SOCIAL PROBLEMS, Vol. 27, No. 2, December 1979

FIELD RESEARCH IN MINORITY COMMUNITIES: ETHICAL, METHODOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL OBSERVATIONS BY AN INSIDER*

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This paper reviews issues in field research in minority communities. The general question, "Where shall minority research come from?" is posed, then considerable attention is focused on the insider-outsider controversy—especially its importance for Chicanos in the social sciences. It is argued that minority researchers have certain empirical and methodological advantages in conducting field research, but also face unique problems in simultaneously addressing ethical, methodological and political concerns. The author's field research experience among Chicano families is then drawn on for general implications for insider research in minority communities.

In the past decade the social science literature on minority research has expanded greatly. Much of it is critical of earlier findings and of the relationships between researchers and minority peoples. The first critique is conceptual, emphasizing that inappropriate assumptions and frameworks have produced distorted accounts of minority group life. The second is political, stressing that the relationship between social researchers and the people they study has been unequal at best and exploitative at worst: researchers take information and eventually receive professional advancement, but the minority people receive nothing for the time and information they provide.

Some social scientists who study minority groups have experienced compelling pressures to reexamine their concepts and methods and to change their relationships with the people they study (Moore, 1973). Some critics of past research in minority communities have called for the use of *field research* in studying minority groups, arguing that this technique better sensitizes investigators to the true nature of the community and its members (Montero, 1977:71), and that more neutral and detached approaches are incapable of grasping social realities.

Field research—here a generic team for observing events in their natural setting—requires firsthand involvement in the communities being studied. Because it can capture ongoing behavior and meaning in terms of the people being studied (Schatzman and Strauss, 1973:13), field research is particularly appealing to those who see the distortions in earlier research as coming from frameworks and conceptions imposed from the outside.

Although many scholars have chosen field research as a corrective strategy, the literature on fieldwork processes (such as entering the field, and developing relationships of exchange and trust) does not adequately address all the special problems of conducting research in minority communities. Far greater attention has been devoted to the conceptual and ethical problems of minority research than to its methodological problems. Not only have the techniques of studying minorities remained largely uncodified (Montero, 1977:2), but there is very little information on the unique conditions faced by minority scholars conducting research in minority communities. Wax (1979:513) has observed recently that a "fieldworker's gender, age, prestige, expertise or ethnic identity may limit or determine what he or she can accomplish." There is now a growing literature on the effects of gender in field research (e.g., Golde, 1970; Easterday *et al.*, 1977; Warren, 1977), but there is almost none on the effects of ethnic or racial identity in the field. For example, a recent volume of the *Journal of Social Issues* (44:1977) devoted to research among racial and cultural minorities has only one paper on the problems of the minority researcher studying minority people (Maykovich, 1977).

* Revised version of a paper delivered at the annual meeting of the Western Social Science Association, April 28, 1978, Denver, Colorado.

The present paper will be focused on this particular knowledge gap. Problems and advantages of minority field researchers will be considered in the context of recent critiques, and the contention that the special insight of minority group scholars (insiders) makes them best qualified to conduct research in minority communities will be sympathetically but critically examined. Emphasizing examples from my own fieldwork, I will eventually show how minority (and gender) status can affect the conduct of field research by facilitating some common processes in the conduct of field research and introducing unique difficulties in others.

THE INSIDER-OUTSIDER CONTROVERSY

One general issue important in research on minorities is that of who should do it (Bridges, 1973:392): "Where shall race relations research come from?" There is considerable disagreement. Moore (1973:66), for example, contends that the distortions in past research reflect the "biases and limitations of the 98 percent Anglo white composition of the profession," and it is now a common viewpoint that the special insight of minority group scholars (insiders) renders them best qualified to conduct research in minority communities.

Wilson summarizes some combined arguments of black scholars on the issue:

> (1) Whites are basically incapable of grasping black realities and (2) because of the very nature of their experiences, blacks and whites will approach the subject of race with very different foci of interest . . . (1974:324).

Opponents argue that nonminority researchers are better qualified for such research because minority scholars may lack the objectivity required.

In academic circles this "insider-outsider" debate has been stimulated in part by Robert Merton's (1972) position paper on the sociology of knowlege. The essay was written in response to the view popular among some black scholars in the late sixties and early seventies: that white scholars be excluded from research in black communities. Merton criticizes blacks' claim to monopolistic and privileged forms of knowledge, characterizing them as elitist and exclusionary. He identifies two extreme positions. One, the insider doctrine, holds that insiders have monopolistic or privileged access to knowledge of a group: the insider is "endowed with special insight into matters necessarily obscure to others, thus possessed of a penetrating discernment" (1972:11). The other, the outsider doctrine, holds that unprejudiced knowledge about groups is accessible only to nonmembers of those groups. Merton's solution is to transcend the distinct statuses. He concludes: "Insiders and outsiders in the domain of knowledge, unite. You have nothing to lose but your claims. You have a world of understanding to win" (1972:44).

Merton's essay raises many significant and disturbing questions. I cannot respond to all of them here but do want to draw attention to methodological and empirical issues he does not consider. Among the conditions affecting minority research is the perception that minority people themselves have of the research enterprise. Social scientists have reported hostility among minority people, and distrust of researchers. Blauner and Wellman (1973:317) point to the growing hostility in many black ghettos, and suggest that such hostility has probably always existed among Chicanos. Moore's account of the history of a study of Mexican Americans (funded by the Ford Foundation) clearly reveals community suspicion of and defense against Anglo researchers. A common complaint was, "Why is it always Anglos who study us, why can't it be one of us?" (1967:234)

White and nonwhite researchers alike would do well to recognize the reported resistance in minority communities. Moore underscores a cynical truism, but one worth repeating when considering minority research: "Most mature minority persons are very well aware of the realities and their helplessness underlies much minority suspicion of the rationale of academic research" (1977:152): the inevitable result is a very realistic distrust of the research enterprise. Clearly such distrust can make field research problematic for both insiders and outsiders, even if insiders even-

tually bridge the gap and are accepted by those they wish to study. Outsider status can prohibit some sociologists from conducting field research in some minority communities, and because field research does involve studying events in their natural setting, it may be especially restricted to researchers of color. Merton's call for insiders and outsiders to unite ignores the larger context of race relations within which research is really carried out.

MINORITY RESEARCH AS EXPLOITATION

A central theme in the recent critique of research on minorities is that social scientists have systematically (if unintentionally) exploited minority peoples. This position has been best expressed by Blauner and Wellman who assert that research serves to maintain the subordination of racial minorities while maintaining the privileged status that social scientists enjoy:

> Exploitation exists whenever there is a markedly unequal change between two parties, and when this inequality is supported by a discrepancy in social power. In social research, subjects give up some time, some energy, and some trust, but in the typical case get almost nothing from the transition. As social scientists, we get grants which pay our salaries; the research thesis legitimates our professional status, then publications advance us along in income and rank, further widening the material and status gap between the subjects and ourselves (1973:316).

Hirsch has commented on Anglo white social scientists who invade Chicano communities and give nothing in return:

> They come to these communities to observe and "systematically" record the way of life of these "strange" people. These observations in turn become tools by which future scholars will be trained so that they can come out to the reservations (barrios, hollows, or ghettos) years from now and verify the observations they have studied. These activities then become the basis for competing theories . . . the battlefields upon which these intellectual wars are fought are the lives of ethnic people. In the southwest the battlefields are most often Chicano communities. Unfortunately the only winners in these confrontations are the individual social scientists, whose prestige, tenure, and monetary reward are dependent upon the acceptance by the academic community of their respective theories (1973:11).

Staples (1976:19) has contended even more critically that subjects get nothing and are sometimes even victimized in the process by being identified as a pathological group.

Some minority scholars have actively encouraged minority people to exclude nonminority researchers from their communities. For example, Armando Rendon has told Chicanos that they should no longer "permit their barrios to be used as laboratories, at least not by Anglo scientificos, nor allow their brains to be picked by opportunist Anglo social scientists, at least not for free" (1971:88).

Such critical observations about the exploitive outsider are very well taken, but an equally crucial and more subtle point must not be overlooked: researchers who are insiders can also be exploiters. "There may be less unhappiness at being used this way by a budding scholar from one's own ethnic group, but this doesn't change the essentially exploitative character of a relationship" (Blauner and Wellman, 1973:317), because minority scholars are still working toward their own professional advancement.

THE INSIDER-OUTSIDER CONTROVERSY AND CHICANO SOCIAL SCIENCE

The insider-outsider controversy, and its implications of exploitation, must be seen against the backdrop of a more academic controversy in the social sciences between "conventional" and "critical" perspectives (Moore, 1973:67). The controversy itself goes back to the protest movements of the late sixties, when black intellectuals attempted to develop black perspectives to guide research and writing on the black experience (Wilson, 1974:322). Undoubtedly the protest movements of the times also fostered the earliest Chicano critiques of social science (Romano, 1973a, b; Vaca, 1970a, b). Among black social scientists, however, attempts to develop black perspec-

tives have a long tradition. The "critical thinking and scholarship provided by the older generation of Black sociologists" (Wilson, 1974:334) such as E. Franklin Frazier, W. E. B. Du Bois and others was important in laying the foundation for the criticism that black social scientists advanced in the sixties.

The *relative* presence of black and Chicano scholars in the social sciences is important to recognize in understanding the insider-outsider debate and its contemporary meaning for Chicanos. Blacks have made progress in developing a black perspective in the social sciences, but a "coherent framework or perspective on Chicano sociology has yet to emerge" (Mirandé, 1978:294). Chicano scholars are comparative newcomers in the social sciences and their hard-hitting critique of traditional frameworks gives the insider-outsider debate a significance that goes beyond the criticism in the earlier protest literature. Chicano scholars are now entering the social sciences in larger numbers than ever before, making their presence felt, and working toward the development of their own critical tradition. The insider-outsider issues will remain salient.

EMPIRICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ADVANTAGES OF INSIDER RESEARCH

I do not suggest that white researchers should not study racial minorities, but I do think that field research conducted by minority scholars has some empirical and some methodological advantages. The most important one is that the "lenses" through which they see social reality may allow minority scholars to ask questions and gather information others could not:

> Undoubtedly, white social scientists are as capable of engaging in race research as their nonwhite colleagues even though their everyday experiences differ. However, because they come to the task with different backgrounds they are likely to see different problems and pose different questions. The intellectual and practical concerns may overlap, yet their analyses and recommendations will almost necessarily differ insofar as these are tempered by differences in the individual sense of urgency and conception of the possible. The results of these differing perspectives for what appears as interpretations of the urban world are profound (Ellis and Orleans, 1971:18).

Blauner and Wellman (1973:329) also believe that minority researchers will pose different questions and perhaps discover different answers. They contend further that there are certain aspects of racial phenomena that are difficult if not impossible for a member of the dominant group to grasp empirically and formulate conceptually. Indeed, the central criticism of past research is that traditional frameworks have not applied well to minority experiences. As Valentine and Valentine put it, most who study and report on ghetto life do so from a thoroughly external viewpoint and "this influences the kind of data and the quality of understanding that emerges" (1970:403). Such observations bring us to the question of whether traditional frameworks are inapplicable or merely insufficient for studying racial, ethnic and cultural minorities. However that question may eventually be resolved, it is very clear by now that insiders in the minority world will undoubtedly influence their research, and often for the better. This is not to suggest that such researchers' understanding or experience will substitute for more systematic knowledge, rather that it may generate hypotheses and discovery of data precluded from traditional frameworks and the experiences of outsiders.

The unique methodological advantage of insider field research is that it is less apt to encourage distrust and hostility, and the experience of being excluded (e.g., as a white researcher) from communities, or of being allowed to "see" only what people of color want them to see. People in minority communities have developed so many self-protective behaviors for dealing with outsiders, that it is quite reasonable to question whether many real behaviors and meanings are accessible to outsiders of another color. The issue here, again, is not only that minority people would consciously mislead white researchers (though they may well do so), but also that those researchers often lack insight into the nuances of behavior.

Parades, for example, explains how enthnographers frequently misrepresent Chicano culture because they are unaware of the "performance" element of Chicano behavior. He provides vivid examples of the way in which outsiders misrepresent Chicano behavior, and cautions that informants may go out of their way to tell the ethnographer what they think ethnographers want to hear:

> The informant not only has his stereotypes about the Anglo fieldworker, but he also has some very definite ideas as to what stereotypes the Anglo holds about him. Sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously, the informant may seek to conform to the stereotype he thinks the Anglo fieldworker has of him rather than expressing his own attitudes and opinions (Parades, 1977:29).

Despite the obvious advantages of insider research, the most frequently voiced objection is that the "subjectivity" of researchers will lead to bias in data gathering and interpretation. This repeated concern over subjectivity disregards the fact that, like their colleagues in majority groups, minority researchers are trained in the methodological rigors of their disciplines. This is not to say that such training by itself guarantees credibility, but simply that both insiders and outsiders are subject to the standards imposed by the scientific community. Research conducted by minority scholars should not be equated with subjective distortion. Even those researchers who openly take the side of the minorities they study, as opposed to the side of the dominant society, must subject their data to validity checks. Subjectivity does not disquality work as scholarship or science as long as data gathering procedures and values are both made explicit. As long as researchers follow established procedures and logically relate their conclusions to the data, they are systematically guarding against bias, whatever their backgrounds.

Becker notes that researchers are accused of bias when they present the side of subordinates and relates this to a hierarchy of credibility: "In any system of ranked groups, participants take it as a given that members of the highest group have the right to define things the way they are" (1967:239). Taking a stand doesn't itself present a problem; rather, the problem is to make sure that research meets the standards of good scientific work, "that our unavoidable sympathies do not render our results invalid" (239). Minority researchers who seek to "set the record straight" by correcting past distortions can still exhibit scientific integrity where data gathering procedures and interpretations are concerned. These are distinct dimensions of anyone's overall research effort.

METHODOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES AND DILEMMAS: A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Minority researchers conducting studies in their "own" communities may experience problems common to all researchers as well as dilemmas imposed by their own racial identity. The effects of minority status on research relationships and data collection deserve serious consideration. My own experience in conducting field research among Chicano families may illuminate some of these issues as well as stimulate further discussions of insider research.

Entrance

The purpose of the research was to study marital roles, marital power and ethnicity in Chicano families. The intent was to "get inside" families and study marital interaction, using focused interviews and observation. "The private character of family interaction and the experience of others in gaining access to families for purposes of research suggested that entry would be a formidable problem" (Zinn, 1979:9). Heeding Bott's (1957) methodological advice, I located families through local agencies, and "entered" the field through a local community education program. The program included workshops and activities for parents of enrolled students. Here I had the opportunity to work with program staff members and participating mothers.

My task was to establish credibility with a number of different groups in the organization as a

basis for recruiting families for the research. For ethical reasons, I attempted to structure my relationships with people so as to include my role as researcher. I became a functioning participant in the program, sometimes assisting staff members with the numerous duties of running the program, and other times participating in workshops and other related activities, all the while communicating to people that I was there to conduct research on families.

Like all researchers, I found that entrance was not a one-time activity. As Warren remarks there is a "constant question about entree to different friendship cliques, different private homes, and different public places" (1977:101). Entering was a constant process because potential informants had to be negotiated with and relationships established separately (Schatzman and Strauss, 1973:23). In the process of establishing relationships with individual informants and getting them to accept my role as researcher, I experienced anxieties common to fieldworkers in their initial phases of research.

In fact, the formidable nature of entering the field and establishing research relationships casts considerable doubt on the notion of minority scholars as "privileged" insiders. Though I was an insider in ethnic identity, I was not an insider in the organization or in the community in which I had chosen to conduct research. Like all researchers, I entered as an outsider and attempted to move carefully toward successful acceptance by community families.

Early in the research, two types of relationships developed, one with program staff members and another with participating mothers. These relationships were not given by my ascribed status of Chicana, but my ethnicity and gender did facilitate the ongoing negotiations with informants. Some of the staff members were paraprofessionals working toward their Bachelor of Arts degree at the local college. They had some knowledge of the portrayal of Chicanos and other minorities in the social sciences, and some exposure to new perspectives on minority groups. As a result, they showed great interest in the research and in the researcher, and went out of their way to be helpful. They made frequent remarks about my being Chicana (or Mexicana) and expressed the feeling that Chicanos should be studied by their own people.

Similarly, Maykovich (1977), a researcher of Japanese origin who did fieldwork among Japanese people, found that personal sympathy was shown to her, a young, female university professor who was working hard. Her appearance as a "researcher with professional qualifications seemed to represent a model success story Japanese style and the realization of achievement goals shared by Japanese in general" (1977:113). In my case, the paraprofessional staff women identified with me, not a a model success story but as a Chicana who was also working towards the completion of a degree.

The ease with which I established my researcher role with staff members did not, however, occur with the parent group. My early contacts with this group were less sustained than those with staff members, and often our interaction took place during a structured program activity. These women accepted my participation and my explanation that I wanted to get to know families for research purposes, but at first they were polite and somewhat distant. My relationship with them took shape in a most unusual way, one that illustrates the importance of the fieldworker's individual characteristics.

During a series of sewing workshops in the program, the women discovered that I was unskilled in the craft of sewing. They laughed at my ignorance, made fun of me, and teased me with comments like "a Mexicana like you doesn't know how to sew?" They decided that I should learn, and took it upon themselves to instruct and assist me in using the sewing machines at the program site. Over the course of several workshops, they worked with me on the construction of a blouse, each taking time from her own sewing and proudly displaying her knowledge of the craft. It was really through this interaction that our friendships began and that they began to identify with me: because of a peculiarity of mine, and their ideas about the skills that a proper Mexican woman should have, I was able to gain their acceptance. This experience provides support

for Wax's (1979) contention that, in the field, the peculiarities of the individual researcher become magnified. In the process of developing interactions with strangers, characteristics of the individual fieldworker can drastically affect the process of fieldwork.

Through my participation in the community action program, I was able to find families for research. By taking an active part in program activities, I had acquired a place in the community and developed relationships with women. When I did "enter" their families, the process of negotiation with husbands and other family members had to take place again, but I entered as a friend of the wives, our relationships bolstered, no doubt, by our common ethnicity and gender.

Ethnicity and Gender in Data Collection

There is a notion, sometimes expressed in the fieldwork literature that "women are more 'natural' fieldworkers since their traditional role in many societies is one of interaction and relationships" (Warren and Rasmussen, 1977:351). This idea, however, has been based on the experiences of women researchers who have also been outsiders; there is very little information in the literature on the effect a woman's insider status can have on field research. Moore discovered in a recent project that middle-aged Mexican American men actually obtained more and better interview data than women, and she explained that finding as based on:

> . . . the role of the traditional poverty level Mexican American family, in which women are quite subordinate. Men interviewers of middle age carry prestige. They are the peers of male dominated respondents and in male dominated households were allowed to interview women respondents more readily than women interviewers (Moore, 1977:155).

My experience was probably different because of the type of research I was conducting and because of the relationships I had established with women prior to the series of interviews with husbands and wives in families. Although the women were interviewed and observed more than men, the men did discuss marital roles and family decision making with me. A real shortcoming in most studies of Chicano families has been the tendency to assume that family roles can be explained by cultural ideals and values. In fact, family ideals often differ from actual role performance of husbands and wives. The privacy of the family setting allows members to engage in what Goffman (1959) refers to as "backstage" behavior. This informal behavior is an important part of family interaction, but it is often difficult for sociologists to study. I was able to observe both husbands and wives in different settings, and to ask them questions about specific behaviors in their families. A male Chicano researcher might not have been able to obtain this information. Given the Chicano ideal of male dominance, it is possible that informants would have felt compelled to reveal only the ideal dimensions of their family role to a researcher who was Chicano and male. As it was, both husbands and wives allowed me to examine both real and ideal dimensions of their roles.

Exchange and Reciprocity

As the fieldwork progressed and I developed research relationships with specific families, I became immediately involved in their day-to-day lives. I was gathering data on substantive research questions and I was also making an effort to create relationships of mutual exchange and reciprocity.

As Wax (1952) indicated some time ago, such exchanges are the key to maintaining good rapport. However, the issue of reciprocity may be different in research among minorities. Whatever the actual nature of the exchanges taking place, they involve what Moore refers to as the "status of minorities in American society" (1977:157). Because that status is a subordinate one, the researcher is often in total control of the research enterprise, creating most of the relationships and usually fashioning them to meet the demands of the research (Blauner and Wellman, 1973). Viewing reciprocity as more than a field technique, I was concerned that the informants receive some-

thing in return for the information they provided. Sometimes reciprocity was expressed simply by spending time with informant family members, listening to their concerns, providing assistance when it was asked for, or helping their children with school work. Because some of the research families were involved in the community education program, I could also assist them in the course of the program activities. One informant continually called on me for help in carrying out her duties as chairperson of the parent group. I spent much time with her—planning meetings, working out activities and writing letters. Other informants also asked for assistance with such program activities as composing and typing letters, organizing meetings and workshops, and planning and carrying out a wide range of activities.

My direct involvement with informants did not always further the goals of the research, but it was "essential to alter the exploitative relationships which research imposes" (Blauner and Wellman, 1973:323). I learned in the field that exchange and reciprocity are more than ideal notions. Informants quickly found that they could call on me for a variety of services. Often I experienced discrepancies between the needs of informants and the demands of the research. At times, my ongoing participation was all consuming, leaving me with little time for analysis of the evidence I was gathering.

Schatzman and Strauss (1973:117) instruct fieldworkers to move back and forth constantly between data gathering and analyzing the data. Sometimes several days would go by before I was able to sit at my desk and analyze the information that I had gathered, recorded and stored. My concern that the research not be exploitative may have led me to take on more responsibilities than I could handle—a problem, of course, not unique to researchers who are insiders.

Direct participation in the research setting does sharpen the researchers' sense of obligation to the people they are studying. Independent of one's racial identity, "participation leads to stronger emotional relationships and perhaps more compelling obligation to the community to do more than detached types of research" (Valentine and Valentine, 1970:405).

Insider Problems

Maykovich cautions that a minority researcher is not any more *free* from problems than is a white researcher attempting to carry on a project in a minority community: "The problems are different in kind, but by no means different in severity" (1977:118). Meeting obligations to informants may also create problems which are peculiar to minority researchers based on their identification with the people they study. For example, an informant asked me to speak on her behalf in a dispute she was having with one of the program directors, an Anglo. In asking me to intervene and support her in the dispute she repeatedly used the phrase, "We Chicanos have to stick together." The expectation that minorities will stick together can put one to the severe test of acknowledging being an insider and at the same time realizing that some claims can jeopardize the long-term research goals. While I did intervene, I was aware that such action might be potentially dangerous to my research since the director could have withdrawn permission to recruit families through the program. A similar test could, of course, come up for nonminority fieldworkers who are asked for assistance in dealing with officials, but a request phrased in insider terms has a special ethical and political meaning to a researcher who has taken a consciously insider position.

Quality of the Data

Field research is always subject to problems stemming from invalidating or contaminating effects of the researcher's presence and selective perception and interpretation (McCall, 1969:128). I attempted to guard against those biases by collecting information from a variety of sources and by using two methods: interviewing and observation. The use of more than one method is the best corrective against contamination "because each method reveals different aspects of empirical

reality" (Denzin, 1970:49). Items bearing on a given substantive point were compared using both methods and continually evaluated for consistency. Using both techniques clearly enhanced the credibility of the research.

Leaving the Field

In spite of the efforts I made to become directly involved in ways that would insure that informants received something from our interaction, I did not *alter* the political context within which the research took place. My relationships with the people I studied were not exploitative, but they were not equal. I created the relationships specifically to carry out my research. Furthermore, I brought those relationships to a close when my purposes were accomplished. During the last stages of the research, the stage of breaking off relationships and preparing to leave the field, the uneven nature of the research relationship became clear. I tried to be honest with primary informant families once the research relationships had been established. I was frank about the amount of time I would be spending in the field, for example. Still, they knew that I had accepted a university teaching position and eventually would be leaving the community. Nevertheless, some of the informants had come to depend on me. I knew this in the final stages of the research, and I felt uncomfortable when I heard the informant say at a parent meeting, "I wish she was not leaving us. I couldn't have been (Parent Activities) chair without her help. I don't know how I'll manage when she leaves." The woman was not merely complimenting me. She was expressing a real concern. She had come to depend on me, and now I was removing my services and support. The calls for recriprocity and researcher responsibility must be heeded, but it must also be recognized that researcher responsibility in meeting obligations may create problems of its own.

A related problem in field research like this is that as researchers go about classifying, summarizing and analyzing, their own feelings and responses often get lost in the aggregate of data. Johnson says that "it is impossible to review the literature about methods in the social sciences without reaching the conclusion that 'having feelings' is like an incest taboo in sociological research" (Johnson, 1975:147); but I do have some feelings about my research relationships which must be expressed. I had forged ties with families, and finally I had to bring our relationships to an end. Researchers do not often speak of it, but it was difficult for me to make that break. I felt uneasy, for example, when one of the primary informants revealed his feelings this way:

> Well it has been good that you came, good that we got to know you, but it's too bad that you won't stay here. Why is it that when our people get educated they have to leave us? You should stay here and teach at the College. When my children go to college they should be able to take courses from their own people.

I had an answer for the informant, an answer having to do with my career commitments and an answer which he accepted. Yet I did not have an answer for myself when faced with the disturbing question: was I, after all, one of those researchers who is never seen in the community again once the study is completed? It was and is a painful question which brings home the fact that "doing research is not a neutral encounter but a problematic often painful human experience which changes the informant as well as the researcher" (Blauner, 1977:xviii).

This ethical dilemma may be unique to insider research. The fact that "researchers tend to disappear from the field after short term expressions of concern" (Moore, 1977:146) may be unavoidable. Insiders may have little choice in this matter, *if* their professional advancement requires their separation from their minority group.

CONCLUSION

The creation of a social science which has liberating rather than oppressive ramifications will require fundamental alterations in the relationships between minority peoples and conditions of

research. Gestures of reciprocity do not, by themselves, alter the unequal nature of research relationships. Nor is having research conducted by insiders sufficient to alter the inequality that has characterized past research. Field research conducted by committed minority scholars may provide a corrective to past empirical distortions in that we are better able to get at some truths. However, our minority identity and commitment to be accountable to the people we study may also pose unique problems. These problems should serve to remind us of our political responsibility and compel us to carry out our research with ethical and intellectual integrity.

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