

Reflections on Research With, for, and Among Indigenous Peoples

Charles R. Menzies

University of British Columbia

This article is a reflection on research with, for, and among Indigenous peoples. The author, an anthropologist of Indigenous descent, attempts to grapple with the various challenges that confront researchers located in mainstream institutions as they pursue respectful research relationships with Indigenous peoples. The strengths and weaknesses of the anthropological method are also discussed from the point of view of the possibility of an Indigenous anthropology. The article concludes by arguing that there is a place for anthropological research in Indigenous communities, but only if anthropologists are willing to commit to participation in the process of decolonization.

Research in itself is a powerful intervention, even if carried out at a distance, which has traditionally benefited the researcher, and the knowledge base of the dominant group in society..... Research is implicated in the production of Western knowledge, in the nature of academic work, in the production of theories which have dehumanized Maori [and other Indigenous peoples] and in practices which have continued to privilege Western ways of knowing while denying the validity for Maori of Maori knowledge, language and culture. (L.T. Smith, 1999, p. 183)

A group of fisheries scientists, sociologists, and anthropologists were gathered around a meeting table. The day's discussions and small-group workshops had been progressing well until one of their number asked during a workshop on Aboriginal traditional ecological knowledge, where were the representatives of local First Nations. To be fair, the organizer of the workshop has maintained a positive working relationship with the local First Nation that predates the workshop itself. A representative of the Nation had attended some of the sessions. However, it was the response of the other participants in the workshop that created the context out of which this article emerged.

The research workshop was focused on defining research designs and methodological approaches that might reconcile contending perspectives on ecological knowledge. Each day of the workshop concentrated on a different perspective toward ecological knowledge: fisheries science, social science, artisanal fish harvesters, and First Nations. Each session of the meeting was structured such that a representative from a particular perspective was there and able to speak as an insider: each session, that is, except the one concerning traditional ecological knowledge of First Nations. When the absence of a local First Nation voice in the discussion was raised, the gathered academics and researchers paused, if only briefly, before chorusing (almost to the person) that it was not really necessary to have representatives of local First Nations involved for the deliberations to

proceed. To call the validity of the proceedings into question in this manner was, according to one of the social scientists, simply a misplaced political correctness.

Accusations of political correctness have become a popular method of silencing outspoken opposition. Conservative politicians, religious fundamentalists, and even beleaguered academics join together in silencing opposition by employing the label *politically correct*.¹ The use of the term—especially as my colleague at the meeting used it—reflects a real and tangible unease felt by a vaguely liberal academic establishment accustomed to producing “knowledge” in a fairly unfettered fashion.

Anthropologists, however, are well aware that they can no longer just impose themselves on colonized or marginal peoples (Asad, 1973; Hymes, 1972). And, as L.T. Smith (1999) reminds us (see epigraph above), social science research is intimately tied to what she identifies as the twined processes of imperialism and colonization. Thus doing research with, for, or among Aboriginal peoples in the Americas presents the social researcher with a special set of challenges that are simultaneously personal, institutional, and political.

As a social anthropologist and as a person of Tsimshian and Tlingit² descent, I write from a particularly conflicted point of view. My disciplinary background emphasizes and highlights the necessity to design, implement, and execute “objective” research programs. Despite nearly four decades of debate over the impossibility of objective research and the importance of a researcher’s subjective location, the academic establishment still values dispassionate and “clear-headed” science above personal testimony and experience. Yet my experience growing up in a northern resource community informs my writing and research in such a way as to prevent me from simply accepting the position of liberal individualism (the idea that knowledge for knowledge’s sake is in and of itself a value to be defended). Although my personal experience does not privilege my voice,³ it does allow me to see the impact of a colonial research ideology that puts the accumulation of knowledge ahead of the interests of the people studied.

This article is self-consciously entitled a “reflection” on research. I do this to emphasize a moment of self-critique: a moment that is both personal and disciplinary. As an anthropologist of Indigenous descent I am continually confronted by a disciplinary practice that understands its historical development in the context of research conducted on Indigenous peoples.⁴ The historical and defining roots of various anthropologies have been built on the cultures, rituals, and beliefs of Indigenous peoples. It is not possible, therefore, for an Indigenous researcher uncritically to accept (or reject) anthropological approaches to the study of Indigenous societies. Through self-conscious reflection the strengths and weaknesses of anthropology as a research model can be explored without the limitations imposed by a more directly problem-based or analytical form of writing.

Ultimately, I do argue that non-Aboriginal social science researchers can continue to research and write about Indigenous peoples. However, it is my contention that such research will only make a meaningful contribution if researchers change their approach so that it becomes part of a process of decolonization. It is unfortunate that there are still many researchers who continue to conduct research *on* aboriginal peoples as opposed to *with* us. Some of these researchers have even mastered the technical form of respectful consultation, but without the necessary depth and the real respect that is required. One can only assume that these individuals self-consciously reject the need to accord real respect to Indigenous peoples and that they continue to benefit from the subjugation of Indigenous peoples.

In the balance of this article I advance my argument for social science research with, for, and among Aboriginal peoples in three steps. First, the contemporary context of research with Aboriginal peoples is described. Second, the challenges of research are outlined. Third, examples of methodological responses from within anthropology are evaluated in terms of their relevance for an autonomous Indigenous research agenda.

The Contemporary Context

Conducting research is always situated in particular social and historical contexts that limit what is possible. There are moments in time when access to a research field is restricted. At other times there may be no effective limits to what can be done or to what questions may be asked.

At present researchers working with or in First Nations communities must operate within a highly restrictive field. This does not mean that researchers need to abdicate their responsibility for accurate or truthful recording of data related to their research question (Dyck, 1993). However, it might mean that researchers do not record certain types of data or that they even change their research project to meet local concerns (Cove, 1987). Nonetheless, no one—neither First Nation nor researcher—is interested in falsified reports. What is critical is this: *research with First Nations requires a set of protocols that clearly identify the rights, responsibilities, and obligations of research partner and researcher*. Many First Nations communities have now instituted research protocols that researchers must abide by when researching in a First Nation community. Such protocols, whether community- or researcher-initiated, ultimately contribute to the establishment and maintenance of respectful research relations.

Irrespective of whether research is initiated by a First Nation or by a researcher it is important to follow a respectful research protocol. Through trial and error during the course of my research career I have developed a personal research guideline that contributes to creating respectful research relations.⁵ This guideline has emerged out of my direct research experiences in consultant work commissioned by First Nations and in research projects that I have initiated. Despite the differences of these two forms of

work (hired gun versus independent researcher) I would argue that they should share the underlying principle of respectful research relations. The approach can be briefly outlined in four basic steps.

1. Initiate dialogue. The first step can come from either researcher or community. If it comes from the researcher, a full plan or detailed letter of intent should be prepared in advance of the first meeting. It is important that the researcher be prepared and willing to modify the plan to accommodate the needs and protocols of the Nation.
2. Refine research plan in consultation with the Nation.
3. Conduct research. It is critical to set up research teams that comprise community members and university-trained researchers. This facilitates a number of processes such as transferring knowledge from researchers to community members (and vice versa), keeps important skills and knowledge in the community, and reduces the Nation's reliance on outsiders in terms of conducting their own research.
4. Writing, analysis, revision, and distribution. This step is the key phase of the project. The responsibility to remain in contact with the community is crucial. Whenever possible, meetings should be held to discuss and analyze the research results in the community. In addition to copies of finished research reports, researchers should leave resource packages that describe the research process (such as descriptions of the methodological approach), data sets, and document banks of secondary literature. The ultimate aim is to democratize access to specialized research skills and resources as much as possible so that research can be conducted in the community and by the community and/or complement the research already underway in the community.

The above methodological approach will not work everywhere, nor should it be employed in all situations. It does offer a guide to research with and for people who are "historically" located outside of the mainstream of power. As social researchers affiliated with mainstream institutions—and irrespective of our personal commitments and intentions—we are located at a nexus of power in the dominant society. Thus our methodological approach should not expand the power and knowledge of the dominant society at the expense of the colonized and the excluded. This is especially important in research involving First Nations.

Underlying the contemporary relations between researchers and Indigenous peoples is a history of forced relocation, systematic discrimination, and expropriation of resources and territory. This is the legacy of colonialism. To deny the colonial legacy by not adapting our research projects to accommodate Aboriginal concerns is to participate in the colonial project itself.

It would, of course, be remiss to overlook the important and positive changes that have recently occurred in how the Canadian state and mainstream society relates to First Peoples. However, these changes are

not the product of any general expression of goodwill or liberal intentions. Rather, they have emerged out of an increasingly militant struggle by First Peoples to regain control over their own destiny in the context of wider movements for social justice. For some this has involved armed struggle. For many others it has meant combining acts of civil disobedience with legal action. Taken in their totality, these movements are a part of the process of decolonization. Just as the independence and anti-colonial movements of Europe's 20th century colonies changed the way anthropology could conduct itself (Asad, 1973; Gough, 1968; Hymes, 1972), so too are First Nations movements toward self-determination challenging social researchers to reconsider how research is conducted (Battiste, 1998; Biolosi & Zimmerman, 1997; Calliou, 1998; Weber-Pillwax, 1999).

The Challenges of Conducting Research

The political context of research with, for, and among First Nations raises crucial personal, institutional, and political challenges. Each of these challenges leads to important methodological and ethical questions that the researcher needs to consider before embarking on a research journey in First Nations communities. This is not a purely pragmatic response to increasingly militant and assertive Indigenous peoples.⁶ Rather, it is part of a necessary program of decolonization in which researchers develop "a more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations and values which inform research practices" (L.T. Smith, 1999, p. 20).

Western social science cannot simply be applied by Indigenous scholars without question because "Western knowledge and science [were the] 'beneficiaries' of the colonization of indigenous peoples" (L.T. Smith, 1999, p. 59). It is for this reason that, as Indigenous or non-Indigenous researchers trained in disciplines such as anthropology (disciplines that emerged at the moment of European capitalist expansion), we are obligated to reflect critically on the foundations of our discipline. It is important that we confront the challenges created by the legacy of colonization in designing our research programs.

The Personal Challenge

The legacy of colonization raises crucial personal challenges for the researcher, most important of which is a direct challenge to researchers' belief that they have an unfettered right to ask questions and to publish "their" findings. Working with First Nations often (though not always) involves a process whereby an official body of the First Nation reviews the researcher's research plans, methods, and written reports.⁷ Some researchers consider this an infringement on their rights as individuals in a democratic society. Others see it as an inappropriate control over the pursuit of knowledge. Perhaps, if researchers thought of this more as a form of peer review, they might not take issue with having their work reviewed by First Nations or other community groups in the first place. It

is, however, an important first step in decolonization to accord the "subjects" of research a place at the table of decision-making.

This is a position that is becoming more common among researchers working with Indigenous peoples. For example, the Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies' statement of ethics in research, originally adopted in 1982 and revised in 1997, states that "there should be appropriate community consultation at all stages of research, including its design and practice. In determining the extent of appropriate consultation, researchers and communities should consider the relevant cross-cultural contexts, if any, and the type of research involved. However, incorporation of local research needs into research projects is encouraged." The question of what constitutes *appropriate* is left undefined. Nonetheless, this is an important general statement of the principle that Indigenous communities should be involved in research decisions concerning their communities.

A related point concerns the question of an individual's right to knowledge and the implication of various forms of collective ownership for Western-style pursuit-of-knowledge research. Among peoples of the Northwest Coast, for example, stories, history, and crests are owned by family groups, not individuals (see, e.g., Cove, 1987). This is in direct contradiction with Euro-Canadian law in which the copyright of a taped interview is the property of the interviewer, not the interviewee. Many non-Indigenous anthropologists now respect First Nation definitions of cultural ownership, although it has been a difficult journey for the discipline. However, for researchers trained in the tradition of possessive individualism, it is still a personal challenge that many must confront regularly if they are serious about respectful research relationships with First Nations.

The Institutional Challenge

University-based researchers face challenges created by the research guidelines of their institutions and national granting agencies. Typically these policies are aimed at preserving academic freedom and protecting the rights of researchers. However, the nature of these policies can be in conflict with the cultural values and proprietary rights of First Nations.

According to the UBC *Policy Handbook*,⁸ for example, "results of all research undertaken in the University shall be fully publishable at the discretion of the principal investigator." Certain limitations on publications are allowed. However,

the University shall be completely free to publish after a maximum of 12 months from termination of the project or submission of the final report, whichever is later, unless an exception for a brief extension is granted by the Vice President Research.

With respect to the issue of confidentiality of data, UBC's *Policy Handbook* has this to say:

If, under the terms of a formal contract, a sponsor agrees to provide data essential to the research which is clearly labeled 'Confidential Data,' the University will accept such a contract and observe such confidentiality provided that the results of the research may be published without identifiable reference to the confidential data and that no limitations are placed on the publication of results other than those outlined.

Taken together, UBC's research policies create a clearly defined expectation that no "reasonable" limitation can be placed on a researcher's right to publish the findings of their research.

Regulations governing research grants awarded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), the key source of funds for university-based social science research in Canada, go even further:

Data collected with Council assistance are public property and must be made available for use by others within a reasonable period of time, provided that confidentiality of personal information and right to privacy are protected.⁹

Regarding intellectual property and copyright, the SSHRC regulations stipulate that

copyright and any rights to intellectual property developed under SSHRC funding are owned by the principal and co-investigators or by the university, depending on intellectual property agreements as defined by the university where the grant holder is employed.... Scholars receiving SSHRC grants for research activities that involve a partnership must retain ownership of all intellectual property and publication rights accruing from the joint activities.

Research regulations, as described above, pose serious challenges for social science researchers working in Indigenous communities. Although these regulations provide important safeguards for researchers and ensure some form of public accountability, they may also be in direct violation of customary laws of Indigenous peoples. By their nature, these regulations perpetuate the colonial system of research where Indigenous peoples are constructed as the subject of the colonist's gaze and the university reaffirms its view of itself as the center of legitimate knowledge. Establishing research policies that respect Indigenous values and simultaneously create research and publication opportunities is a crucial goal toward which we should strive.¹⁰

The Political Challenge

As discussed above, a broadening movement for self-determination by First Nations defines the current moment. Also, as noted above, this often poses problems of access for the researcher. However, to view this simply as an access issue is to misconstrue the nature of the situation. Problems of access are a symptom of the history of colonization. Thus research with and for First Nations requires a commitment—in the sense theorized by the literary critic Williams (1977)—on the part of the researcher to a political process.

According to Williams (1977), all social practice "variously expresses, explicitly or implicitly, specifically selected experience from a point of view" (p. 199). Alignment is in this sense merely an admission that the participants of a particular social formation cannot separate their production (i.e., ethnographies or research programs) from the social relations of which they are a part. To deny alignment is an implicit commitment to the dominant social order. If it is to mean anything, commitment "is surely conscious, active, and open: a choice of position.... commitment is a conscious alignment, or conscious change of alignment (pp. 200, 204).

Calling for a self-conscious alignment or change of alignment is not a call for advocacy anthropology. Nor is it a call for anthropologists to become political hacks. It is, however, a call for political engagement and recognition that involvement in research with First Nations will be a political act irrespective of the researcher's intentions.

Anthropological research in Aboriginal communities often has far-reaching implications for the recognition of existing Aboriginal title, litigation, and anthropological practice itself. Anthropologists face challenges from Aboriginal communities and the dominant society with respect to the extent of their "commitment." For Aboriginal communities, anthropologists—rightly or wrongly—often seem to appear briefly in their midst only to depart to their "world of lectern, libraries, blackboards, and seminars" (Geertz, 1988, p. 129). In the eyes of the dominant society, however, anthropologists are seen (i.e., if they are seen at all) as romantic partisans.¹¹ So, then, what is to be done?

Research Solutions from Anthropology

Since the first radical critiques of anthropology began emerging in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Gough, 1968), anthropologists have responded by either completely withdrawing from any research with, for, or among Aboriginal or other "marginalized" peoples; have simply ignored the critique and have continued to conduct researcher-led, standard, pursuit-of-knowledge research; or they have engaged in self-consciously committed, cooperative, and/or community-based research.

Each of these responses involves unique sets of advantages and disadvantages. The first response is essentially a nonresponse and ultimately a refusal to confront the colonial arrogance of the discipline's history in any meaningful way. The remaining two responses involve competing models of research and different epistemological understandings of what social science research is and should be.

In broad terms, the second response—continuing with research for research's sake—reflects a research model in which the researcher is able (or at least believes he or she should be able) to accumulate knowledge without impediment. It is also a model that assumes that research can and/or should be value-free and objective. Thus this response remains within the parameters of the mainstream paradigm.

The third response is more clearly directed toward participation in the process of social change. From this vantage point, there are no value-free locations from within which knowledge can be accumulated in a neutral fashion. Instead, all social positions are understood (Williams, 1977) as being located within wider fields of power and that this power is not equally distributed among all social players.

Anthropologists have had to deal with the issues of power and everyday life in a way that many other social researchers have not. Our research brings us into direct contact, over extended periods of time, with real people. Our primary method is based on establishing relationships that are friend-like in nature. In fact, many of us do form lasting personal relationships with the people we work with and live among while doing our fieldwork. This is a critical difference between scientists who "don't need to ask the fish for permission" or colleagues in another social science discipline who conduct their research at an arms-length basis through surveys, questionnaires, or archives.

For researchers unaccustomed to actually working with people on a long-term basis it might be difficult to comprehend fully the extent to which anthropological research allows for little real down time or time away from the public gaze of the people in the community where the anthropologist is living. Many nonanthropological researchers have avoided the sorts of criticisms often lobbed at anthropologists if only because they are never really in the communities for longer than a few hours or days. Furthermore, nonanthropological researchers rarely deal on an extended basis with community members outside the official circles of leadership. Anthropologists, however, are "there" in communities in a way that reveals all of their warts and blemishes. Working with and living among people for long periods opens a space for intense emotional responses on the part of anthropologist and community members alike.

The anthropological method of living in a community for an extended period (most anthropologists will live in a community for at least one year, and often two years, before beginning the process of writing about their experience in the community) is both a strength and a weakness of the anthropological method. As a strength, this methodological approach creates an opportunity for a researcher to come to understand the nuances and details of everyday life that are rarely seen, let alone lived, by researchers employing other types of research methodologies. Although the picture that emerges is often limited in its scope, it is still a far more detailed and reflective picture of the reality of how people live than can ever be learned by a survey, a perusal of archival records, or interviews with leading members of a community conducted in a local official's office.

The weakness of the anthropological method is twofold. First, the proximity of anthropologists to the people they write about and the duration of their stay in the field can create an image of the anthropologist as

biased in favor of the community. Although it is true that most anthropologists empathize with the people among whom they have lived and written about, few anthropologists would agree that anyone's interest is served through falsification. A more problematic second weakness stems from the potential problems connected to living in a community for the purpose of research. Despite living for a long period in a community, anthropologists do plan to return to their homes. Irrespective of their intentions, desires, or the sincerity with which they proceed, the fact that they are only visitors creates a social distance. This distance creates a social context for community concerns about the sincerity anthropologists. This is especially the case in communities that have been subjected to colonialism. Add to this a disciplinary history where Indigenous peoples have provided the content for generations of students, and one has a recipe for mistrust and anger. I would not agree that anthropologists are in fact ashamed handmaidens of imperialism.¹² At present, however, anthropologists are an ever-present reminder of the fact of colonialism by virtue of their presence in an Indigenous community.

Anthropological methods have built on the strengths of long-term fieldwork and have attempted to resolve the weaknesses in a variety of ways. For example, Salisbury (1976) argues that anthropologists should maintain a degree of social distance between themselves and those they "study" so that they may act as a "societal ombudsman." Jones (1970, 1971, 1980), writing from the subject position of an Afro-American anthropologist who has conducted research at home and away, makes a cautious case for what he calls *native* or *insider* anthropology. And anthropologists such as Gough (1968, 1993) and Leacock (1981, 1987) argue for an "engaged anthropology" (see also G. Smith, 1999) in which anthropologists become self-consciously aware of their role in the social field of power and reorient themselves toward effecting progressive change.

The methodological positions of Salisbury (1976), Jones (1970, 1971, 1980), Gough (1968), and Leacock (1981, 1987) represent key strands in the anthropological debates concerning the potential for objectivity and the necessity of political alignment in research. They are exemplary in how their work demonstrates important approaches to working with subaltern or marginalized peoples: anthropologist as objective ombudsman (Salisbury); anthropologist as insider (Jones); and anthropologist as activist (Gough and Leacock).

By focusing on this group of elder anthropologists I am in no way claiming that nothing has been added since their days of active engagement in shaping anthropological thought in the 1970s. There are many important developments and additions to anthropological ways of thinking (Marcus & Fischer, 1986; Narayan, 1993; Zavella, 1997).¹³ We now express a greater sensitivity to the feelings of the people being written about. We now claim a greater care and attention to how ethnography is written. Yet I feel something is lacking from this new work.

The anthropology of the late 1960s and early 1970s emerged in a moment of passion and belief. The debates occurred in the context of wider social protests and movements. This context added a sense of immediacy and a belief in the possibility of fundamental social transformation that faded as the 20th century drew to a close. Yet the progressivism of anthropologists such as Gough (1968) and Leacock (1981, 1987) was replaced by a dilettantish obsession with text, which ultimately and abjectly turned its back on any meaningful engagement in the real world outside the hallowed pages of an increasingly inward-looking academy. Late 20th-century anthropology retreated from the real, and in so doing became less relevant than it ever was for Aboriginal and other marginalized peoples.

As I argue below we need to make a clear decision over what to borrow and what to reject from the academic traditions of the mainstream academy. By returning to the writings of anthropologists such as Salisbury (1976), Jones (1970, 1971, 1980), Gough (1968), and Leacock (1981, 1987) we are in fact returning to the roots of our contemporary debate over the possibility of a decolonized research project. I have deliberately selected exemplary articles that predate the fetishization of text so that the issues can be more clearly understood and the arguments more directly revealed.

Anthropologist as Objective Ombudsman

Salisbury's (1976) notion of the anthropologist as societal ombudsman bridges the gap between anthropology as objective social science and the anthropologist's humanistic desires to act "as an intermediary in trouble situations between central agencies and local groups" (p. 255). Salisbury argues that anthropologists are particularly well suited to mediate between conflicted groups for two reasons: (a) anthropologists can "translate and make intelligible to people with a particular perspective the viewpoint of a different group," and; (b) the anthropologist could use the accumulated knowledge of the discipline to suggest possible courses of action to BOTH SIDES" (emphasis in original, p. 257). Salisbury strongly emphasized the last point because he was convinced that "when an anthropologist commits himself to one side only, he nullifies many of the benefits that his professional training could give to that side" (p. 257).

Salisbury's (1976) contribution to anthropology and his work on behalf of the Cree of James Bay is well documented and highly regarded. Yet his vision of anthropology is still firmly locked in an epistemology that unquestionably accepts notions of objectivity and scientism. In his 1976 article, Salisbury was intent on demonstrating that there could be a "useful" anthropology in which the researcher can "remain the professional anthropologist, dispassionately evaluating information, conducting research, and communicating the findings" (p. 264). Salisbury's commitment to a professional, dispassionate anthropology ultimately undermines the usefulness of his approach to research for Indigenous scholars. As L.T. Smith (1999) makes clear, it is not enough to be well

intentioned: Western forms of research are themselves implicated in the expansion and maintenance of colonialism. And, as Salisbury himself points out, the effectiveness of the anthropologist as societal ombudsman relies on a "relatively enlightened central bureaucracy" (p. 263): an unlikely situation in contexts where Indigenous peoples lack self-determination.

Anthropologist as Insider

Jones' (1970) argument for insider or native anthropology takes the progressive role of anthropology advocated by Salisbury (1976) one step further. Whereas Salisbury saw the anthropologist as, in a sense, an unproblematic research tool, Jones argues that the ethnic and/or racial identity of the anthropologist is an important factor in creating a progressive and community-based research practice. According to Jones, an insider or native anthropologist—a person "who conducts research on the cultural, racial, or ethnic group of which he himself is a member" (p. 251)—has a potential advantage over the outsider based on his or her membership and involvement in his or her own community (for an Indigenous take on this argument see, e.g., Kanuha 2000; Marker, 1998; Shilubane, 1997; L.T. Smith, 1999; Weber-Pillwax, 1999).

The insider's advantage is not simply an issue of being familiar with the community and thus better able to discover key pieces of data. Jones (1970) points out that there has been a long history in anthropology of using insider or native anthropologists to get at the hidden details of their own cultures:

The native anthropologist is seen by the field as a whole—not as a professional who will conduct research and develop theories and generalizations, but as a person who is in a position to collect information in his own culture to which an outsider does not have access. (p. 252).¹⁴

It is against this notion of the helpful native that Jones proposes a native anthropology, that is, "a set of theories based on non-Western precepts and assumptions in the same sense that modern anthropology is based on and has supported Western beliefs and values" (p. 251). Although Jones notes a number of potential problems that might inhibit the development of a native anthropology, he does express a cautious optimism in its potential.

The primary obstacles to the development of a native anthropology identified by Jones (1970) are: (a) being able to recognize that no oppressed group is homogeneous; (b) that membership in an oppressed group does not imply that all members share the same set of interests, and; (c) that even oppressed groups can have internal hierarchies. These three obstacles are important aspects of the research context. If the researcher ignores them, or is unwilling to recognize them, then her or his effectiveness on behalf of the oppressed group is ultimately undermined.

Jones (1980) makes these observations in a forceful critique of well-intentioned researchers "who place themselves and their research skills in

the service of the oppressed" (p. 99) without questioning the power structure of the local group itself. It is not enough, Jones argues, to simply accept the "purity ... [and] motivations of those who occupy positions of leadership in local groups" (p. 99). One is sometimes called to recognize the existence of local internal hierarchies that may "parallel the relationship between the local group and the external institutions" (p. 103). Ignoring local power structures is ultimately an abdication of responsibility on the behalf of the researcher and may lead to "serious errors of judgment" (p. 103). Native anthropology may then become a mechanism used by the elites of oppressed groups to maintain their own vested interests in a tragic echo of the oppressive structures of Western research paradigms.

Central to the argument for a native anthropology is that its power is not reliant on the "truth value" of the research. Rather, it emerges out of the values and assumptions of the oppressed group itself and thus is better able to reflect and describe their own experiences. Although Jones (1970), for example, is unwilling to argue that every minority, oppressed, or marginal group should invent its own anthropology, he clearly describes how outsider research has ignored issues that are relevant to these groups. With Battiste, L.T. Smith, and others, Jones argues that, "the emergence of a native anthropology is part of an essential decolonization of anthropological knowledge and requires drastic changes in the recruitment and training of anthropologists" (p. 258).

Anthropologist as Activist

The first calls for fundamental change to the discipline of anthropology emerged at the height of the political protest movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Anthropologists such as Wolf, Gough, and Leacock publicly called for a reinvention of anthropology in the service of oppressed and marginalized groups. Both in their academic work and in public forums they called attention to the participation of anthropologists and other researchers in the project of Western Imperialism (Leacock, 1981; Lee & Brodtkin-Sacks, 1993; Schneider, 1995; Sutton, 1993). For these anthropologists, social science research was as much about finding ways to overthrow injustice as it was about uncovering truth. It is disappointing that the clear critiques written by anthropologists like Gough and Leacock have been overshadowed by a postmodernist dilettantism more intrigued with the structure of text and the style of writing than with the real conditions created by Western imperialism. I am thankful that the discipline appears to be leaving the cul-de-sac of *post-somethingism* and is reawakening to the need for a politically engaged anthropology (G. Smith, 1999).

For anthropologists such as Gough and Leacock, political commitment as social activists was central to their conception of anthropology as a discipline. From their activist vantage point, they were able to recognize that "anthropology had not been and cannot be ethically neutral" (Ber-

reman, 1993, p. 254). In their research with subaltern peoples they recognized the need to participate in social change that had real benefits for marginalized peoples such as national minorities, Indigenous nations, and ordinary working people.

Their experience as women in a small 'c' conservative, white, male academic environment highlighted for them the fallacy of so-called scientific objectivity or neutrality. In the context of US aggression in Southeast Asia, Gough called on anthropologists to work on behalf of oppressed and subaltern peoples and participate in halting the US war.

The radical critique of Western social science is based on three key points. First, that mainstream social science is linked to the maintenance of social inequality (Asad, 1973; Gough, 1968, 1993; Hymes, 1972; Leacock, 1981, 1987; L.T. Smith, 1999). Second, that the claim for scientific neutrality is an illusion (Asad, 1973; Leacock, 1987; L.T. Smith, 1999). Third, a call for researchers to commit themselves to supporting the struggles of oppressed peoples (Gough, 1968; L.T. Smith, 1999). The radical critique shares much in common with that of the Indigenous critique of social science research with one central difference. That is, for Indigenous scholars the researcher's social identity as a member of an Indigenous community is considered to be of critical importance.

As Indigenous scholars it is important to highlight our location in our home communities. However, as Jones (1970, 1971, 1980) reminds us, the simple fact of being a member of an oppressed minority or an Indigenous community does not automatically confer on us the ability to see farther or naturally to produce more accurate results. We need to incorporate the understandings of the anthropologist as activist in our research programs. Although our experiences as people of Indigenous heritage may guide our reflections and open our eyes to important questions, it does not mean that non-Indigenous scholars have nothing to offer us.

Conclusion

This article was born in the hours following the exchange described at the beginning of the article. In the year following my frenzied, late-night writing, I have had the opportunity to reflect on the relationships connecting my chosen academic discipline and its methodological approach to Indigenous peoples. It is beyond question that anthropology is indeed the "child of western imperialism" (Gough, 1968). But the destiny of the child is not predetermined by the nature of the parent: "Parents' imaginations build frameworks out of their own hopes and regrets into which children seldom grow, but instead, contrary as trees, lean sideways out of the architecture, blown by a fatal wind their parents never envisaged" (Smart, 1966, p. 63). There is a possible future anthropology, inspired by the actions of anthropologists such as Leacock, Gough, Wolf, and Jones that may finally accept responsibility for its own history and thereby become part of a new post-imperialist world.

The challenges anthropologists face in research with, for, or among Indigenous people are difficult, but not insurmountable. In this article I outline the nature of these challenges—personal, political, institutional—and reflect on three key solutions that anthropologists have offered. Researchers who are serious about their commitment to respectful research relationships with Indigenous and other subaltern peoples will most probably find it necessary to become politically engaged in progressive social moments in society at large. Theory, as Leacock (1987) reminds us, must be rooted in a dialectical praxis: “commitment makes it possible to work toward an effective—a practical—theory of social change.” If anthropology is to play a useful and progressive role in the process of decolonization, it will ultimately require a political commitment in support of Indigenous peoples and an unambiguous recognition of the colonial role played by mainstream social science paradigms.

Notes

¹The term *political correctness* first entered the public imagination the early 1990s following an article published in the US magazine *Newsweek* that described the campus battles over inclusive language and the introduction of non-Western curricula (Adler & Starr, 1990, p. 48). The term was used to describe the new curricula emerging out of Women, Black/Afro-American, Latino, Native American, and Gay/Lesbian Studies that challenged the dominance of a Western canon that prioritized European male thinkers as representing the pinnacle of human civilization. According to the writers of the magazine article, PC and the new curricula represents a form of censorship and intolerance and “is, strictly speaking, a totalitarian philosophy” (Adler & Starr, 1990)—a bitter irony for minority and Indigenous students and academics who are struggling to overcome what amounts to nearly five centuries of censorship and intolerance. Although the term has a history dating from the practice of Maoist-influenced political groups of the late 1960s and early 1970s, it was the derogatory sense employed by *Newsweek* that caught the public’s imagination.

²I am an enrolled member of the Tlingit and Haida Council of Indian Tribes of Southeast Alaska and am of Tsimshian descent through my father.

³See Clifford (1988) for a discussion of the construction of authority in the text and the construction of ethnographic validity.

⁴It is important to understand that although anthropology is on the one hand a product of “European” colonialism, it is not a unitary project. There are important national differences tied to specific imperial domains that have created separate local anthropologies. The three key national anthropologies are French, British, and US American. Anglo Anthropologists in Canada sit uncomfortably between two imperial anthropologies: US American and British. US American anthropology, through its apical ancestor Franz Boas, made its name conducting research on Native American, Inuit, Metis, and First Nations. Although the disciplinary focus has shifted away from concerns with North American Aboriginal peoples, our cultures are the content at the root of the discipline.

⁵Please note that although I have developed these guidelines over time, many other researchers and First Nations communities have adopted or initiated similar protocols. In fact the development of respectful research relations and greater sensitivity to research participants has been one of the most important developments in anthropological research during the past several decades. One of the issues that I have not discussed in these guidelines is the question of intellectual property rights. This is an important subject that deserves a full treatment in its own right. I would direct the interested reader to the section “The Challenge of Research,” below and also to Battiste and Youngblood Henderson’s (2000) *Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage*.

⁶Unfortunately, some researchers have made changes in their methodology and research protocols only as a result of pressure from Indigenous communities. These researchers will confide, even boast, in their private conversations of how they managed to get Chief A or Chief B to sign a letter of support for their grant applications. Then, once the letter is duly filed with the granting agency, they continue without further regard to correct protocol. Unfortunately for researchers who follow in the wake of this kind of slash and burn consultations, building community trust is made much harder.

⁷There are important issues concerning the control of research by local elites that need to be considered. I would refer the reader to the section below, "Anthropologist as Insider," for a more detailed consideration of this issue. Suffice it to say that how anthropologists deal with local-level political factionalism is an area fraught with difficulties and ultimately cannot be reduced to clear rules.

⁸All references to the UBC *Policy Handbook* (<http://www.ubc.ca>).

⁹Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (<http://www.sshrc.ca>).

¹⁰Some research institutions are working toward research protocol agreements. For example, UBC's First Nations Language Program is developing protocol agreements with First Nations for research. Under this agreement, faculty researchers will sign community research protocols in order to do research. It remains to be seen, however, if these types of agreements will actively engage in democratizing and changing dominant institution research in ways that shift the control of research out of the hands of dominant elites.

¹¹Popular images of anthropologists, from movie images to newspaper accounts and court decisions, have tended to highlight the anthropologist as romantic partisan, vainly struggling to defend some isolated and quaint traditional people. Such anthropologists are seen to have thrown "objectivity" to the wind in their blind defense of "their people." Reality, of course, is always far more complex than popular imaginings.

¹²To find the true face of imperialism I would suggest that we look to government officials, their corporate allies, and members of local elites who have benefited from collaboration with the colonizer.

¹³In addition to such mainstream anthropologists as listed in the body of the text, there have also been many important contributions from Indigenous scholars (Calliou 1998; Marker 1998; Weber-Pillwax 1999).

¹⁴Many of the early 20th century Indigenous scholars, such as William Beynon (Tsimshian Nation), were recruited by anthropologists like Franz Boas. Mainstream anthropologists found it expedient to employ Indigenous ethnographers to get at the "real goods" of Indigenous histories, cultures, rituals, and materials objects.

Acknowledgements

I am appreciative of the research and learning opportunities that have been presented to me by the Nisga'a and Tsimshian Nations. These research opportunities have created an opportunity to reflect on how a respectful research relationship can and should be established and maintained. I would also like to thank my colleague at UBC Bruce G. Miller for his mentorship and especially for the experience of co-teaching with him an ethnographic field school operated in cooperation with the Sto:lo First Nation. A special thanks to the students from the 1997 and 1998 ethnographic field schools who taught me much more than perhaps they might have realized. I wish to offer a special thank-you to my colleagues in the UBC First Nations Faculty group, most especially Jo-ann Archibald for her thoughts, comments, and support at various points throughout my time at UBC. For those who have read and commented on this draft, Anthony Marcus, Caroline Butler, Kim Brown, Alexia Bloch, and the *CJNE* anonymous readers, I thank for their advice and comments. Time for writing this article was made available in large part by the good graces of my family and through the timely contributions from a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada standard research grant.

References

- Adler, J., & Starr, M. (1990, December 24). Taking offense: Is this the new enlightenment or the new McCarthyism? *Newsweek*, p. 48.
- Asad, T. (Ed.). (1973). *Anthropology and the colonial encounter*. London: Ithaca Press.
- Battiste, M. (1998). Enabling the autumn seed: Toward a decolonized approach to Aboriginal knowledge, language, and education. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 22, 16-27.
- Battiste, M., & Youngblood Henderson, J.S. (2000). *Protecting Indigenous knowledge and heritage: A global challenge*. Saskatoon, SK: Purich.
- Berberman, G. (1993). Ethics and responsibility: Themes in the life and work of Kathleen Gough. *Anthropologica*, 35(2), 249-262.
- Biolsi, T., & Zimmerman, L.T. (Eds.). (1997). *Indians and anthropologists: Vine Deloria Jr. and the critique of anthropology*. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press.
- Calliou, S. (1998). Us/ them, me/ you: Who? (re)thinking the binary of First Nations and non-First Nations. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 22, 28-52.
- Clifford, J. (1988). *The predicament of culture: Twentieth-century ethnography, literature, and art*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Cove, J. (1987). *Shattered images: Dialogues and meditations on Tsimshian narratives*. Ottawa, ON: Carleton University Press.
- Dyck, N. (1993). "Telling it like it is": Some dilemmas of fourth world ethnography and advocacy. In N. Dyck & J.B. Waldrum (Eds.), *Anthropology, public policy, and Native Peoples in Canada* (pp. 192-212). Kingston, ON: McGill-Queens Books.
- Geertz, C. (1988). *Works and lives: The anthropologist as author*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Gough, K. (1968). New proposals for anthropologists. *Current Anthropology*, 9, 403-407.
- Gough, K. (1993). Anthropology and imperialism revisited. *Anthropologica*, 35, 279-289.
- Hymes, D. (Ed.). (1972). *Reinventing anthropology*. New York: Vintage.
- Jones, D.J. (1970). Towards a native anthropology. *Human Organization*, 29(4), 251-259.
- Jones, D.J. (1971). Social responsibility and the belief in basic research: An example from Thailand. *Current Anthropology*, 12, 347-350.
- Jones, D.J. (1980). Accountability and the politics of urban research. *Human Organization*, 39(1), 99-104.
- Kanuha, V.K. (2000). "Being native" versus "Going native." *Social Work*, 45, 439-418.
- Leacock, E. (1981). *Myths of male dominance: Collected articles on women cross-culturally*. New York: Monthly Review of Books.
- Leacock, E. (1987). Theory and ethics in applied urban anthropology. In L. Mullings (Ed.), *Cities of the United States: Studies in urban anthropology* (pp. 317- 336). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Lee, R., & Brodtkin Sacks, K. (Eds.). (1993). Anthropology, imperialism and resistance: The work of Kathleen Gough. *Anthropologica*, 35(2), 175-306.
- Marcus, G., & Fischer, M.J.K. (1986). *Anthropology as cultural critique: An experimental moment in the human sciences*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Marker, M. (1998). Going native in the academy: Choosing the exotic over the critical. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 29, 473-80.
- Narayan, K. (1993). How native is a "Native" anthropologist? *American Anthropologist*, 95, 671-686.
- Salisbury, R. (1976). The anthropologist as societal ombudsman. In D.C. Pitt (Ed.), *Development from below: Anthropologists and development situations* (pp. 255-265). The Hague, Paris: Mouton.
- Schneider, J. (1995). Introduction: The analytic strategies of Eric R. Wolf. In J. Schneider & R. Rapp (Eds.), *Articulating hidden histories: Exploring the influence of Eric R. Wolf* (pp. 3-30). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Shilubane, P.X. (1997). Towards the Indigenisation of anthropology. *South African Journal of Ethnology*, 20, 207-211.

- Smart, E. (1996). *By Grand Central Station I sat down and wept*. London: Grafton Books.
- Smith, G. (1999). *Confronting the present: Towards a politically engaged anthropology*. New York: Berg.
- Smith, L.T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies*. London: Zed Books.
- Sutton, C.R. (Ed.). (1993). *From Labrador to Samoa: The theory and practice of Eleanor Burke Leacock*. New York: Association for Feminist Anthropology / American Anthropological Association.
- Weber-Pillwax, C. (1999). Indigenous research methodology: Exploratory discussion of an elusive subject. *Journal of Educational Thought*, 33(1), 31-45.
- Williams, R. (1977). *Marxism and literature*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Zavella, P. (1997). Feminist insider dilemmas: Constructing ethnic identity with Chicana informants. In L. Lamphere, H. Ragone, & P. Zavella (Eds.), *Situated lives: Gender and culture in everyday life* (pp. 42-61). New York and London: Routledge.