SUSAN GUYETTE

# COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH

## A HANDBOOK FOR NATIVE AMERICANS

AMERICAN INDIAN STUDIES CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES

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Photograph of Brown Tadd and Lorenzo Baca taken by Terry Busch.

To Those Who Have Shared

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The idea for this handbook came from the experiences of the staff of the American Indian Studies Center at UCLA in their day-to-day cooperative efforts with both researchers and community groups. We have a vision of research conducted that benefits Native American communities in their development efforts and this book is but a small contribution to that future. First in our thanks is an expression of gratitude to Velma Salabiye, who contributed the chapter on LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES. Since Ms. Salabiye has directed Native American libraries for several years, her guide to locating resources materials and creating a community library reflects her experience on a practical level.

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The vast amount of knowledge available to the human mind is known to librarians and many other people. Time and effort are requirements in keeping this information available and current.

I am grateful to the persons who have generously given their time to express their opinions and give input on this chapter. I wish I could name them all--their specialized areas have contributed to specific portions regarding library procedures, community concerns, comments, and clerical assistance.

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Vee Salabiye

Librarian
American Indian Studies Center, UCLA

# USING THIS BOOK

Some persons may read all of this book, while others may choose chapters that pertain to their current interests. Our explanation of how chapters of the book are related to each other is intended to assist the reader in using the text as a handbook.

The INTRODUCTION explains the concept of community-based research and give some reasons why research relationships in the past have not always benefited the communities involved. In the next chapter, entitled THE NATURE OF RESEARCH, some different types of research are identified and basic steps for conducting a research are identified and basic steps for conducting a research project are outline. A discussion of considerations in working with one's own culture is also presented. These two chapters, then, are intended as a beginning guide for researchers.

Specific methods for four different types of community-based research approaches are then presented in the next four chapters, NEEDS ASSESSMENTS, SURVEY RESEARCH, EVALUATION, and CULTURAL ARTS. These approaches were selected as those commonly of value for community development efforts, and for the balance that they may provide in integrating the traditional while new development occurs.

The following two chapters on STATISTICS AS A RESEARCH TOOL and COMPUTERS presents descriptive methods for analyzing the data collected according to the approaches described earlier. In the section on STATISTICS, our intention is to provide an introduction that is basic and that prepares the reader to understand the results of computer packages discussed in the chapter on COMPUTERS. It is very possible that the community-based researcher may be interested only in the chapter on STATISTICS, may complete calculations by hand and never proceed to the chapter on COMPUTERS; however, it was not intended that the COMPUTER chapter would be used without the STATISTICS chapter, unless the researcher already has a background in statistics. The reader may find the STATISTICS chapter useful in interpreting the computer printouts that are forwarded by other projects or researchers for program use.

In overview, the chapters on research approaches and methods for analyzing data represent steps taken in the research process. These steps result in the formulation of a research plan. The chapter on LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES presents a guide for locating the information needed to complete the research plan and then to conduct the research project. At this point, the researcher may find out that the original plan may already have been done, may need to be modified, or may proceed with the background material located. This chapter also presents methods for organizing information and materials for future community use.

If funding is not already available for the project, the reader may wish to utilize the chapter on RESEARCH PROPOSALS AND REPORTS as a tool for completing a funding proposal. The section of this chapter concerning research reports is valuable regardless of funding status, for any project results should be recorded for future use. Communities may then decide to protect the information, for that is their option. It is noted in this chapter that good reporting procedures are necessary to maintain good rapport with funding agencies, and that there are techniques of reporting that protect confidential data.

The last chapter, on COOPERATIVE EFFORTS WITH RESEARCHERS, describes some of the problems that community groups sometimes have in working with researchers and in locating resources from outside the community. Guidelines for establishing relationships that benefit those cooperating on a project are suggested. Methods for protecting information are also discussed.

These chapters are intended as an introduction to basic aspects of community-based research. Bibliographies of advanced sources are presented at the end of each chapter, in case the reader wants more information. The appendix on RESOURCES FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT gives additional information for those seeking support for projects. The entries include sources available for both research projects and for development projects that may require some research in the process. For example, a fine arts project may be applied to the development of a crafts complex, requiring a new building for housing of the results. So, funding sources that might be an indirect resource for a project are included. And lastly, the appendix on a SAMPLE COMPUTER PACKAGE SETUP carries through the questionnaire given earlier in the chapter on NEEDS ASSESSMENTS, to show the coding necessary to input that example to a program package.

Our intention in presenting this guide to the research process is to include all of the steps needed to complete a project, while retaining the use of individual chapters as parts of a handbook.

# INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of this century, thousands of research projects have been conducted involving Native American communities. There is an increasing awareness, often painful to communities, that this research usually does not come back to the community directly, either in the form of knowledge contributed to the community or contributions toward social development. With the incidence of alcohol-related illness, suicide, and other poverty related socio-economic conditions rising annually, the urgency for community-based research to develop solutions is now felt as never before. Research is a powerful tool for community development, whether for assessing the needs for community services or for development through the preservation of cultural traditions. This handbook is guided by a vision of communities increasing their research potential from within, and developing research relationships that directly benefit the community.

In the past there were specific reasons for not including community leadership in the general course of research investigations. Attitudes of researchers have often reflected the trends of thinking in society-at-large during a particular time, rather than ill intentions on the part of the researcher. Though times are changing, some of these views persist and must be dealt with in present day projects. If some of these attitudes and procedures of the past can be identified, then similar situations may be avoided in future research relationships. With understanding and communication, the time for reciprocal relationships for research, or those that benefit all participants in a project, can come.

## UNDERSTANDING THE PAST

Certain trends of thought during the recent past have shaped the policies and methods of research and development. A few of these trends are outlined and contrasted to come of the current trends that contribute to cross-cultural cooperation.

* One viewpoint present in the early study of tribal cultures assumed that these cultures were in the process of dying out or becoming extinct. Research following this viewpoint tended to focus upon the documentation of culture as it existed in its oldest forms, rather than examining the change resulting in cross-cultural contact. The motivation behind this widespread documentation, that tribal cultures might be rapidly disappearing, led to the idea that if these cultures were not quickly documented, then all record of them might be lost. American Indians were seen as subjects for research, and rarely participated in the formulation of the questions asked. This

approach often results in the members of a culture being regarded as "objects" of study. In contrast to this view, a new trend is emerging which recognizes cultural diversity and the continuation of traditional cultures. This dynamic model of society sees cultural interchange and change as an ongoing process.

* Another view held in earlier research efforts is the idea that certain cultures are "primitive," while others are more complex. This categorizing of cultures was often based on the state of technology and led to a "ranking oriented" approach to cultures. That is, some cultures were believed to be more highly developed than others. While not explicitly saying that technologically complex cultures are better than "primitive" cultures, the ranking process revealed biased value judgement through the criteria selected for ranking. Today, current trends in research tend to recognize the complexities of holistic cultural systems, where cultural subsystems (such as religion, kinship, economics, ecology, and legal systems) are delicately interrelated and very sensitive to change. Today, many researchers look to holistic systems for the answers to present day problems created by advanced technology. Increased sensitivity to the functional value of belief systems is leading to recognition of the importance of presenting different views. For example, tribal origin and creation stories are more frequently presented along with the results of archaeological finds, recognizing the importance of the tribal view.

* One method that discouraged many communities from the idea of research involved the practice of a researcher locating a cooperative person within the community and keeping this person's identity secret. This contact, known as an "informant," provided answers to the researcher's questions, and some of the information gained was generally kept secret until after the informant's death. The secrecy in this method of gathering data limited community access to the data, and in many cases the information passed on with the researcher without being made public. In contrast, today many tribes require approval of a research plan before the researcher is allowed within a community. Those who assist in a research project are often called "participants" or "consultants," and may help formulate the research design.

* Although the earlier, academic research studies contributed to the theoretical knowledge of man's history and the different cultural systems, recognition of the value of **applied** research was limited. Applied research is practical, in that it is oriented toward the documentation or resolution of a problem. It is intended in the applied research plan that the research results will be turned back to the people. Action research is an outgrowth of the applied trend, and today more researchers are willing to become involved due to the growing acceptance of this type of research among the academic community.

* In terms of social and economic development, native communities have often been impacted by the trend toward **development theory**. Development theory implies a position of superiority in a hierarchy, in that one culture initiates change based on its world view, upon another culture. In the past, those motivated by this theory often assumed that what is better is known, and little attention was paid to the idea that resources are limited. Differences in attitude toward the environment can create conflict in the implementation of development strategies. For example, the two different views of progress as "conquering nature" versus progress as "living in harmony with nature" lead to conflict. An emerging approach to community development encourages development through finding out what the community wants and then helping the community to get the skills and resources needed to achieve these desires.

Although not all research activities of the past were characterized by these trends, often these views promoted a negative view of research by the community. With cooperation and participation in the research process, community persons can become aware of the limitations of research while developing resources for development.

## SELF-DETERMINATION

The past decade, an era of emerging self-determination, has seen new beginnings of Indian solutions to the socio-economic problems at hand. Development can be seen as realizing new solutions and innovations while retaining tribal tradition. This type of development comes from within, where the sensitivity to the delicate balance of a holistic culture lies. Although remaining objective is important to the research and development process, the researcher can take care to be objective while being guided by the insights of a insider. Various steps to take in reducing cultural bias are presented in this handbook. In a holistic culture, the insider may be able to predict how change in one area might affect other areas, and that is a crucial insight for the type of development that seeks to retain traditional values.

What then does self-determination mean in terms of research? These are a few of the meanings:

* Determining priorities for research, as they relate to needs seen by communities
* Determining what local human and material resources are and how to utilize these at appropriate and critical stages in the planning process
* Determining when and where to use "outside expertise" or a consultant
* Determining the depth of the study
* Determining the methodology to be used
* Determining if and how the data will be applied
* Determining which data will be protected or made public
* Determining access to the results

Let us look at a specific research example. If alcoholism were determined to be a high community priority for research, several approaches could be developed. A survey could be taken to determine the extent of alcoholism in the community. Or, a new treatment approach could be evaluated for its effectiveness in reducing the alcoholism present. The community might ask, "Is the survey really necessary to document this problem?" There have been hundreds of alcoholism studies done by outsiders in the past, and many Indian communities feel the need to develop more in-depth studies that test solutions.

## COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH

The concept of community-based research has its roots in the idea of self-determination. It is research, largely descriptive, that comes from within the community. It may include outsiders, but in a cooperative and sharing relationship that is sensitive to the viewpoints of both insiders and outsiders. Community-based research can be an invaluable tool in community development, as a means of documenting needs and testing solutions.

This handbook presents four different methods of research: the needs assessment, survey research, program evaluation, and culture and fine arts research. There are many other approaches to research, and additional references are given at the end of each chapter for those who are looking for greater depth than could be presented here. These four were chosen because of their basic usefulness in community development. The rest of the handbook is focused upon the tools for collecting and analyzing data, such as statistical methods, computer methods, library and information resources, and preparing the research proposal or report. The final chapter on cooperative efforts with researchers points out techniques for avoiding misunderstandings between researchers and participants, insiders and outsiders, and methods for establishing cooperative working relationships.

This handbook is intended as a practical research guide for an era of self-determination in community development.