Title
Introduction

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Introduction

SUSAN LOBO AND KURT PETERS

This special issue of the *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* (AICRJ) focusing on urban topics came about as a result of an awareness among those of us working in urban areas of the scarcity of interest, research, and therefore literature that relates to American Indian urban experiences. Many of us had worked on these topics for years, essentially in isolation from others, wondering why, with more than half of all Indian people living in urban areas, there has been so little scholarly interest focused on urban contexts. Occasionally a contact would be made with a like-minded researcher, and a resolve would be established to collaborate and possibly publish jointly. Colleagues and students were encouraged to "think urban." However, these urban-focused publications and ongoing collegial ties have been very few when compared to the vast and active interest and literature in other American Indian topics and contexts. This special issue, then, is long, long overdue.

Some significant signposts regarding American Indian urban studies that directly led to this current special issue include the 1990 U.S. Census, the special 1994 *Alcatraz Revisited* issue of the AICRJ, and the panel "Being Indian in the City: Reflections on Urban Identity and Community" at the 1996 American Anthropological Association meetings in San Francisco.

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The 1990 census, in spite of problems with undercount, reaffirmed the large numbers of Indian people living in urban areas. Also, the process of carrying out the census demonstrated the lack of understanding by this governmental agency and, by extension, other governmental agencies regarding the very nature of urban Indian populations and communities. Issues arose concerning the dynamics of residency, age and gender factors, education, and income. Terry Straus and Susan Lobo, whose articles appear in this special issue, participated in a census-sponsored research project of "hard to count populations," Straus in Chicago and Lobo in Oakland. During the course of this project these two researchers not only realized that they had both worked in similar community-based contexts for more than twenty years and shared many research interests, but surprisingly had never heard of one another. This clearly indicated the lack of established means of collegial identification and communication. During the course of this census project it also became evident that the methodology utilized by the census bureau, based on a series of premises that are not relevant to understanding Indian people and the structuring of urban Indian communities, was a major factor contributing to the undercount and miscounting of Indian people living in urban areas.

The 1994 special issue of the *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, "Alcatraz Revisited: The 25th Anniversary of the Occupation, 1969-1971,"[1] was significant in bringing together writers who discussed a number of themes, including the impact of the Alcatraz occupation and its aftermath in urban and rural areas of Indian country. This occupation affected the life decisions of people, many of whom have continued in the past twenty-five years to live and work in urban areas. Duane Champagne, editor of AICRJ, was a strong force in making possible both that special issue and this current one. Jack Forbes has contributed articles to both issues. Other publications in the past ten years, such as Joan Weibel-Orlando's *Indian Country, L.A.*,[2] have had a significant impact regarding studies of urban themes. An article by Weibel-Orlando is included in this current special issue.

A third event that was a catalyst in the development of this special issue was the panel on urban Indian topics organized by Deborah Jackson at the American Anthropologist Association 1996 annual meetings. Papers were presented by Kurt Peters, Deborah Jackson, Mary Grantham-Campbell, Terry Straus, and Susan Lobo, among others, all of whom also

have written articles for this special issue. Duane Champagne and Joan Weibel-Orlando were discussants. This panel was attended to overflowing and generated intense interest, yet another indication of the need to recognize the existing research, to connect with other scholars and writers, and to publish the results of our work. During the hours of discussion following this panel, the plan to put together this current special issue was finalized. Darby Price, Renya Ramirez, Paul Spicer, and other scholars who have articles in this current special issue also joined in that long planning discussion.

In conceptualizing this special issue we reached out to other colleagues, many of whom enthusiastically responded. Some researchers remained beyond our reach in our search, and some people contacted were not able to participate. We therefore recognize that this selection is not a complete one of those currently working in urban areas, but do believe that it represents a strong selection of the range of current themes and provides multiple suggestions for future directions.

The reality and vitality of continuing Indian life is urban, rural, and everything in-between, with all of these contexts for Indian people interrelated and linked in multiple ways. Why then has this focus on issues related to American Indians living in urban contexts taken so long to come into being? The rural/urban dichotomy is a false expression of Indian reality, yet it has been one of the molds that has continued to shape research and writing. Work at regional and hemispheric levels, as well as in comparative studies, has been even longer over-due. With this special issue we are focusing on urban contexts and themes, but mindful that these are a part of larger rural and urban and hemispheric spheres.

A brief overview of the legacy of urban studies and American Indian studies gives insight into influences at the root of why American Indian urban studies have not been more actively carried out in the past. Also, discussed here are the ways that this legacy has contributed in a positive way to shaping some of the thinking as reflected in this current issue.

A prominent and very influential early approach to urban and urbanization studies was that of Redfield[3] and his "folk-urban continuum." He juxtaposed rural "folk" and their communities with "urbanites" and their communities. While he ostensibly proposed a continuum, his work has most generally been interpreted as a dichotomous model. Although most of his work was in Latin America, his influence, via his students and

colleagues at the University of Chicago, was far-reaching in shaping later rural to urban migration studies, as well as in defining concepts of acculturation and assimilation in urban areas.

Closely associated with urban studies of that period and also very influential in establishing the urban research themes and tone was the work of Wirth.[4] His theories associate urbanization with "social disorganization" and "cultural breakdown," thematic concepts that continue particularly to influence urban sociological studies. On an individual psychological level, this approach in looking at social problems led to an emphasis on urban loneliness, despair, anomie, and the effects of alcoholism, racism, and poverty. On a practical, day-to-day basis these are themes and approaches within the domain of social welfare which continue to be addressed by the urban Indian community-based social service organizations in creating and maintaining community well-being. Another related variant of the theme of "disorganization" is the thesis of the "culture of poverty" originally coined by Lewis.[5] Although criticized with good reason, this concept continues even today to influence, in often subtle ways, both research and political and economic policy in urban areas.

These research approaches and the models of urban life that they generated, reflected and validated long-standing popular thinking and stereotypes regarding the causes and nature of poverty, migration into cities, and social organization of those living in cities. In turn they have affected our current state of studies of American Indians living in urban contexts.

The creation of these urban research theories and research methodologies and approaches during the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s dovetailed and influenced the development and implementation of policy affecting Indian lands, resources, and economic and social options. This is seen most prominently in the termination-relocation policies of the 1950s and their aftermath into the 1970s. These policies were major catalysts for Indian people to migrate in large numbers into urban areas, thereby intensifying the process of establishing urban communities.

Parallel with yet functionally distinct from these urban studies have been the massive amounts of research and writing related to American Indian history, culture, and politics. Most of this scholarship has had an almost exclusively rural focus. There are three particularly prominent reasons for this rural and historical focus. One is that Native homelands have overwhelmingly been in rural areas, so that many American Indian

research themes dealing with genocide, loss and control of land and resources, and the relationship with the federal government have for practical and historic reasons focused on non-urban areas.

A second reason stems from the strong influence in American Indian studies by the traditional anthropological stance which has emphasized the static model of the "ethnographic present." This model has been often criticized for the idealized frozen-in-time effect. The ethnographic present, almost exclusively rural in context, created a mindset that has been very difficult to set aside.

A third reason for the rural emphasis stems from the weight of generalized popular stereotypes stressing that everything Indian is set on a rural stage, and most frequently colored by romantic views of the past. Both the media and the educational system reinforce and revalidate these popular stereotypes throughout contemporary Indian and non-Indian society, making them very difficult to discard. An important step in breaking out of the restrictive rural mode was taken by American Indian writers of fiction such as Momaday and Silko who have not been constrained by social science and research orientations and agendas. They were able to reflect more freely and creatively on Indian realities, aspirations, and visions, wherever they might be.

The selection of articles gathered here for this special urban issue of the *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* represent a fresh start, one that is aware of and in many cases stems from the historical theoretical roots of past researchers and writers, and one that is immersed in and deeply cognizant of the role of urban contexts in American Indian lives. As the editors of this special issue, we appreciate the research legacy of the past and see many elements and themes from these studies reflected in current research and writing. We further believe that the selection of articles in this special issue is unbounded to some extent from the restraints of the past.

Geographically, it is Forbes' article that takes the broadest hemispheric approach. Miller and Trujillo cross contemporary international borders in discussing the history and conceptualization fundamental to more specific urban themes. Gonzales and Price also take an essentially general, rather than regionally specific, approach. Other articles in this issue look specifically at urban contexts in the Southwest, the San Francisco Bay Area, Chicago, the Upper Great Lakes, Los Angeles, the

Northwest, and Alaska. The disciplines represented here are wide-ranging: Native or American Indian studies, ethnic studies, anthropology, sociology, education, English, and social work. The pieces range along a continuum: Some are squarely situated within a discipline or field of study, while others take a more personal or multidisciplinary approach.

The eighteen articles in this special issue fall into a logical sequence, both thematically and methodologically. These are: I. Overviews of urbanism; II. Urban communities: definitions, structuring, changes and examples; and III. Individual urban experiences emphasizing identity and healing.

OVERVIEWS

Jack Forbes gives a sweeping picture of Native urbanization throughout the hemisphere from ancient times to the present. His article, *"The Urban Tradition Among Native Americans,"* addresses the misconceptions that Native peoples have always lived in rural or "uncivilized/urban" areas, and that a split between urban and rural exists. He speaks of the formation and structuring of great metropolises such as Teotihuacan and Tikal, tying in the creation of mounds and pyramids to longstanding sacred places and ceremonial centers. He defines urbanity not as the presence of densely placed structures, but rather as the "intimate interaction of substantial numbers of people in a given geographic space." Names of great urban centers flow through his description: Cholula, Chavin, Tula, La Venta, Chan Chan, Tiahuanaco, and Chaco Canyon. Some of these have estimated populations of up to 250,000 people within their sphere. The underlying theme of this article is: "Over vast areas of America some Native Peoples lived highly urbanized lives for many millennia."

In her article, "Tell the Indian Urban," Carol Miller contextualizes Indians in urban settings via a discussion of fiction writing. She provides insights into the ways that contemporary Indian writers utilize their works to counter stereotypes existing in the non-Indian imagination, especially those of invisibility and victimization. Miller finds that these images are reversed in the literature that provides an Indian perspective, expressing cultural vitality in settings of positive change that includes the many faces of urban experiences. She comments on the works of Silko, Mourning Dove, Ella Deloria, Momaday, Ignatia Broker, and Sarris for her examples. This analysis

shows the contrast between European-based and -derived notions of place and relationship with those of Native peoples. Concepts such as "urban" and "community" are considered from an Indian perspective. She raises the questions, "How alien is an urban environment?" and "What are the foundations of 'civilized' behavior?" as two of the themes that emerge throughout the selection of articles in this special issue.

Moving from Forbes' comprehensive look at the long history of urbanism in this hemisphere and Miller's discussion of concepts and stereotypes regarding "urban," Octaviana Trujillo's "The Yaquis of Guadalupe, Arizona" carries forward many of these themes. Trujillo, however, situates her work directly in Yaqui history, group identity, and persistence. She traces the historical roots of the migration north from the Yaqui River towns in Sonora, Mexico, and into southern Arizona. The subsequent establishment of Guadalupe shortly after the turn of the century began a process of community growth and eventual placement within the Phoenix metropolitan urban sprawl. The Yaqui experience encompasses three cultural variables in community creation: Yaqui, Mexican, and Euro-American with trilingual and tricultural implications. Trujillo maintains that a fundamental aspect of understanding urbanism is that "the social adaptation of Native Americans to an urban context ... is much older than the history of Native American/non-indigenous American contact." She stresses that in the Yaqui case the emphasis on language usage is a reflection of both Yaqui history and cultural survival.

URBAN COMMUNITIES DEFINED, STRUCTURES AND EXAMPLES

Susan Lobo presents an overview of the definition of community in "Is Urban a Person or a Place? Characteristics of Urban Indian Country." She cautions that the often used concept of community may not be as "simple, nor one-dimensional as it appears." Focusing on the San Francisco Bay Area Indian community, she demonstrates how this collective has constituted itself, and how this structuring relates to personal and community identity. The urban Indian community is defined as "a widely scattered and frequently shifting network of relationships with locational nodes found in organizations and activity sites of special significance." While reflecting the reality of

urban Indian communities, this definition emphasizes the less evident forms that relationships take, rather than adhering to the frequent definitions of community that stress ethnically contiguous neighborhoods. Lobo also notes the ways that the Bay Area Indian community has changed over time, becoming more diverse and complex since it began to expand in the 1950s.

In "Retribalization in Urban Indian Communities" Terry Straus focuses on examples from the Chicago area, taking a careful look at the multiple ways that urban Indian communities as groups and also individual Indian people are reconnecting to more rural "tribal" homelands. Straus' essay there redefines, extends, and enriches the understanding of how identity is perceived and actualized. This article also makes a substantial contribution to the clarification and definition of a number of terms and concepts that are often used, but the meanings and connotations of which are rarely discussed in depth. These include "urban," "tribe," "Indian," and "community." The emphasis throughout this discussion is that "tribalness" is not lost in urban contexts, as some feared and predicted, but rather has been redefined and augmented.

Grant Arndt, through use of archival material in his essay, "Contrary to Our Way of Thinking: Struggle for an American Indian Center in Chicago, 1946-1953," delineates the people and events that led to the establishment of the Chicago Indian Center, one of the first in the United States. In many respects he provides a detailed history that mirrors similar developments in other urban centers: the need to establish gathering places, the emergence of leaders, the role of existing non-Indian social service entities in both helping and hindering this process, and the social accommodations that take place in multitribal settings.

Many historic parallels between Chicago and Los Angeles are evident in Joan Weibel-Orlando's article, "And the Drum Beat Goes On ... Urban Native American Institutional Survival in the 1990s." She describes in detail both the personalities and philosophies of the administrators of the Southern California Indian Center and the structural basis for what has been a very successful and long-standing core institution in the Indian community. The article outlines a series of operational strategies, initiated in the last ten years in order to continue to offer needed social services in spite of the reduced availability of funding. Weibel-Orlando identifies these survival strategies as focal community redefinition, institutional reorganization, leadership and staff skills development, creative approaches to securing funds, build-

ing new alliances, and maintaining loyal advocates.

In "Feminists or Reformers? American Indian Women and Political Activism in Phoenix 1965-1980" Païvi Hoikkala looks at the historic development of the Phoenix Indian community and the role of women of diverse tribes who were significant in building that community. Hoikkala notes that Indian women "utilized tribal views of womanhood, family, and community in their involvement in community-based cultural, educational, and church activities." These very active women, who were extremely instrumental in the life and shaping of the Indian community, viewed themselves as reformers rather than as feminists. Further, Hoikkala says, "Women accepted the tasks assigned to them in the gender systems of their societies, but by the same token, they demanded the rights that their obligations entailed."

Another distinctive urban community is discussed by Kurt Peters in "Continuing Identity: Laguna Pueblo Railroaders in Richmond, California." This community of people from Laguna Pueblo in New Mexico established the Richmond Indian Village in the 1930s in the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe railyards. Their relationship with the rail company had been originally established via an agreement in 1880, when tracks were laid through Laguna tribal lands in New Mexico. While the relationship between tribes and the federal government looms large in many other Indian communities, the history of the Richmond Indian Village, in contrast, was officially identified as a colony of its home pueblo, and was derived from a tribal-to-corporate agreement. Peters discusses some of the daily life in this urban "village," as well as some of the ways that individuals connected to the greater urban area and to their home community.

INDIVIDUAL URBAN EXPERIENCES

Identity Emphasis

Angela Gonzales gives a thorough general discussion of American Indian identity issues in "The Political Economy of American Indian Identity: Maintaining Boundaries and Regulating Access to Ethnically Tied Resources." This article outlines the historical role played by the federal government in establishing "official" criteria for racial identification and how

these criteria in turn influenced and reinforced stereotypes among the general population regarding American Indians. They have also affected internal perceptions of identity designations by Indian people themselves. Discussion is included of increases in Indian populations in both rural and urban areas as perceived by the U.S. census. Gonzales utilizes the model of a continuum of identity that ranges from American Indians, American Indians of multiple ancestry, and Americans of Indian descent, noting the ways that these each relate to access to resources, notably educational resources.

In "This Hole in Our Heart: Urban Indian Identity and the Power of Silence," Deborah Jackson examines second-generation urban Indian people and the lack of intergenerational sharing of cultural and identity information. This in turn shapes life experiences. Through a series of personal narratives, she focuses on childhood experiences that included a denial of Indianness within the family. These were households in which "an elusive American Indian heritage hovered around the margins of their childhood, not quite present, yet never completely absent." The narrators of these life stories tell of the various ways they have reconciled their self-identity as adults, and their relationship with an urban community and with their rural homeland community as well.

Darby Price brings us insights into the continuing and urban ways that Indian humor is a special form of communication in "Laughing Without Reservation: Urban Indian Standup Comedians." He discusses Indian perspectives on a range of themes, including racial, cultural, and ethnic identities and relationship experiences at the individual and organizational levels. The article stresses some of the ways that humor makes explicit often subtle definitions of social norms and values. As Price points out, Indian standup comedians are cross-cultural entertainers and educators, providing pointed cultural critiques from an Indian viewpoint. This article also addresses issues manifest in the old stereotype of the humorless, stoic, and tragic Indian.

In "Discrimination and Indigenous Identity in Chicago's Native Community," James Fenelon discusses the results of research that focuses on a broad range of contemporary issues confronting Indian people living in the Chicago area. His research models include an outreach survey conducted by the American Indian Economic Development Association (AIEDA). Fenelon's article notes contexts and various modes in

which discrimination takes place, as well as individual, structural, and organizational responses. He identifies the role of identity in answering the question: "Who are Urban Indians?" as a key to understanding the dynamics of societal racism and discrimination.

Healing Emphasis

"Healing Through Grief: Urban Indians Re-imagining Culture and Community in San Jose, California" by Reyna Ramirez emphasizes a process of decolonizing knowledge, in this case through a holocaust exhibit, as a means of addressing and reducing intergenerational trauma. The exhibit includes a vision to unite indigenous people from throughout the hemisphere, and is also seen as having a healing function through diminishing the imposed divisions that are a part of colonization. Ramirez discusses an indigenous consciousness that spans the Americas. She weaves not only her own reactions to the exhibit and its planning into the discussion and analysis, but also includes glimpses of her personal life as an Indian woman who spent much of her youth in the community where the exhibit takes place.

Paul Spicer's "Drinking, Foster Care, and the Intergenerational Continuity of Parenting in an Urban Indian Community" addresses the ways in which foster placement outside of Indian families and communities has compromised the successful parenting of Indian people. Based on a series of in-depth interviews in Minneapolis, Spicer shows the link between alcohol abuse and the loss of custody of children. He distinguishes between the comparative positive legacy of "kin" care in contrast to placement in non-Indian foster home care.

Christine Lowery, in "From the Outside Looking In: Rejection and Belonging for Four Urban Indian Men in Milwaukee, Wisconsin," focuses on life histories that are a part of a larger qualitative study regarding American Indians and recovery. Through their life histories, these men in recovery explore their social, relational, and cultural identities, providing insights into structural and cultural influences on their lives. Each becomes involved in the urban Indian community in differing ways and at different stages in his life. Three of the men are of mixed heritage and one is Oneida; the multicultural aspect of their life histories is also discussed. Rejection and

belongingness are two themes that appear in all four life histories, aspects that are crucial to envisioning how urban living has shaped the lives of these individuals.

Mary Grantham-Campbell looks at educational institutions in Fairbanks, Alaska in "It's Okay to Be Native: Alaska Native Cultural Strategies in Urban and School Settings." She presents how they have successfully addressed bringing a more positive approach to educational settings than had previously been the case. She discusses switching to education that is additive, rather than subtractive, meaning one that strengthens a unique and viable Native identity, one that "cultivates more favorable and functional attitudes toward high academic achievement." She identifies three cultural strategies that have been successfully utilized: an attitude of "It's Okay to be Native"; personal and professional navigation of funding and using culturally relevant curriculum materials; and increasing the use of cultural camps.

"Safe Futures Initiative at Chief Leschi Schools," by George Guilmet and his coauthors, details the lessening of problems related to alcohol, drugs, violence, and gangs faced by youth and their families on the Puyallup Reservation as a result of a series of prevention programs initiated by the tribally run Chief Leschi Schools. As with the articles by Trujillo and Grantham-Campbell, the focus is on the role of educational institutions in community well-being. The reservation community discussed here is somewhat different from other urban Indian communities included in this issue in that the city of Tacoma expanded, encompassing the previously existing rural reservation. Tribal members became urban, not through migration to urban areas, but rather because the city came to engulf them. Guilmet and his coauthors discuss the particular stresses and solutions used to resolve the problems facing youth and their families. Some of these are similar to other urban communities and some are unique to this particular community.

The American Indian Studies Center solicited a poem from Joy Harjo. She graciously submitted "The Path of the Milky Way Leads through Los Angeles," which lends Harjo's thoughtful and personal insights to this special issue.

It has been exciting to have worked with all of the authors of the articles included in this special issue of the *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*. We feel that this selection represents some of the very best innovative thinking currently relevant to American Indian studies of urban themes, and we

hope that it stimulates thought as well as future research and writing. The editors and authors encourage your comments.

NOTES

1. See *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 18:4 (1994).

2. Joan Weibel-Orlando, *Indian Country, L.A.: Maintaining Ethnic Community in Complex Society* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991).

3. See Robert Redfield, *The Folk Cultures of Yucatan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941).

4. Louis Wirth, "Urbanism as a Way of Life," *American Journal of Sociology* 44 (1938): 1-24.

5. See Oscar Lewis, "The Culture of Poverty," in *Scientific American* 215 (1966): 4.