When the Topic Is Racism: Research and Advocacy with A Community Coalition

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THIS ARTICLE PROVIDES AN ACCOUNT OF THE PROCESS OF A community-initiated research project on racism.[1] The account includes the immediate aftermath of the study's public release, which is effectively promoting social change in this community. The case study addresses a number of issues from the perspective of a research consultant active in social justice initiatives. These issues include practical issues in the research process regarding research questions and methods, the intersection of theory with practical knowledge, research as disguised activism, research criticized as divisive to the community, and research as knowledge production.

Conventional research epistemologies that assume research to be "value free" have been increasingly problematized in recent decades. Still, research is generally assumed to have a limited relationship to advocacy. Advocates of socially engaged research take a number of positions contrary to the assumption of value-free research. Generally, these positions acknowledge "value-committed" research and seek to undermine the practice of researcher-as-expert distant from the circumstances being studied. There are good arguments for valuing the knowledge-in-practice of community activists (Kirby and McKenna, 1989). Furthermore, their active engagement is often crucial in ensuring that the results of the study are utilized for more than collecting dust on shelves across the community.

Nevertheless, applied social research is often undermined by valuations of the credibility of such research, limited conceptions of what the scholarly creation of new knowledge is, acceptable venues for the publication of findings, and weak value apportioned to community "service." The following account addresses a number of issues. The intent is to demonstrate that such research is important, that scholars would benefit from such involvement, and that there may be an important niche in social justice and community issues for researchers from outside the academy.

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Researchers handle researcher self-awareness in numerous ways. Although many argue for methods of "bracketing," few extend their notions of reflexivity to the extent articulated by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. For Bourdieu, reflexivity not only meant an awareness of one's investment in the research or the ways in which researchers bring themselves into the methods, data, findings, and conclusions (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Reflexivity for Bourdieu is the turning upon itself of the sociological tools — a critical sociology of the field of sociology, not just increased methodological rigor (Meisenhelder, 1997). Recognizing that conventional epistemological forms are products of society, Bourdieu called for analysis of the means of production of sociological research.

This case study examines a community coalition and a research project on racism initiated by that coalition. My field notes are supplemented by key informant interviews. Data were analyzed for observations related to (1) applied social research on a socio-politically sensitive issue in a community-based setting and (2) intersections of research and advocacy. More detailed themes were derived from these two domains. Reliability checks were conducted with coalition members through formal and informal interviews. The details are presented with anticipation of their utility in other cases. However, such generalizing must remain the reader's responsibility, as he or she will be most cognizant of the specifics of the context to which they may wish to apply these reflections. It is my hope that the case study "offers lessons for further conversation rather than undebatable conclusions, and [will] substitute the companionship of intimate detail for the loneliness of abstracted facts" (Ellis and Bochner, 2000: 744).

Case Study: Diversity Thunder Bay

Background of Thunder Bay

Canada is a country with a population that encompasses a wide diversity of cultures and ethnic groups. It is a country often described as having *two* founding nations. Yet Aboriginal peoples predated the French and English immigrants as nations on the continent, and are a vibrant element in Canadian society. Numerous ethnic groups have also become part of what is often termed "the Canadian mosaic." The historical colonizing of the Canadian landmass, coupled with ethnic and cultural diversity, has made race relations part of the mosaic also. However, there are competing accounts of the effects of race and racism in Canadian history, culture, and society. Although most racialized people have experienced prejudice or discrimination on the basis of skin color and features, many non-minority people question the existence or effects of racism in a democratic country (Henry et al., 1995).

Thunder Bay is a city of approximately 110,000 people in Northwest Ontario. Aboriginal peoples comprise approximately 12% of the population.[2] Thunder Bay also has a significant multicultural component, with a number of European and non-European cultural societies. In the 1996 census, 2.5% of the population

responded as members of visible minorities.[3] Demographic factors also include a 20-year decline in economic vitality and population.

The history of Northwest Ontario means that Aboriginal-white relations have been an issue for 300 years — they are socially and economically entwined. There is a considerable history of political disenfranchisement, paternalism, bad faith, and oppression (Dunk, 1991). These historical factors are important because they affect present conditions. The long-term effects have been a systemic disadvantaging of Aboriginal peoples under conditions that have been labeled oppressive (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996).

Despite the long history of racial and ethnic interaction, deliberate race relations work is relatively new and limited. Most of this has taken place around the annual March 21 campaign marking the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. In the early 1990s, numerous agencies established Race Relations committees and wrote race relations policies. These agencies included the city of Thunder Bay, Thunder Bay Police Services, both public and Catholic school boards, and the regional hospital board. Nevertheless, people active in issues of community advocacy, First Nations, and multiculturalism felt that the community was generally unaware of or refusing to acknowledge how racism occurs in Thunder Bay at large, and that the March 21 campaign was insufficient. Most of the institutional activity was considered "window dressing." By 1999, many of the committees no longer met regularly, had inadequate representation, or were simply "advisory." Anti-racism workers felt burned out.

The Organization and Its Research Project

The formation of Diversity Thunder Bay followed a canvass of organizations that had committees on race relations or had been involved in such issues. A general conclusion was that Thunder Bay needed a central organization to help coordinate action and public education in this area. Diversity Thunder Bay was formed as a coalition of representatives from First Nations organizations, multicultural organizations, community agencies, municipal institutions, and police services. Membership in the coalition meant that minutes of the monthly meetings were sent to about 35 members, although about 10 people, who varied from month to month, typically attended meetings.

Among the frustrations of anti-racism workers was having to argue repeatedly that racism is an issue in Thunder Bay. It was felt that a study providing baseline information about the issue was needed. In late 2000, a grant was written and funding was secured under the multiculturalism program of the federal government's Department of Canadian Heritage. The study, *A Community of Acceptance: Respect for Thunder Bay's Diversity* (ACOA), was to begin in June 2001 and would include surveys and interviews. I was hired as the research coordinator under a competitive bidding process. This was Diversity Thunder Bay's first significant project.

A Project Management Committee (PMC), consisting of four people from community organizations, oversaw the project. I developed the research methodology in consultation with this committee. Preparation, instrument development, and pilot testing occurred over the summer in preparation for a late September launch of the study.

The ACOA methods and data are reported elsewhere (Haluza-DeLay, 2002a; 2002b). Three hundred ninety-two surveys were returned for a response rate of 38%. Interviews were conducted with 45 people. Results showed considerable experience or observation of racial incidents in the community, explicated racializing social practices, and detailed these practices in key social locations around Thunder Bay. For example, it was found that retail establishments and restaurants were by far the most commonly reported sites of racial incidents. The findings were discussed in the context of social cohesion. Building on the scholarly literature that shows the importance of social cohesion for economic prosperity (Dayton-Johnson, 2001), the data show that racialization is adversely affecting social cohesion in Thunder Bay. The 144-page report was released on March 21, 2002. A six-page report summary was widely distributed.

The Aftermath of the Report Release

The press conference announcing the study results generated a startling front-page headline, "Racism thrives in city"(Ketonen, 2002), and a round of radio interviews. Although the study disappeared from media attention, it continues to generate discussion and is being used by activists and race relations committees a full year after its release.

Institutional reaction to the study was cool or dismissive at first. Three days before the media conference, a courtesy meeting was held with institutional stakeholders. All of these institutions were part of Diversity Thunder Bay and they were therefore aware of the study and presumably knowledgeable of its progress. Several institutional representatives objected strongly to the study. Immediately following the release of the study, for example, the police union came out with a statement disputing the study. The two primary criticisms were "generalizability of 'anecdotes'" and that "stories were reported from other places and the past." Both criticisms showed a misunderstanding of qualitative research methods and the intent of portions of the report to show racializing practices in the community, rather than prove specific incidents.

The same two primary criticisms have been heard from other sources in Thunder Bay in contexts that indicate continuing dismissal of the report and the issue. In such encounters, the PMC maintained a collaborative and cooperative stance that did not single out any institutions, yet remained firmly insistent on addressing the results of the report.

Over the following eight months, anti-racism activists met with various stakeholders. The results have been mixed. For instance, despite the empirical evidence that racism is a problem in Thunder Bay businesses — both in retail

interactions with customers and workplace practices with employees — and a meeting with the Chamber of Commerce, there was no immediately apparent action by the business community to acknowledge diversity issues.[4] On the other hand, the City Council has mandated action, including an audit of diversity-related practices and policies. The City of Thunder Bay and Thunder Bay police services committees on race relations have been rejuvenated. In the case of the police committee, an informant attributes this to the presence on the committee of one of the PMC members pushing for action. But this person credits ACOA with raising sufficient awareness and providing the solid ground upon which to advocate for changes as being necessary. Still, after a media event held by the police race relations committee in November, more than one anti-racism activist felt, "the police seem to think things are generally OK, and they just need to do a little bit" (field notes, November 2002).

Other organizations and community members are also using the report to assert that denial of racism is unacceptable now. Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) is the Grand Council of First Nations in the geographic region near Thunder Bay. Shortly after the report was released, one of the PMC reported:

> Yesterday I received a copy of a letter sent from NAN to the manager of [store name deleted] informing him that since the Diversity Report, NAN was going to follow up on each incident of racism reported to them. The letter went on to detail the incident at ___ and request an apology and a meeting with the manager. Copies were sent to the Mayor, the Chamber of Commerce, Diversity and [a multicultural council]. I am impressed (e-mail, April 2002).

The meeting was held in the mayor's office and an apology was issued privately. NAN has discussed the ACOA findings in other meetings with the city, the Chamber of Commerce, and other institutions. The report appears to be affecting the discursive ground of such discussions, as denial of racism is an untenable position now. Nevertheless, substantive changes in organizational practices and personnel's understanding of the issues will take more time.

Where to from Here?

Dissonance is still present in the community on the topic of racism. The study has been done, reported, distributed, and sometimes read. Community workers and the Aboriginal community expect some action, whereas the majority, particularly those in the municipal and business sectors, would continue to ignore the issue. It is too early to tell how well ACOA will assist long-term social change in the racism experienced by visible minorities and Aboriginal peoples. The most active members of Diversity Thunder Bay feel uniformly that the study was a superb step forward in their activities and that it has been and will be extremely beneficial. "Look at how we got City Council to talk about it so fast," said one.

Anti-racism workers attribute the report's effectiveness to several factors. ACOA provides a solid empirical foundation from which to address racism. These activists felt that the study's high level of quality would make it a useful document in the long term. The research has provided the data to demonstrate the reality of racism in Thunder Bay, including its forms and locations. It leaves little room for continued denial of the problem. A multi-method approach helped; the report went beyond numerical data to provide the "stories" of racialization. "The stories make it come alive. People can see that racism means something," said one. "If we had done it like this ten years ago, maybe we'd be further along now," said another. In addition, the interview data show racializing practices beyond the simple common-sense understandings of racism as only existing in blatant and individualized forms.

Those involved identified a number of consequences of the study. Some action is being taken. The study itself still has some visibility. Informants wish that they could do more to "push" awareness of the study's conclusions and recommendations. Time and resources are limited among anti-racism workers, who generally have other duties in organizations mandated for other primary purposes. Yet, "the subject isn't going away anytime soon," said one informant. The study has provided legitimacy to the issue.

Some of those involved report being renewed, feeling new energy to work on this and related issues. The position of an activist contesting with power is tiring, particularly in the face of denial of the problem. The research has provided new data for the arguments. But it has also given an important emotional boost to some activists. Seeing the project from conception to completion, the sense of empowerment from achieving an accomplishable outcome, and having long-held practitioner's knowledge confirmed through effective social science have contributed to the revitalization. Finally, ACOA alerted members of other community groups to the racism in Thunder Bay, resulting in an increase in the number of organizations and individuals to work on these issues.

Lessons Learned

In this section I present six themes relevant to this research project's utility in social justice efforts at the community level. These themes fall in two categories: (1) practical matters that challenged the project, such as research questions, methods, and the utility of theory; (2) assumptions about research that challenged the project, such as beliefs that the research was divisive or biased, and understandings of research as knowledge production.

Practical Matters That Challenged the Study

Research questions. Among the most important practical matters of any research process is to develop a sound set of research questions. Solid research questions enable efficient use of resources and drive the details of the methods ultimately

chosen. It was my role to listen and learn from those long involved with the issue, but to coach them in articulating specific research questions.

In an early meeting, one committee member said, "we want to be able to say it happens and here's how it happens," in other words, "to document the experiences of racism" (field notes, June 13, 2001). Yet late in July, the committee also discussed the study's purpose as gaining a sense of the attitudes and perceptions across the community so that the organization could better orient its public education and advocacy. These two goals suggest different methods and targets. Further complicating matters, the committee would have liked to assess a wide breadth of community sectors. Finally, the purpose of the study was to be compelling to community policymakers, so it was felt that "victim testimony [alone] was not sufficient" (field notes, June 13, 2001).

Because of these competing intents, clarifying the research questions was an important part of the applied research process. Besides the task of documenting patterns and practices of racialization, I ultimately chose "the effects of racialization on social cohesion" as a framework by which to organize the data collection, analyze the data, and communicate the results. Social cohesion (and its theoretical relative, social capital) have become buzzwords in Canadian policy circles. Although a uniform understanding of the terms is lacking (Jenson, 1998; Robison et al., 2002), "as a quasi-concept useful for policy purposes, social cohesion remains robust" (Beauvais and Jenson, 2002: *v*). I hoped that if the data showed an effect of racism on community social cohesion, the argument for addressing it as a community problem would be stronger than if the report primarily described racism as affecting individual opportunities and quality of life.

Research methods. A second practical matter that arose was the need to control the methods used in the study while working with little flexibility in time line due to the funder's budget cycle. The committee had widely divergent views on the survey technique. The majority on the PMC wanted a great deal of information — more than was feasible. One project committee member was theoretically minded in ways that overly problematized studying the issue. Much of my scholarly work takes a similar critical stance, but the situation reinforced a need for deconstruction and critique to be offset by mundane practicality. Another committee member wanted a very simple instrument. However, such informational surveys had been done and ignored. When it became clear that a lengthier survey would be developed, this member distanced himself from the project for a time. Even more important for methodological reasons was controlling the distribution of the survey. I had to find careful ways to foster the enthusiasm of Diversity Thunder Bay members without sacrificing sampling principles.

Given the desire for this study to communicate powerfully to elite sectors of the community, I pushed methodological rigor more than it appeared the project committee thought necessary.[5] Ultimately, I was confident of the utility and strategic representability of the responses. The survey was extensive but manageable. In the

end, it yielded a great deal of useful data. The response rate compared favorably with other community-based research on the topic, particularly since patterns of racialization were more important than population generalizability. After seeing early drafts of the report and data, the aforementioned "distant" PMC member again became an ardent backer of the project. The methodological rigor meant that later attempts to dismiss the study were not successful.

A contracted researcher must balance client needs, community involvement, and research expertise. Hayes (2000) emphasizes the need for quality control, which is an educational process. The community group and the researcher may operate out of different cultures and must learn to work together. Druckman (2000: 1571–2) points out, "this is also an educational process for both clients and consultants. The clients must learn to appreciate the advantages of using analytical methods to address and solve their problems. The consultant must learn to tailor their methods to the clients' contexts...." Research methodology must be sound particularly on social justice issues, where social norms and powerful social structures will be challenged. This is an important skill set that researchers bring to the issue.

The intersection of theory and practical value. The experience of conducting this study convinced me of the value of research that is theoretically sound and practically valuable (in this case, effectively used in advocacy). Druckman (2000) corroborates this point in an overview of his work as a research consultant. Although nothing specifically original about racialization was discovered through the study, the research was well grounded in the current literature on the social conditions of racialization. ACOA also contributes to the understanding of the fracture points of social cohesion, an area of weakness in the current social capital discourse (Jenson, 1998; Haluza-DeLay, 2002b). By using this theoretical framework, the study addresses the effect of racism on community social relations, rather than only as a negative factor in the quality of life of racialized peoples.

Injustice has certain large-scale structural aspects, but is played out in personal lives. Therefore, research with a justice focus will be contextualized in local circumstances, with local particularities front and center. This is not generally the type of research that lends itself to publication in journals that emphasize universalized results. If researchers are to engage in socially relevant research on issues of justice, the academy will need to revise its valuations, including opening up time and space for community-based work (Peters, 2002). Using the social cohesion framework in this research was part of my scholarly desire to contribute to the literature, a need that will not always coincide with the desires of community groups. However, the framework's utility arose first from the pragmatic concern about communicating the effects of racism to local municipal and business authorities.

Universities are being increasingly challenged to show the relevance of their research for society (Druckman, 2000; Peters, 2002). Unfortunately, this is part

of a neoliberal commodification project in which economics and "practicality" colonize other spheres of the lifeworld. Peters (2002) notes a growing demand for policy-relevant research. As economistic valuations become more prevalent, and practical — ergo, "common-sense" — relevance is preferred, it may become more challenging to conduct social justice research that challenges existing power distribution and taken-for-granted social arrangements. However, the reorganizing of the academic field caused by an emphasis on social relevance may inadvertently open opportunities for more locally relevant and community-based research such as that described here.

Research as knowledge production. As the research progressed and preliminary results began to appear and be reported to the coalition and the PMC, members began to express a sense that the research results should speak on their own. As one committee member said, "the study will make it clear — racism is a problem in our community. I will no longer argue about it. I will just point to the study" (field notes, January 25, 2002). Similarly, another person refused an on-camera television interview after the public release of the document in March. Their assumption appeared to be that knowledge production — the research — can create social change. Ironically, this attitude holds even among activists who operate in the political realm and deal with community power structures.

Events following the release of the report point to political processes that undermine such linear movement from knowledge production to social change. Turning the tools of sociology upon itself shows some of the practices surrounding this assumption of a knowledge-action link. Attention to these practices can improve the utilization of research for social justice purposes.

The academic enterprise is founded upon the emancipatory potential of knowledge (Kemmis, 2000). Yet such a rational process misses how certain knowledges gain dominance and are reproduced. A reflexive sociology needs to analyze who has the power to name the social world, thereby encouraging a collective reinforcement of certain "knowings."

> Racist stereotypes can be dismantled only in the face of knowledge claims that provide strong and compelling counter-evidence.... [However,] the dominant group has the means and power to construct and perpetuate through control of the media and other outlets the knowledge claims that legitimate their privileged positions, [which] the deconstruction of inaccuracies about race and legitimization of nonracist knowledge claims have not yet penetrated (Johnson, Rush, and Feagin, 2000: 99).

Such collective habitation often operates non-rationally and is unconsciously appropriated (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Social change efforts must illuminate these unconscious processes, such as those social practices that are experienced as racializing (Eliasoph, 1999).

The assumption is that becoming conscious of these forms of knowing will

serve to create the person-by-person changes leading to different social constructions of reality. A further assumption is that knowledge uncovers the oppressive structures and confronts power. However, it is not the "knowledge" alone that does this, but the process by which the knowledge is taken up and used in the community, altering "common-sense." Research builds a case that activists can argue when the rational approach is useful. ACOA's utility was in part because of the combination of methods. The numbers could be given veridicality as "factual," while the narratives helped to make the report more lively. The narratives also expressed the alternative knowledge-in-practice of racialized people and may also begin a vicarious learning process within the majority who would otherwise be unaware of their marginalizing racialized social practices. Finally, the report gave "legitimacy" to the issue of racism in the community. It changed the basis of community discourse from the denial of racism to grudging acknowledgement.

Researchers may have a further challenge in this process of relevance and public presentation. Davies (1999) notes that intellectuals are skilled at "problematizing," trained as they are in critique. Druckman (2000: 1571) contrasts the academic culture that emphasizes the manner in which research is done and the nonacademic culture that is concerned with "getting it done by the close of business" (in other words, with the utility of the findings).[6] Other language practices have an impact on effective advocacy drawn from research findings. Researchers commonly qualify their conclusions (e.g., "appears to," "may indicate"), thereby demonstrating the tentativeness of all produced knowledge, but such language presents to policymakers and the public a lack of confidence in the findings. Such hedges provide easy opportunities for dismissal of socially sensitive research that already confronts mainstream conventions and power.

Research as disguised activism. Academic debate over the nature of research problematizes objectivity and neutrality, but the public still primarily believes that science, even social science, should be an objective and nonpartisan process. Outside stakeholders cast aspersions on ACOA, asserting in varying ways that the study was biased research, and therefore invalid. Two common patterns emerged. First, people questioned whether the study was really needed. Second, there were comments such as "the survey assumes racism happens in Thunder Bay" (field notes, October 12, 2001).

I responded in two ways. The study is grounded in the lived experience of anti-racism workers and others who work with Aboriginal peoples and ethnocultural groups; the frequency of reports about racial incidents indicates that racism exists in the community. Furthermore, one could argue that racism is present in most communities, and therefore Thunder Bay was not being singled out as especially rotten.

Howard Becker's (1967) article, "Whose Side Are We On?" has been frequently read as a call for partisan research. However, Hammersley (2001) does not think Becker so intended. Following a thorough analysis of Becker's other writings,

Hammersley (2001: 91) concludes, "Becker believes that systematic and rigorous sociological research inevitably tends to have radical political implications." In other words, the research is not partisan, but it produces results leading to convictions. As the ACOA study was concluding, Pierre Bourdieu died, and his close colleague, Loïc Wacquant, made a comment that corresponded to the approach used in this study. "From the very beginning, his [Bourdieu's] approach was to *use the coolest, most methodical approach* to reframe the hottest, most burning matters of the day" (McLemme, 2002, emphasis added). When the research is about a topic that is socially or politically sensitive in the community, the researcher would do well to consider the passion with which one conveys the research.

This is not to suggest that researchers cannot be activists. Markusen (2001: 47) elaborates,

> An activist intellectual develops and disseminates ideas with the intent to change as well as explain the real world. Working from explicit norms and assumptions about how social, economic, and political systems operate, she commits herself to establish cause and effect in order to prescribe policy, planning, and political [and I would add, social] interventions. To achieve an impact she struggles to write and speak clearly and engagingly, her message carefully tailored to her (possibly multiple) audiences.... She writes for diverse outlets and speaks to uninitiated and possibly hostile audiences....

However, when the topic is socio-politically sensitive, as is racism in a community, scrutiny of the research will most often come from the dominant perception of appropriate methods, questions, and ideologies. The populace's impression of nonpartisan objectivity in research remains a context in which community-based research and social justice research operate.

This case study suggests that researchers have methods that can play a productive part in social change, but that are nonetheless socially inscribed. The public discourse on social science still questions research that contrasts unreflexive, taken-for-granted social understandings. As researchers we are involved in "the political struggle for symbolic capital" (Meisenhelder, 1997: 169), that is, for the reproduction or transformation of society. Research without value commitment implicitly supports the status quo (Davies, 1999). Following Hammersley's view of Becker, the first commitment for researchers is to insist upon action on the research's results.

Research as divisive in the community. A common criticism of the study was that the study would be divisive for the community. One survey respondent represented this view: "Everyone should be treated exactly the same, instead of putting out papers like this that just seem to breed prejudice."

I referred to this challenge as "The Carpet Strategy," as in sweeping problems under the carpet. This strategy works if you are on top of the carpet, but if you

are under it *because you have been swept there*, you have likely got a different view. One interview participant in the ACOA study explained that racism is a community problem "because everybody shoves it under the carpet. Like me, at work. Letting it slide lets it continue." However, as the research team found, not all members of a "marginalized group" feel marginalized or are supportive of research on such an issue. They will also have differing views about solutions.

There are alternative versions of social cohesion. Nostalgic visions of a seemingly cohesive past can emphasize maintenance of the status quo. Alternatively, persons can choose a variety of personal strategies for fitting into society. As numerous scholars have noted, multiculturalism does not inevitably lead to social fragmentation. However, various visions of society need to be discussed openly. In social justice terms, visions that leave people marginalized are unacceptable.

Kemmis (2000) grounds his version of participatory research in Habermas' theory of communicative action. He notes that three facets of this approach are applicable to civic engagement. The first two are an orientation to mutual understanding and unforced consensus. As one can surmise, racism will undermine even the possibility of meeting these conditions. The creation of open discussion is the other necessary facet. In the present case, the research has helped to open more communicative space in Thunder Bay. The research has demonstrated that there is a problem that cannot be denied. It has shown the social practices that marginalize on the basis of racial factors and how important social locations are implicated in the process of community racialization. Although community cohesion might be affected in the short term, the study serves to make visible the conflict that was already present. What the community will then do is a different matter.

Conclusion

With increasing social pressure for academic research to contribute to practical problem solving, one might presume that researchers may have more opportunity to address social justice issues. They will have to be creative, however, in communicating with marginalized community groups that have seen the ivory tower well gated and academia often serving to reproduce conditions of marginality. Creativity will also be needed to secure funding and to accomplish the research tasks. This case study has hardly mentioned the crucial support of a pair of program officers within the funding agency.

Research is not simply knowledge production, and must be seen as a political act that speaks to other political acts. Research on relevant justice issues is embedded in a social context with expectations about "research" and "science" that must be accounted for. Research in the applied setting is challenging, interesting, and valuable. Yet researchers involved in pursuing social justice will face challenges in the process and ideological contestations of the findings that their scholarly training alone will not address.

NOTES

1. The project described herein was supported by funding from the Government of Canada, Department of Canadian Heritage. Other support was received from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Appreciation is due to the project management committee and other community members.

2. According to the 1996 Canadian census, the Aboriginal population of Thunder Bay is 8,605. However, the figure is estimated upwards to address sampling errors associated with particular issues of assessing First Nations populations, such as nonparticipation, literacy, and political resistance. The population of Aboriginal peoples is increasing due to in-migration from smaller communities in the north, and a high birth rate.

3. Canadian census categories and employment equity laws distinguish between "visible minorities" and Aboriginal peoples. Obviously, racialization affects individuals and groups independently of official labels.

4. This may be changing. As this article went to press, the Chamber of Commerce and a local First Nation are in the midst of preparing a program to address Aboriginal-specific issues in retail exchanges.

5. It should be noted that these perceptions of the PMC process of discussion come from my notes, written at the time. PMC members had differing perceptions of the process in interviews a year later.

6. A sociologist at the local university expressed frustration that community groups rarely approach academic researchers for interesting research projects such as ACOA. I have frequently heard community groups say how difficult it is to get university researchers interested. Consultants are assumed to work to deadline and to different, but still acceptable, standards.

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