. Other changes are: a shift in time perspective from reconstruction of the mythical ethnographic present to studies of the present-day situation; and greater participation of Native Americans in anthropological work. (ERB)
Changing Roles for the Anthropologist:
Current Work among Native Americans in North America

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Abstract

The position of the anthropologist working among Native North Americans has changed in recent decades. Anthropologists must frequently act as intermediaries, mediators, or advocates. They more often study the present-day situation, with attention to the history through which continuities and changes can be traced. One methodological consequence is greater participation in anthropological work by Native Americans. The major theoretical impact is increased attention to deficiencies in anthropological constructs for addressing issues of continuity and change within cultural traditions. [Native American studies, applied anthropology, analysis of social change and continuity, ethical and professional responsibilities]
The position of the anthropologist working in North America with Native Americans today differs from that of most anthropologists working with Native Americans a few decades ago, regardless of the topic of study, but especially so where religious issues are a concern. This affects the kind of anthropological research undertaken, the way in which the work is done, and the results. These consequences, in turn, raise new problems but also have new effects which may benefit anthropology, as well as the people among whom anthropologists are working.

This discussion proceeds from a consideration of why the anthropologist's role vis-a-vis Native Americans has changed, to observations of ways in which anthropology is being done differently as a consequence, to considerations of the methodological and theoretical implications of these changes, concluding with some comments on issues of ethics and professional responsibility.

There appear to be reasons both external and internal to anthropology which have contributed to the anthropologist's changing position among Native Americans. Externally, several kinds of legislation have affected the work of anthropologists. Although they were not active in bringing about the passage of the Indian Claims Commission Act of 1946 (Stewart 1961:182), many anthropologists served as expert witnesses in the resultant lawsuits of the 1950s. The
environmental protection legislation of the 1960s and 1970s (especially the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 [42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.] and the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended through 1980 [16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.]), reflected some anthropological input in its attention to the cultural environment as well as the natural environment. It has created a place for anthropological expertise to be exercised at various levels of planning, policy formulation, and evaluation. The concerns of Native Americans, as descendants of the prior inhabitants of most lands to which environmental laws apply, must often be represented in these efforts. The civil rights legislation encoded in the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 (P.L. 95-341; 42 U.S.C. 1996) has also had an impact on anthropological activity among Native Americans. The 1978 publication of regulations governing the Federal acknowledgment process (25 C.F.R. 54), whereby previously unrecognized Indian groups may petition the government for recognition of their status as tribes, provides an additional area where anthropological research is called for. Another significant external factor has been the increase in political power of Native Americans over the past two decades. This not only affected some of the environmental legislation and was the impetus for the proposal and passage of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act and for creation
of the Federal acknowledgment process, but also has enabled Native American groups to control the activities of anthropologists working among them to a greater degree than ever before.

Internally, anthropology passed through a period of self-scrutiny in the 1960s, which included recognition of its historical relationship to colonialism (Nash 1975). Anthropologists became aware that they were often identified with a superordinate power, with outsiders who penetrate a society and take something away. As a result, many more anthropologists became concerned that at least some aspect of their studies should be of direct use and benefit to people among whom they work. The essays collected by Hymes (1972a), advocating a "reinvention" of anthropology, are a good expression of this thinking, which affected anthropology in other areas as well as the Native American studies considered here.

Recent anthropological work among Native Americans differs from that of the past in several ways. The focus of studies has changed. A much greater proportion of activity is directly related to explicit Native American concerns, such as control over lands or access to them, cultural preservation of various sorts, and the exercise of religion or traditional practices.
The anthropologist's employer has changed as well. A number of anthropologists now work directly for Native American groups, and many more are employed by public agencies with responsibilities to Native Americans. A few anthropologists were involved in work related to the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. For example, La Farge wrote the Hopi constitution and by-laws for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (Clemmer 1972:226). A few others served as advisors to the B.I.A. in the course of research sponsored by that agency (see, e.g., Aberle 1966:227-236). A trend to increasing involvement of anthropologists in the public sector can be seen beginning with the Indian land claims cases of the 1950s, where anthropologists were engaged as expert witnesses both by Indian plaintiffs and by the Government as defendant. From the late 1960s up to the present, anthropologists have contributed both as authors and reviewers to studies of the possible environmental impacts of proposed development activities and other undertakings which might affect places or practices of concern to various Native American groups and individual. They compiled information which allowed Federal agencies to review their policies affecting Indian religions, as required by the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, and are contributing to policy revisions. Anthropologists are presently active in the preparation and evaluation of petitions for Federal
acknowledgment. Some are involved in the design and execution of programs aimed at teaching and recording native language and culture in Native American communities and local schools. In many of these efforts, the anthropologist frequently takes the role of mediator or advocate, working between a public agency and a Native American group, pushing for the interests of one or the other, or serving as an advisor when policy is formulated which affects relations between the two. This is a more active role than was commonly undertaken in the past. The University of Chicago's Fox project of the late 1940s and 1950s shared the action orientation of present-day work, although the anthropologists and others from the university instigated the program on their own initiative, at the behest of neither a public agency nor the Fox themselves. The work of the project reflects many of the same emphases and issues under discussion here and below (Gearing, Netting and Peattie 1960; Gearing 1970).

Another way in which recent work differs from that of the past is a shift in time perspective, away from attempts to reconstruct lifeways of the mythical ethnographic present, to studies of the present-day situation. Such studies are required for much current work, for example, for assessing impacts of planned development activities, for identifying traditionalist spiritual leaders to be consulted regarding
current religious practices and concerns, and for describing the contemporary situation of Indian groups petitioning for Federal acknowledgment. The shift to studies of the present also entails attention to the course of historical change which has occurred, because present situations must be placed in context for the purposes of studies like those just mentioned. Thus, the anthropologist engaged in this work cannot ignore the fact that the societies and cultures under study have been, and still are, changing, as are elements such as religious beliefs and practices within them. He must recognize, for example, that Yurok religion today is different from what it once was, but that it is still Yurok religion—or is it? (See appendices K-T in U.S. Department of Agriculture 1977; Chartkoff and Chartkoff 1977, 1979; Bright 1977; Theodoratus, Chartkoff and Chartkoff 1979 for a recent discussion of precisely this question). This is one of the kinds of questions which must be addressed in today's anthropological studies among Native Americans.

These changes in the kind of anthropological work undertaken among Native Americans have had consequences for the discipline, in areas of method and theory. With regard to method, the use of consultants has changed in some ways. One indicator of this is current usage of the term "consultant" rather than the old "informant." In some kinds of studies, especially those related to environmental
legislation or the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, greater attention is given to views directly expressed from within the Native American community than to an ethnographer's more abstract explanatory synthesis, although it is usually an ethnographer who has the task of obtaining the views and presenting them. This emphasis can be seen as early as the 1950s land claims cases in California, when anthropologists retained as expert witnesses by Indian plaintiffs argued that Indian testimony from the ethnographic record was a more valid basis for assessing traditional land use practices than the more abstract "ecologic approach" advanced by anthropologists working for the Government: "the ecologic approach shows what a group of Indians could have lived off of, if they had wanted to; not what, historically, in terms of ethnographic documentation, they actually did live off of" (testimony of R.F. Heizer in The Indians of California vs. The United States of America, Dockets 31 and 37, published in Heizer and Kroeber 1976:42).

The 1950s land claims cases were concerned with Indian activities prior to 1848, and drew upon published ethnographic data collected in the past. In some circumstances today, anthropologists are asked to set up ways in which direct testimony about present-day situations and concerns can be obtained on an ongoing basis as needed, preferably without the continuing presence of an
anthropologist as intermediary. This is frequently desired by agencies such as state departments of transportation or parks which may have a few anthropologists on their central staffs who can plan and carry out extensive consultations in connection with major construction or development projects, but have no one stationed at district offices where an occasional maintenance action may require consultation, or where new concerns of local Native American individuals may arise from time to time. Generally, the procedure has been for staff anthropologists or consulting anthropologists to work in an area long enough to identify appropriate Native American consultants and to establish an information base regarding current issues of concern. The effort is usually initiated in connection with a major project or planning episode. Success in continuing the interaction between the agency and established advisory committees or consultants is variable, generally not succeeding over time without the presence of someone who knows a bit of the ethnography of both the agency and the Indian people involved. It is most often an anthropologist who has this knowledge and can act as a mediator, but some agencies assign the liaison responsibility to non-anthropologists, with mixed success.

This can be taken as a challenge to teach some anthropological field methods and evaluation skills to non-anthropologists. Some teaching of this sort does go on
when the anthropologist defends the validity of the consulting process which has been set up. The anthropologist must use the advisory role to agencies to ensure that they do not set up inflexible general procedures for consulting. The success in teaching agencies that Native American interest groups require different communication efforts than non-Native American groups must be followed with the lesson that different Native American groups (or the same group at different times) may require different procedures for achievement of adequate consultations. This should prevent the development of an undesirable parallel with past Government-Native American relationships, where the Government insisted on everywhere having a tribal council or tribal head with which it could deal.

The participation of Native Americans in anthropological work today may extend beyond a consultant role. Individuals may serve as go-betweens for religious leaders who do not wish direct contact with outsiders. Indian observers of archaeological excavations serve as liaisons between the academic researchers and interested members of the Indian community. Sometimes this communication provides for Indian input into research design and analysis (Quick 1983). Some national or state commissions and organizations of Native Americans serve as advisors to public agencies. They may recommend that agencies conduct Native American
consultations, sometimes identifying appropriate individuals with whom initial contacts should be made, and they often review proposals for anthropological work and monitor its progress. In at least one case, the California Native American Heritage Commission, a state agency, anthropologists have been employed to assist the Indian commissioners in their work. On some occasions, Indian organizations may undertake the anthropologist's customary role, performing consultations for agencies, among other Indian groups as well as among their own people.

In some cases, Native Americans undertaking these intermediary functions have some anthropological training, but more often they do not. Such activities raise the challenge of offering anthropological training to Native Americans, perhaps in a more accessible setting than established university programs. An informal survey among colleagues suggests that the representation of Native Americans enrolled in programs leading to college degrees in anthropology has not increased significantly in the last few decades. However, in California in the past decade, a number of Native Americans have acquired anthropological training under the stimulus of employment opportunities or new motivation for documenting their heritage. As a consequence, there has been increasing Indian participation in environmental impact studies and more involvement of both
young and old in native language and culture programs. Currently, some individuals are acquiring skills needed to contribute to petitions for Federal acknowledgment of their group's tribal status. The expertise acquired in most cases has been a result of informal training and experience gained while working as consultants or observers for linguists, social anthropologists, and archaeologists, although a formal cultural heritage training program was run cooperatively for one year by Sonoma State University and Ya-Ka-Ama, a Native American educational organization; unfortunately, the program ended when CETA funds became unavailable.

There are still many Native Americans with great interest in their heritage who are uninterested in anthropological training, because the anthropological perspective as they have seen it expressed does not lead to the kind of information and understanding they want. This is unfortunate, because anthropology as a discipline has much to gain from direct Native American involvement. Hale (1972) discussed potential benefits for linguistic studies, in terms of the competency of native speakers which provides a base for linguistic analysis with much richer potential than any non-native can ever achieve. There are analogous competencies which native bearers of a culture bring to other kinds of anthropological analyses. It is to be hoped that a by-product of the anthropologist's greater attention to
issues of current concern in Native American communities today will be increasing involvement of Native Americans in anthropological activities.

Another methodological consequence of the recent changes in Native American anthropological studies results from the need for documentation of places and practices of religious importance. More precise on-the-ground locations and descriptions are being recorded than was previously customary. This detail can be very valuable for a variety of analyses, such as archaeological studies of settlement pattern and studies of persistence and change in religious practices, but new responsibilities may accompany the new information. Anthropologists may now be told things which formerly would have been withheld, for example, the locations of cemeteries or ceremonial places which had previously been kept secret for protection. Is it possible for the anthropologist to adequately ensure confidentiality of such information? The Native American Heritage Commission in California used state law (S.B. 297) to protect its records from public disclosure, and the National Park Service suggests that Federal records of "cultural sites" can be excluded from the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act in the same way as archaeological site location information is protected by the Archaeological Protection Act (U.S. Department of the Interior 1982:53691). When
anthropologists are recipients of such special information, do they become obligated to advocate the actions desired by those who entrust them with secrets (and what if there is disagreement about desired actions within the community from which the information comes)? Are there limits beyond which the anthropologist should not pry, regardless of good intent or legislated mandate of the agency for which he works? This is a particularly pressing question in relation to efforts to ensure free exercise of religion, where the anthropologist probes the domain of the "sacred," something always difficult to define, and in many cases coincident with the "secret." How much must be known, in order to protect? One is reminded of Jaime de Angulo's outrage that anthropologists continued to press for secret information in studies of religion in the American southwest, expressed in a 1925 letter to Ruth Benedict: "Don't you understand the psychological value of secrecy at a certain level of culture? You know enough of analytic psychology to know that there are things which must not be brought to the light of day, otherwise they wither and die like uprooted plants" (quoted in Nabokov 1982:27).

The most important theoretical impact of current anthropological work among Native Americans has been to highlight deficiencies of existing theoretical concepts for describing and analysing cultural persistence and change. Hymes (1972b:34) suggested that anthropologists need to look
at the interplay between the cultural as traditional and the cultural as emergent, particularly as we expand our focus from the study of "distinctive others" to the bulk of human communities, Native Americans among them, which are in the continuing process of integrating with other societies as parts of complex units. An analysis which isolates societies, or treats them as static, is inadequate.

Current Native American studies pursuant to the American Indian religious Freedom Act and related measures raise these issues. The law affirms the United States policy to protect free exercise of traditional religions, and refers to sacred objects, ceremonials, traditional rites; it provided for consultations with native traditional religious leaders "in order to protect and preserve Native American religious rights and practices." The underlining indicates words which are ill-defined. The task falls most appropriately to anthropologists to ensure that the words are given meanings such that protection is accorded to present-day beliefs and practices which are changed from the old ways, but still part of a coherent cultural entity.

The necessity for anthropological involvement is illustrated by two weaknesses of the report made to the President as a consequence of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (Federal Agencies Task Force 1979). In one section it contends that new sacred places will not come into
being, thus denying the validity of change in Native American religions. Elsewhere it attempts to draw broad contrasts between Native American religions and other major world religions. While the intent was benevolent in these cases, the consequences might not be, for this conveys the notion that a static characterization of a grand pan-Indian religion might be adequate to guide enforcement of U.S. policy toward Indian religions when, in fact, what is needed is a case-by-case approach which recognizes different traditions and newly emergent beliefs and practices (cf. White 1981).

Anthropologists know this, but do existing concepts suffice for explorations of the "sacred" and the "traditional" today, if the changed and changing qualities of Native American cultures and societies are acknowledged? How much current work remains grounded in "an older anthropological tradition which...laid more stress on recovering the past than on ascertaining the mechanisms that were at the base of the stability of going bodies of tradition or made for change in them" (Herskovits 1952:54)?

"Acculturation" has been a term used to describe some aspects of culture change although, as Beals (1982:17) indicates, it has been indiscriminately applied to a number of different contact situations, so that it is variously equated with colonialism, assimilation or one-way accommodation by a subordinate group overwhelmed by a superordinate culture, or
it is used to refer to the adjustment of the individual to new cultural pressures. Beals suggests "abandoning the term in favor of viewing the contact situation as a special case of culture change" (1982:17). Clemmer (1972) pointed out the weakness of prior acculturation studies which tended to analyse change in terms of "before-and-after" lists of traits, identified as to origin with the superordinate or subordinate power (cf. Beals 1982:8). He suggested that a way to emphasize the dynamic aspect of the situation would be to look at resistance to acculturation or, if we drop that term, at resistance to culture change in the contact situation. This approach emphasises resistance as culture-building, rather than persistence as cultural stasis. Joffe's (1960) view of the Fox is an earlier, less explicit expression of the same approach (see Castillo 1978:103-104; Cook 1943:30-37 for other examples).

Clemmer offers an analytical framework whereby one isolates "fundamental beliefs" of both sides in a culture contact situation, and proceeds to discern an "ideology" which translates those beliefs into "behavior." While these concepts are hardly the powerful theoretical tools which anthropology requires to deal with Native American cultures as dynamic and emerging, they perhaps illuminate some issues of controversy which have arisen between anthropologists and Native Americans recently. For example, a number of Native
American individuals and groups testified against the proposed regulations for implementing the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 (P.L. 96-95; 16 U.S.C. 470aa et seq.) because the regulations classified Indian cemeteries as archaeological sites, and skeletal remains as artifacts. And currently in California there is disagreement among Native Americans and some archaeologists and physical anthropologists over the disposition of skeletal remains in state custody.

Using Clemmer's framework, one can see that some Native Americans have fundamental beliefs about the sanctity of interred human remains and the inappropriateness of disturbing them. Some archaeologists and physical anthropologists have basic beliefs about the sanctity of scientific data, and the inappropriateness of destroying it, or destroying potential access to it. The archaeologists' beliefs translate into ideologically justified ("for the greater good") actions which treat human remains as objects, and which can quantitatively assess potential damage to cemeteries and consequently propose mitigation activities which will lessen the damage. Native American beliefs translate into actions (also ideologically justified "for the greater good") which reflect a subjective, qualitative approach, where potential damage cannot be scaled or lessened--it must be avoided.
This same controversy also bears on the question of the understanding of "tradition" and the boundaries of traditional religions. Does the archaeologist have only to respect a concern for skeletal remains which could plausibly—in "scientific" terms—be ancestral to Native Americans living today? Or must he acknowledge the possibility of broad ethnic bonds of identity which transcend blood lines? On this particular issue, I have found myself playing mediator (though not a neutral one) between some archaeologists and some Native American individuals and groups. As a mediator, I was aided by my ethnographic knowledge of both groups, which let me work back to the fundamental beliefs underlying the ideologies which supported divergent behaviors.

I mention this to call attention to ethical and professional responsibilities which arise as a consequence of the greater action orientation of current anthropological studies among Native Americans. One is the anthropologist's professional responsibility to do ethnography on both sides. While the responsibility to obtain and communicate information from and about the Native American community is usually understood whether the employer is a Native American group or a public agency, the corresponding responsibility to obtain and communicate information from and about the agency and the larger order of which it is a part is not so commonly
understood. In a discussion of development anthropology, Hoben mentions that effectiveness is enhanced as "anthropologists have met the challenge of using their professional perspectives to analyse and respond to the bureaucratic environment in which they work as 'participant observers'" (1982:362). Others likewise emphasize the value of "studying up" (Nader 1972) for effectiveness in applied anthropology of various sorts (e.g., Gaines 1981:90; Cochrane 1980:456).

Aside from increased effectiveness, another reason for studying both sides is to understand the mission of the agency or the implications of a planned action or policy as these relate to the Native American people concerned, for the anthropologist is ethically charged with responsibility for the consequences of his work and the uses to which it may be put, to the extent that these can reasonably be anticipated (American Anthropological Association 1973). Thus there may be times, as Schneider notes (1975:289), when the anthropologist must decline to perform some activities, or when the agency anthropologist or consultant must argue against the plans or policy of an employer (Heinen 1980:453). In many cases, the anthropologist will want to provide the results of his studies to both parties to a negotiation situation, to provide the basis for more mutual understanding which will balance the power relationship somewhat, and
promote the possibility of accommodation on both sides. In anticipation of such situations, the anthropologist should ensure that the terms under which his work is conducted will permit such dissemination, a circumstance likely where a role as intermediary or mediator is recognized explicitly. Likewise, since an advocate role may dictate the withholding of information to empower one side or another, the anthropologist must consider in advance the ethical and professional questions, as well as possible legal ones (Chambers 1980:451) which may be raised in undertaking such a role. Certainly, it is an appropriate one for many of the situations in which anthropologists work among Native North Americans today.

In spite of our ethical and professional guidelines, anthropology as a discipline offers no absolute answers to questions of the ways in which change should be encouraged or discouraged, nor does it automatically provide judgments when groups or individuals within them disagree about values and consequent actions (cf. Hoben 1982; Hymes 1972b; Cochrane 1980:456). However, the discipline does provide approaches to analysing such situations, thereby potentially clarifying them for the parties concerned, and providing a way for the anthropologist to be objective without objectifying those among whom he works.
Anthropology stands to gain theoretically and methodologically from increased involvement of Native Americans in the discipline, as especially competent professionals, as reviewers and as directors of our work in some cases. Anthropologists cannot ethically refuse the roles of intermediary, mediator and advocate which are a part of most current work among Native North Americans. Indeed, we should recognize that aspects of all three roles inhere in the responsible undertaking of any one. We must, as professionals, bring to such work an awareness of the context in which it is undertaken and the goals toward which it is directed. If we take care to do this, we can expect as a result some anthropology which is good for the discipline, and also useful to those for whom and among whom we work.
Notes

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