

Transnational development training and Native American ‘laboratories’ in the early Cold War*

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Abstract

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, as the US launched the Point Four initiative of overseas technical assistance programmes, a number of American officials, academics, and analysts saw valuable global lessons in the US Bureau of Indian Affairs’ development interventions among Native Americans. These interests culminated in a suite of professional training experiments, involving trainees from around the world, which emphasized cross-cultural development methods and used certain south-western Native American communities as field ‘laboratories’. A foundational seminar programme, coordinated by Cornell University social scientists, inspired additional training initiatives, tied to Point Four projects abroad, which brought foreign government officers from South Asia and the Middle East for similar training in New Mexico and Arizona. These training experiments not only placed Native American situations at the centre of significant transnational conversations about development, but also reinforced and widely circulated particular ideas regarding ‘underdevelopment’, ‘experts’ prerogatives, and the politics of development relations.

Keywords Cornell, development, Native Americans, Point Four projects, transnational

Introduction

In the spring of 1950, as Assistant Commissioner John Provinse of the US Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) delivered commencement speeches at a number of Native American schools in the south-western US, his primary focus was the global significance of the American government’s development work in Indian communities. Speaking before multiple graduating classes in Oklahoma and New Mexico, Provinse responded enthusiastically to President Truman’s inaugural address the previous year, calling for the expansion of American technical assistance

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overseas in what would become known as the Point Four Program. Provinse boldly asserted that, as the US moved forward with this initiative, its ‘experiments’ in developing Native Americans could profoundly guide its interventions across the globe:

The United States experience with its American Indians is one of the probably most critical experiments in human and inter-group relations that has ever been carried out in the world. ... America, unfortunately, does not realize that in searching for acceptable approaches to other non-industrialized peoples in other parts of the world it has within its own national history and its present Indian population the answers to many questions it is now seeking to solve. America needs to know what is likely to happen in these many far-away places in the world into which our technological knowledge will be exported. We need to know what it means to groups of people unlike ourselves to change their ways of living, adapt new practices, accept different values. ... America needs to profit, in this critical time of need, from its experience with the American Indian.¹

Echoing Provinse, a number of American government officials, academics, and analysts in these early Cold War years trumpeted the valuable global development lessons to be gleaned from the BIA’s ‘experimental’ interventions in Native American communities. Accompanying this agenda were also certain assumptions, reflected in Provinse’s message, about the comparable nature and challenges of ‘underdevelopment’ among Native Americans and other peoples ‘unlike ourselves’ around the world, the imperative and prerogative to ‘develop’ such societies, and the potential for deriving effective universal methods for doing so, based on social science-infused analysis.

This article focuses on how such interests and perspectives came together in a particular suite of training experiments in the late 1940s and early 1950s, sponsored by actors in an array of American institutions (government agencies, universities, and foundations) and geared toward civil servants, professionals, and graduate students from the United States and around the world. From 1949 to 1952, Cornell University’s Sociology and Anthropology Department spearheaded a summer graduate training programme in applying social science methods to the problems of technical assistance, using certain Native American and neighbouring Hispano communities in the south-west as field ‘laboratories’.² This cross-cultural approach, and immersion in Native American development situations in particular, then inspired additional training initiatives in the early 1950s. These were tied to expanding American Point Four assistance programmes abroad, which placed foreign government officers from South Asia and the Middle East in similar programmes in New Mexico and Arizona.

Examining these different training experiments reveals an under-examined dimension of America’s expanding Point Four footprint in the post-war era: the transnational significance of Native American development contexts. Scholars have recently contributed new insights in this

1 National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC, Record Group 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, entry 192, box 1, folder ‘Misc. (2 of 2)’, John Provinse, ‘The Indian and the years ahead’, draft for the ceremony at Fort Sill Indian School, later revised for speeches at the Chilocco Indian Agricultural School and the Santa Fe Indian School. For more on Provinse’s desire to link Indian Affairs to the Point Four initiative, see Paul C. Rosier, *Serving their country: American Indian politics and patriotism in the twentieth century*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009, pp. 140–1.

2 Hispanos refers here to descendants of colonial Spanish and Mexican settlers in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado. For a recent volume critically interpreting their cultural histories and representation, see Phillip B. Gonzales, ed., *Expressing New Mexico: nuevomexicano creativity, ritual, and memory*, Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2007.

regard, noting the influence of Native American precedents on American development administrators engaged in overseas Point Four projects, and the global context of Native American political organizing around development in the early Cold War.³ Yet relatively little has been written on the Cornell seminar, its focus on immersion in Native American communities, and its replication and meaning as a model of international development training. To date, the only detailed analysis related to this topic is a 2001 article by Wade Davies, which traces the origins, content, and organization of just the initial seminar series, and highlights its limited impact on BIA management practices towards Native Americans.⁴

My intention here is to expand our view to the important transnational implications of the Cornell seminar, as well as its Point Four-related spin-offs, particularly the comparative value and global development lessons that the programmes' organizers, advocates, and participants derived from the study of Native American development dynamics. In doing so, my goal is to illuminate how Native American scenarios were an integral part of significant transnational discussions and thinking about community development methodologies among influential actors from as far afield as South Asia, the Middle East, and beyond.

Initiating and promoting these various development 'laboratories' was a network of like-minded development specialists, positioned in influential American governmental and non-governmental circles, with common convictions that Native American 'underdevelopment' was generally comparable to that of other 'backward' societies across Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Moreover, they shared a deep confidence that America's experiences in managing its indigenous populations could provide lessons of universal value, regarding how best to effect desired developmental changes in such societies around the globe, particularly through the application of more refined cross-cultural methodologies. The transnational training programmes that they created thus advocated a generally utilitarian engagement with recipient cultures, one geared towards facilitating directed technological change, minimizing local resistance to such 'innovation', and reinforcing the prerogative of trained 'experts' to define and manage the development process.

As reflected in the responses of many of the foreign and American trainees involved, such underlying development aspirations and assumptions also tended to be shared and reaffirmed by the programmes' diverse participants. These experiences in the south-west provided unique and valued opportunities for trainees to compare their immersion in Native American case studies with the particular development predicaments that they faced around the world. The programmes' cross-cultural observation of Native American development further served to reinforce and widely circulate, through participants' disparate transnational trajectories, particular ways of conceptualizing both global problems of 'underdevelopment' and appropriate technical, cultural, and political methods for specialists to resolve them.

3 See, for example, Paul C. Rosier, 'Crossing new boundaries: American Indians and twentieth century US foreign policy', *Diplomatic History*, 39, 5, 2015, pp. 955–66; Rosier, *Serving their country*; Daniel M. Cobb, *Native activism in Cold War America: the struggle for sovereignty*, Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2008; Alyosha Goldstein, *Poverty in common: the politics of community action during the American century*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012, pp. 77–110; Megan Black, 'Interior's exterior: the state, mining companies, and resource ideologies in the Point Four program', *Diplomatic History*, 40, 1, 2016, pp. 81–110.

4 Wade Davies, 'Cornell's field seminar in applied anthropology: social scientists and American Indians in the postwar southwest', *Journal of the Southwest*, 43, 3, 2001, pp. 317–41.

Cornell and international development, via the south-west

The originator of the foundational Cornell seminar, the university's Sociology and Anthropology Department, was at the forefront of the broader infusion of social scientists into the post-war global expansion of US Point Four assistance programmes. In 1946, the department chair, Lauriston Sharp, and the newly recruited Alexander Leighton began erecting a programme that 'addressed the question of facilitating the introduction of modern agriculture, industry, and medicine to areas that are deficient in those technologies'.⁵ This initiative involved hiring a number of applied anthropologists interested in analysing cultural dynamics in 'underdeveloped' societies receiving technological assistance, at sites both in the US and abroad, with the goals of aiding and improving the processes of planned development. With funding from the Carnegie Foundation and the Russell Sage Foundation, the department eventually expanded its profile to field stations in India, Peru, Thailand, and the American south-west, and organized various culture-oriented training initiatives in these and other locales to help facilitate technical specialists' introduction of development changes among target populations.⁶

As part of this wider global ambition, in 1949 Leighton and colleagues at Cornell and the University of Arizona initiated a more extensive training programme in cross-cultural development dynamics, the Field Seminar in Applied Anthropology, based in New Mexico and Arizona. As Davies has noted, the genesis of this programme was heavily inflected by Leighton's war-era background in US government projects involving the interpretation and administration of 'foreign' cultures. This included his psychological study of Navajo culture for the Office of Indian Affairs in the early 1940s, a stint as community analyst at the Japanese American internment camp at Poston, Arizona, and strategic policy work on Japanese cultural dynamics for the Office of War Information. These experiences helped solidify his profound confidence in the capacity of social scientific expertise to help guide the reordering of the post-war world and the spread of technological advances to 'less developed' areas in culturally nuanced and effective ways.⁷ Sharing this outlook in the late 1940s was the applied anthropologist Edward Spicer, at the University of Arizona, who had similarly trained in south-western Indian cultures and worked extensively as an analyst for the federal War Relocation Authority, and whom Leighton convinced to help organize and lead the new field seminar.⁸ Together with the rest of the assembled seminar team – the anthropology professor John Adair; Tom Sasaki, a graduate student from Cornell; and a University of Arizona graduate student, Henry Dobyns – Leighton and Spicer hoped that this novel cross-cultural training and immersion in the American south-west would, through its social scientific methods and field-based insights, have wide international application as the US expanded its overseas assistance programmes.

5 Alexander Leighton, foreword to Edward Spicer, ed., *Human problems in technological change: a casebook*, New York, NY: Wiley and Sons, 1965, cited in Davies, 'Cornell's field seminar', p. 322.

6 Davies, 'Cornell's field seminar', pp. 322–3; Nicole Sackley, 'The village as Cold War site: experts, development, and the history of rural reconstruction', *Journal of Global History*, 6, 3, 2011, pp. 481–504; Eric B. Ross, 'Peasants on our minds: anthropology, the Cold War, and the myth of peasant conservatism', in Dustin M. Wax, ed., *Anthropology at the dawn of the Cold War: the influence of foundations, McCarthyism, and the CIA*, London: Pluto Press, 2008, pp. 108–32.

7 Davies, 'Cornell's field seminar', pp. 320–2. See also David H. Price, *Cold War anthropologists: the CIA, the Pentagon, and the growth of dual use anthropology*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016, pp. 35–7.

8 Davies, 'Cornell's field seminar', p. 322; Edward H. Spicer, *Pascua: a Yaqui village in Arizona*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1940; Edward H. Spicer, 'The use of social scientists by the War Relocation Authority', *Applied Anthropology*, 5, 2, 1946, pp. 16–36.

The choice to locate the seminar in the south-west in part grew out of the organizers' collective research experiences, familiarity, and connections with a wide variety of Native American communities in the region (particularly Navajo, various Pueblo groups, Tohono O'Odham, and Pascua Yaqui) and some of the Hispano populations of northern New Mexico. The post-war acceleration of particular BIA agricultural programmes in the area, particularly in response to dire economic conditions on the Navajo and Hopi reservations, further attracted the attention of the seminar team.⁹ Thus, during the seminar's four-year run (1949–52), several of these diverse communities became the focus of the programme's cross-cultural observations and analysis of development dynamics. Beginning at university and government facilities in Santa Fe and Flagstaff, participating students were provided with introductions to the cultures and histories of the target populations that they would visit, and to relevant applied anthropological research methods. They then ventured off on successive week-long field excursions, meeting with local BIA officials, community leaders, and selected families on the Navajo reservation, on the Tohono O'Odham reservation, and in the Hispano community in Truchas, New Mexico, with occasional side trips to additional Indian reservations and pueblos. Each field session was then followed up by group discussions for a few days, with the entire programme culminating in focused student reports on their field experiences.¹⁰

Overall, the programme rested on certain underlying premises that the seminar organizers hoped to impart to their students. First was the shared conviction that these south-western communities were particularly suited to illuminating pressing challenges of technological change and adaptation to modern life occurring among 'underdeveloped' societies the world over. Reflecting a broader orientation in post-war American social scientific thinking, the Cornell team diagnosed problems of 'underdevelopment' and poverty primarily through the lens of cultural dynamics, rather than political economy. Skimming over many of the messier implications of local Native American and Hispano communities' particular experiences of capitalist and colonial power relations, the seminar organizers instead represented these 'backward' populations as typical of peasants and rural villagers across the globe, all commonly struggling to adapt their pre-existing ways of life to novel forces of modernization. Seminar trainees could therefore study these communities as working microcosmic 'laboratories', which mirrored global processes of developmental change.¹¹ As John Adair and other seminar organizers repeatedly emphasized, when explaining the programme's focus: 'These areas in the south-west are used as a laboratory to demonstrate to these students what they may find in other parts of the world where native peoples are just emerging from tribal life, and where rapid economic change has brought about a radical shift from the old to the new life.'¹²

9 Davies, 'Cornell's field seminar', pp. 323–4; Rosier, *Serving their country*, pp. 122–38.

10 Davies, 'Cornell's field seminar', pp. 329–32; Robert Bunker and John Adair, *The first look at strangers*, Rutgers, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1959, pp. 127–40.

11 Alice O'Connor, *Poverty knowledge: social science, social policy, and the poor in twentieth-century U.S. history*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001, pp. 113–23; Alyosha Goldstein, 'On the internal border: colonial difference, the Cold War, and the locations of underdevelopment', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 50, 1, 2008, pp. 26–56; Sackley, 'Village as Cold War site', pp. 489–94; Davies, 'Cornell's field seminar', pp. 322, 325–8.

12 Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian, Santa Fe, NM, John Adair Papers (henceforth WMAI, AP), box 37, file 32, 'Field seminar in applied anthropology', n.d.; WMAI, AP, box 1, file 1, John Adair to Dow Carnal, Superintendent, Hopi Reservation, 14 May 1951; Alexander H. Leighton, John Adair, and Seymour Parker, 'A field method for teaching applied anthropology', *Human Organization*, 3, 1951, pp. 5–11.

Further animating the creation of this comparative global ‘laboratory’ was the organizers’ shared confidence in the necessity and improbability of directed developmental change, and the indispensable role of social scientific analysis in this process. Here again the preoccupation with cultural explanations weighed heavily: resolving the challenges of technology transfer was approached as fundamentally a question of improving tactics of cross-cultural implementation, rather than addressing underlying dynamics of power and inequality. By studying how BIA and other government administrators had handled the challenges of introducing technological innovations (such as irrigation projects or land conservation measures) among different south-western populations, students would learn how to avoid culturally misguided approaches of the past, which had often generated resistance and ‘hostility towards the innovator’, and to identify what were seen as more effective and universally applicable development techniques. Learning practices that were responsive to local social structures, cultural dynamics, and ‘felt needs’ would thereby generate methodological toolkits for both facilitating the more efficient transfer of technological know-how and reducing the potential for social antagonism among development recipients in comparable situations around the globe. As Leighton and others asserted, students would thus ‘discover for themselves that some of the principles they are assimilating have wide application, and that much of what they learn among the Navaho can help them with the Spanish-Americans and, hence, the Arabs or the people of Thailand’.¹³

Global lessons and perspectives from the south-west field

Over the course of its four-year run, the seminar strove to transmit these principles and perspectives to a few dozen trainees from a wide variety of nationalities and backgrounds. Students participated in the programme as part of their professional training in the social sciences, agriculture, medicine, social work, and other fields, and hailed from such diverse places as the US, Canada, El Salvador, the UK, Belgium, the Netherlands, Egypt, Turkey, Iran, India, Nepal, Thailand, the Philippines, and New Zealand. Many of the foreign trainees were technical specialists who were employed by their home governments and were temporarily in the US on Point Four-connected training grants. In addition, every summer a number of spots in the seminar were reserved for a variety of American agricultural extension workers and other specialists, primarily from the Department of Agriculture (USDA), particularly the Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations (OFAR), and Point Four Programs.¹⁴

While this range of individuals’ experiences of the seminar naturally varied widely, their collective responses to the programme over the years also reveal some common threads and presumptions. For many, the comparative and methodological premises of the programme tended to reinforce their views on the necessity of state-managed development in target communities, and the comparability of ‘underdeveloped’ societies across the globe. Exposure to the situations of certain Native American communities was also seen to be particularly valuable

13 Davies, ‘Cornell’s field seminar’, pp. 322, 325–8; Leighton, Adair, and Parker, ‘Field method’, pp. 5–6.

14 WMAI, AP, box 37, file 32, ‘Field seminar in applied anthropology’, n.d.; WMAI, AP, box 37, file 32, Alexander Leighton, ‘Cornell southwestern program: a summary report on five years, 1948–53’, n.d.; WMAI, AP, box 15, file 606, M. L. Wilson to John Adair, 5 December 1950; WMAI, AP, box 37, file 39, ‘Lynn Hollist’ file; WMAI, AP, box 9, file 307, Adair to Leighton, 19 July 1951; WMAI, AP, box 9, file 308, Leighton to Johnston Avery, Technical Cooperation Administration, State Department (henceforth TCA), 7 January 1952.

for approaching cross-cultural assistance work among similarly 'backward' populations in other global spheres.

Take, for example, the case of John Hall Paxton and Vincoe Paxton, who participated in some of the Cornell programme's sessions in 1950. Until just before this, the Paxtons had spent a long career in western China, working as an attaché and a community nurse, respectively. They then rose to international fame during the country's tumultuous revolution, dramatically fleeing advancing communist armies, and escaping across the Himalayas to safety in India.¹⁵ Once resettled in the US, and prior to being reposted to a consulate in Iran in 1951, the Paxtons were given a short-term training assignment in the south-western US, immersing themselves in what they saw as comparable societies to the 'Muslim tribesmen' with whom they had worked in Xinjiang province, and pursuing the opportunity to take part in the Cornell seminar.¹⁶ As related to John Adair, they were particularly excited by the seminar's broader global prospects: 'We found many problems in that area [Xinjiang] of interest and importance and have developed the theory that, perhaps, solutions that we might work out in Indian studies here might be significant for the operation of the President's Point Four Program for Backward Areas in many parts of the world.'¹⁷

Like the Paxtons, many of the other participants in the programme saw the seminar as an opportunity to gain skills in dealing with 'backward' societies and cultures of the south-west, which they could then apply in their future careers in similarly 'underdeveloped' parts of the world. Farrokh Saidi, for example, was a twenty-one-year-old Iranian who had recently studied anthropology at Cornell as an undergraduate, and who was enrolled in medical school at Harvard when he attended the south-west seminar in 1951. He viewed the seminar as not only supplementing his training in technical and medical fields, but also enabling him to effectively adapt and apply such knowledge 'into the backward areas of Iran'.¹⁸

For Bai Matabay Plang, a thirty-eight-year-old educator and social worker visiting from the southern Philippines, the 1950 seminar experience was immensely valuable, and something that she hoped to replicate in her own country, for 'the people of the backward country who is [*sic*] seeking enlightenment'.¹⁹ In the months following the seminar, when Plang returned home, she wrote a few times to Edward Spicer about her deep appreciation for all that she learned in the programme, and '[h]ow I love to relate our experiences in New Mexico and Arizona to my people'. She was also busy at this time spearheading an eventually successful initiative to launch a technology institute in Mindanao, and repeatedly expressed her strong interests to Spicer about how a similar Cornell cross-cultural immersion programme, based at this new university and likewise studying local rural communities, 'could be instrumental in our general progress'.²⁰

15 J. Robert Moskin, *American statecraft: the story of the U.S. foreign service*, New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2013, pp. 9–11; J. Hall Paxton, interview with Milton Lehman, 'I escaped over the roof of the world', *Saturday Evening Post*, 29 April 1950.

16 Arizona State Museum, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ, Edward H. and Rosamund B. Spicer Papers (henceforth ASM, SP), J. Hall Paxton and Vincoe Paxton to 'Our dear friends', 31 August 1950; Vincoe M. Paxton, 'American nursing on the roof of the world', *American Journal of Nursing*, 50, 11, 1950, pp. 698–701.

17 WMAI, AP, box 11, file 429, J. Hall Paxton to Adair, 2 May 1950.

18 WMAI, AP, box 37, file 32, Farrokh Saidi to A. Holmberg, 27 March 1951; e-mail from Farrokh Saidi to author, 8 March 2010.

19 ASM, SP, box 3, folder 13, Bai Plang to Edward Spicer and family, 17 June 1951.

20 *Ibid.*; ASM, SP, Bai Plang to Spicer, 31 July 1950; ASM, SP, Bai Plang to Spicer, 2 August 1950; ASM, SP, Bai Plang to Spicer and family, 10 October 1950; ASM, SP, Bai Plang to Spicer and family, Christmas card from Philippines, n.d. For an overview of Plang's career, see <http://www.usm.edu.ph/about-usm/profile/the-founder> (consulted 24 August 2017).

In a few illuminating cases, some trainees elaborated much more fully on how their involvement in the seminar, particularly their exposure to Native American social dynamics and BIA responses to them, more substantively influenced their thinking about effective strategies for dealing with ‘underdeveloped’ populations around the world. Take, for instance, the example of Darwin Solomon, a thirty-one-year-old American graduate student in the seminar in the summer of 1950. Solomon participated in the programme as part of his graduate work in rural sociology and agricultural economics at Cornell, arriving with a few years’ experience serving in China as a United Nations agricultural extension worker. Following his seminar experience, and while working for the US Economic Cooperation Administration in Thailand, he published an article for the academic journal *Kiva*, which explicitly focused on the broader significance of the south-western cross-cultural initiative for international development work, and also replicated many of the seminar’s presumptions. At a time when the United States increasingly questioned the effectiveness and expense of its technical assistance programmes around the world, Solomon explained: ‘Many an American extension worker may find object lessons in how change is facilitated or blocked by studying the diverse cultural groups in our own south-west’, their ‘transition from an unscientific subsistence agriculture’, and the ‘often well intentioned, but frequently misinformed efforts [that] have been made to accelerate and guide that transition’.²¹ Drawing out comparative examples from the seminar’s Navajo, Pueblo, and Hispano case studies and his own field experiences in China, Solomon highlighted the relative effectiveness of involving local people in some of the planning and executing of the changes affecting them, and of educating the development ‘educator’ with a deeper, self-reflective understanding of the intercultural relations surrounding technical assistance. Significantly, what was left unquestioned here were the necessity of these ‘changes’, development administrators’ prerogative to define and implement them, and the broader power dynamics structuring development assistance. Solomon instead emphasized the functional imperative underlying the seminar’s cross-cultural contributions: deriving ‘more efficient methods for bringing about desirable changes in habits and attitudes ... in a foreign culture’.²²

Somewhat similar reflections on the seminar’s global utility came from Shripad Keshav Bedekar, a thirty-nine-year-old official in the Agriculture and Forestry Department in Bombay State, India, who participated in the Cornell seminar in 1952, as part of a larger Point Four grant to study American agricultural extension practices. Having only previously trained in the technical field of agricultural economics, he found the seminar’s immersion in social scientific principles and Native American cultural dynamics particularly eye-opening and transformative.²³ He also extolled the seminar’s virtues in a lengthy letter to a departmental colleague from India, who had just been assigned as an extension officer in British colonial East Africa. Stressing that the seminar’s training ‘should be of very considerable help to you in your work’, Bedekar shared some of the comparative insights that he had gleaned from the Cornell

21 WMAI, AP, box 37, file 39, ‘D.D. Solomon’; Darwin D. Solomon obituary, *Sundance Times* (Wyoming), 5 October 1995, p. 10; Darwin D. Solomon, ‘Lessons from the Southwest for extension educators abroad’, *Kiva*, 18, 1–2, 1952, p. 19.

22 Solomon, ‘Lessons from the Southwest’, pp. 19, 28–9.

23 Montana State University-Bozeman Libraries, Merrill G. Burlingame Special Collections, Bozeman, MT, M. L. Wilson Papers (henceforth MSUBL, WP), box 40, file 20, Virginia Wilson, ‘Evaluation project of the special study on principles, organization and methods of extension work in the United States made by the agricultural extension officers from India, sponsored by the Ford Foundation’ (henceforth ‘Evaluation project’), n.d., Bedekar, p. 1.

programme, with particular examples of lessons that the Navajo and Tohono O'Odham (Papago) cases could offer for development work in Zanzibar. Along the way, he also underscored the seminar's assumptions regarding the fundamental need for 'underdeveloped' societies to be restructured and the unique potential of sensitively applied social scientific methods for reducing cultural and political obstacles to developmental success. For instance, cultivating some cultural understanding and including the participation of the target population were essential to facilitating the transfer of technological know-how, and avoiding the cross-cultural conflicts of past state interventions: 'The resistance to acculturation displayed by Papagos and Navahos is a case in point. People treated as inferiors show tenacious adherence to existing state of things, since under such stress they cannot act rationally.' A shrewd development agent could instead achieve success, as seen in some Native American examples, by strategically employing fine-tuned anthropological techniques – like 'a prudent motorist' closely following 'the "road signs" on the highway of technological progress'. The positive development results were then predictable: 'The frictional resistance itself gets less and less as progress is made, because attitudes to change become more and more favorable, as changes are accepted one after another, in arithmetical progression ... and ultimately people may be so conditioned as to accept a technological improvement entirely on a rational basis.'²⁴

Another particularly clear example of the global value that participants drew from the seminar's cross-cultural approach and its Native American case studies can be found in the experiences of Baron Goto, director of the Hawaii Territory's Agricultural Service, who attended the Cornell programme in 1950. Goto was part of the influential Japanese American community in Hawai'i, and by the time of the seminar was a rising star in the American government's early Cold War efforts to help to transform the islands into an important site for technical training and development programmes there and beyond, as part of its larger ambitions in the Asia-Pacific region.²⁵ His enrolment in the 1950 seminar was part of a longer study tour of extension projects across the mainland US, and, as Mire Koikari has recently noted, the seminar had a uniquely 'profound impact' on Goto's future thinking and administrative trajectory. At the end of his seminar experience, Goto composed a 'handbook', which articulated broader principles that administrators across the globe should use in implementing technical assistance programmes. The handbook directly restated the seminar's main anthropological methods and approaches, perpetuated its presumptions regarding the necessity and primary role of development specialists, and particularly emphasized the cross-cultural insights derived from his first-hand observation of Navajo case studies and their utility in addressing worldwide development challenges. Notably, Goto echoed here a major comparative lesson highlighted by other seminar participants cited above: by understanding the cultural systems of target populations, development agents could better obviate social resistance, and thus advance the goals of technical assistance.²⁶

Over the following months, Goto further championed the seminar's global significance before different government audiences. In November 1950, while attending a USDA conference in Washington on land-grant colleges' extension work, he presented an overview of his

24 WMAI, AP, box 2, file 41, Shripad Keshav Bedekar to Raon, 'Letter to a friend who is going to Africa as an extension worker', 15 August 1952. Bedekar was prompted to write this letter as a seminar assignment.

25 For a deeper contextualization of Goto, see Mire Koikari, *Cold War encounters in US-occupied Okinawa: women, militarized domesticity, and transnationalism in East Asia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp. 115–22.

26 *Ibid.*, pp. 119–22.

handbook and the Cornell programme's value at a special seminar meeting of Point Four administrators. As the event was retold to John Adair, everyone in attendance felt that it was the best such seminar yet, thanks to Goto's convincing articulation of the programme's broader importance for international development training and its unique field immersion in the management of cultural 'differences'.²⁷ Back in Hawai'i in early 1951, Goto began applying some of the Cornell seminar ideas and lessons in the various training courses that he organized for US Point Four technicians preparing for assignments across the Asia-Pacific region.²⁸ In subsequent years, as he attained leading positions in international technical assistance and training institutions in Hawai'i, his formative exposure to the Cornell programme and Native American development dynamics would continue to inflect his approach to the problems of providing technical assistance to foreign, 'underdeveloped' cultures in various Pacific island territories, the Philippines, Okinawa, and beyond.²⁹

Bringing the seminar and Native American development to the world

As the Cornell seminar progressed and graduated such apparent success stories as Goto, Bedekar, and Solomon, some of the seminar organizers felt emboldened to bring their messages and methodology to even wider audiences. Further adding to this momentum was the active support from well-placed government colleagues, who likewise saw great potential in the seminar's capacity to influence the direction of American development assistance overseas. Working closely together, they brainstormed about more systematic ways to dramatically broaden the influence of the seminar on the expanding terrain of Point Four-related programmes.

From its inception, the seminar had enjoyed the deep interest and close cooperation of key allies in the USDA offices involved in foreign work. The department's Director of Extension, M. L. Wilson, was extremely sympathetic to the Cornell seminar's mission, having regularly incorporated the latest findings in rural sociology and applied anthropology in his various career positions as head of the USDA's Bureau of Agricultural Economics (BAE), the Extension Service, and other community development programmes.³⁰ Once the seminar began, Wilson visited the programme, regularly discussed its development with Leighton, Adair, and Spicer, and enthusiastically sent USDA technicians and extension officers to participate every year.³¹

Another important USDA ally was Douglas Ensminger in the OFAR, who had long-running intellectual connections with Cornell and believed in the infusion of social scientific thinking into agricultural extension work. After earning his doctorate in rural sociology

27 WMAI, AP, box 15, file 606, M. L. Wilson to Adair, 5 December 1950.

28 ASM, SP, box 3, folder 19, Adair to Spicer, 5 February 1951, relating a recent letter from Goto to Leighton.

29 Koikari, *Cold War encounters*, pp. 116, 121–4, 128–9.

30 Jess Gilbert, *Planning democracy: agrarian intellectuals and the intended New Deal*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015; Daniel Immerwahr, *Thinking small: the United States and the lure of community development*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015, pp. 44–7; O. F. Larson and J. N. Zimmerman, *Sociology in government: the Galpin–Taylor years in the U.S. Department of Agriculture 1919–1953*, Philadelphia, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003.

31 ASM, SP, box 3, folder 19, Spicer to Margaret Mead, 24 August 1950; ASM, SP, Adair to Spicer, 5 February 1951; WMAI, AP, box 15, file 606, Wilson to Adair, 5 December 1950; WMAI, AP, box 9, file 307, Adair to Leighton, 19 July 1951; WMAI, AP, box 9, file 308, Leighton to Avery, TCA, 7 January 1952; Leighton, Adair, and Parker, 'Field method'.

at Cornell in 1939, he assumed various roles in the USDA, such as directing both the BAE's community organization research programme and the Extension Service's programme in rural sociology extension. By the time that the Cornell seminar began in 1949, Ensminger was in charge of coordinating the OFAR's agricultural training of foreign nationals, and he showed his commitment to the seminar by personally selecting and sending OFAR personnel to attend the programme during its first three summers.³² His interest in the seminar's philosophy and methodology was underscored again in the autumn of 1951, when he joined Wilson, other US officials, and representatives from various countries in attending the Cornell Institute in Anthropology, which aimed to prepare technicians for development assistance work overseas by training them 'to understand different cultures of the world'.³³

With such support from Wilson, Ensminger, and others, some of the Cornell faculty initiated plans in early 1951 to expand the seminar's influence on overseas Point Four programmes. Following months of conversations with other members of Cornell's Sociology and Anthropology Department and the university administration, as well as Point Four staff in various government agencies, John Adair submitted a programme proposal to the State Department's Technical Cooperation Administration (TCA) director. The idea was for Cornell to set up a contract with the TCA for a pilot year (July 1951–July 1952), creating a special seminar programme in 'native communities' of New Mexico and Arizona, which would be exclusively devoted to training as many as eighty American TCA employees engaged in Point Four projects around the world.³⁴ Adair justified such an expansion by recapitulating the past achievements of the Cornell seminar, and emphasizing the prime training conditions of the American south-west, a region 'where for many years the United States Government has been confronted with problems similar to those which now confront T.C.A.' Not only could the seminar programme 'provide T.C.A. personnel with invaluable insight' into comparable development challenges; it could also lead to targeted follow-up training projects, led by social scientists from Cornell and elsewhere, in the Point Four-recipient countries themselves.³⁵ Both Adair and his colleague Leighton continued to work on such ideas over the next couple of years. They discussed possibilities and mobilized financial support with officials in the State Department and the Social Science Research Council, hosted two State observers at the summer seminar to consider potential methods to institute in the department's training courses, and promoted the seminar model in meetings with other government agencies' officials and congressional leaders.³⁶

32 Harry S. Truman Library, Oral history interview with Douglas Ensminger, by Harry S. Taylor, Columbia, MO, 16 June and 7 July 1976, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/esmingr.htm#note> (consulted 24 August 2017); WMAI, AP, box 9, file 307, Adair to Leighton, 19 July 1951; WMAI, AP, box 37, file 32, Clifford R. Barnett to Modesto Ortiz-Rigau, 20 April 1951, regarding Ensminger and the seminar.

33 National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD, Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Interior, Record Group 48 (henceforth NARA2, RG48), entry 879, box 4, folder 'Training: general December 1949–April 1951 (Pt-IV)', 'Department of Agriculture land-grant college contacts – programs OFAR', 'Foreign program letter' 28, 19 October 1951.

34 NARA2, RG48, telegram, Adair to John Evans, Interior Department, 21 February 1951; NARA2, RG48, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Cornell, to Administrator, TCA, 'A proposed training program for Point Four workers in the American Southwest', n.d.

35 NARA2, RG48, 'Proposed training program'.

36 ASM, SP, box 3, folder 19, Adair to Spicer, 11 May 1951; WMAI, AP, box 9, file 307, Adair to Leighton, 19 July 1951; WMAI, AP, box 9, file 307, Leighton to Adair, 28 July 1951; WMAI, AP, box 1, file 1, Adair to Donald Stone, ECA, 17 October 1951; Leighton, 'Cornell southwestern program'.

Though nothing more expansive formally emerged from these efforts, they do reflect the wide circulation of the south-west seminar's activities and the deep confidence that the seminar organizers, and at least a few well-positioned allies in government and foundation circles, held in the training programme and its Native American case studies' transferability to development administration worldwide.³⁷ Moreover, cultivating such networks of support soon led to some more tangible outcomes: the replication of the Cornell seminar model in a couple of experiments in development training for foreign government officers in the early 1950s, similarly based in the south-west and involving immersion in Native American development realities.

The seminar's first afterlife: the 1952 extension tour from India

The first spin-off of the Cornell seminar occurred in late 1952, as part of a training programme for a large group of agricultural officers from across India during their two-month tour of American extension practices. This special programme came about as familiar allies of the Cornell model in American foreign aid circles continued to generate enthusiasm for the seminar, as they ventured directly into assistance initiatives in newly independent India. For both the programme's organizers and the trainees, this short course would serve overall to reinforce many of the original guiding assumptions regarding the comparative value of studying Native American 'underdevelopment' and cross-cultural methodologies for remedying such problems around the globe.

The idea for this initiative developed out of a confluence of interests among a variety of governmental and non-governmental players in India and the US, at a moment of accelerated ambitions for planned rural development under Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. In the few years following India's independence in 1947, particularly in response to shifting Cold War dynamics in the wake of the Chinese revolution and the outbreak of conflict in Korea, the US more seriously viewed development assistance to India as a crucial strategy in its global struggle against communist expansion. In 1951, a new agreement between the US and India brought direct support to the Nehru government's First Five-Year Plan for economic development and launched an acceleration of American aid over the next few years.³⁸

At the same time, building upon prior transnational experiments in Indian village improvement over the preceding decades, a number of American planners, academics, and foundations also became heavily involved in the country's expansion of new rural community development programmes.³⁹ Cornell social scientists again played an especially prominent role

37 For instance, an overview of the field seminar's approach and examples from Cornell's Native American research in the southwest were included in Spicer and Dobyns' influential edited volume, *Human problems in technological change*, which was adopted for social science training in many American university courses and circulated widely among a number of US and foreign government agencies. Spicer, ed., *Human problems*; Davies, 'Cornell's field seminar', pp. 332–3.

38 Dennis Merrill, *Bread and the ballot: the United States and India's economic development, 1947–1963*, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1990; David C. Engerman, 'West meets east: the Center for International Studies and Indian economic development', in David C. Engerman *et al.*, eds., *Staging growth: modernization, development, and the global Cold War*, Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003, pp. 199–223; Michael E. Latham, *The right kind of revolution: modernization, development, and U.S. foreign policy from the Cold War to the present*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011, pp. 68–75.

39 Nicole Sackley, 'Village models: Etawah, India, and the making and remaking of development in the early Cold War', *Diplomatic History*, 37, 4, 2013, pp. 749–78; Subir Sinha, 'Lineages of the developmentalist state: transnationality and village India, 1900–1965', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 50, 1, 2008, pp. 57–90.

in these activities, both directly through the Sociology and Anthropology Department's pilot development project in the northern province of Uttar Pradesh, and indirectly through the department's close relationship with the Ford Foundation, which became a major supporter, along with the State Department, of Nehru's new nationwide community development programme in 1952. In fact, the first Ford representative hired to head the foundation's new office in Delhi that year was Douglas Ensminger, who, as noted above, had long-running intellectual connections with Cornell, and had helped support the south-west seminar from his prior position in the OFAR.⁴⁰

Soon after settling into this new role at Ford, Ensminger began brainstorming about creative ways to infuse the foundation's assistance to Indian community programmes with the latest in American rural development knowledge. In mid 1952, in consultation with his former colleague at USDA, M. L. Wilson, he thus helped develop a two-month training programme in the United States for some twenty-one extension officers from across India and two representatives of the Indian government's Ministry of Food and Agriculture. It was hoped that 'visualizing what in the United States Extension experience might have application to India' would better equip these officials to achieve some of the stated objectives of India's First Five-Year Plan, 'to lift the rural community to higher levels of organization and to arouse enthusiasm for new knowledge and new "ways of life"'.⁴¹ With these goals in mind, Wilson and Ensminger further strove to incorporate what they saw as some of the cutting-edge cross-cultural training methods of the Cornell seminar, a programme that each had so energetically supported throughout its run.⁴² As planning for the Indian extension tour began taking shape in early 1952, both men committed themselves to ensuring that some similar programme would be a highlight of the overall itinerary.

Given Wilson's personal investment in this part of the tour, the Ford Foundation delegated him to make all of the south-west seminar's necessary arrangements. Wilson in turn successfully enlisted one of the main organizers of the Cornell summer seminar, Edward Spicer, to lead a condensed one-week version of the course, based in Native American and Hispano communities in New Mexico and Arizona. As he explained to Spicer, while some officials involved in American assistance to India might question the relevance of such a programme, arguing that the visitors 'might easily develop an attitude that they can see underdeveloped people living in mud houses in India and don't have to come to the United States to see them', he instead held high hopes 'that growing out of this would be some knowledge on their part of the native culture and cultural change and that they would begin to see their native India in terms of the pattern of culture'.⁴³ As in the Cornell summer programme, Spicer's seminar for the

40 Immerwahr, *Thinking small*, pp. 66–80; Corinna R. Unger, 'Towards global equilibrium: American foundations and Indian modernization, 1950s to 1970s', *Journal of Global History*, 6, 2011, pp. 121–42; Ross, 'Peasants on our minds'; Sackley, 'Village as Cold War site', pp. 494–5. On Ensminger and his work for Ford in India, see Nicole Sackley, 'Foundation in the field: the Ford Foundation's New Delhi office and the construction of development knowledge, 1951–1970', in John Krige and Helke Rausch, eds., *American foundations and the coproduction of world order in the twentieth century*, Göttingen: Vandenoebck and Ruprecht, 2012, pp. 232–60; Chay Brooks, "'The ignorance of the uneducated": Ford Foundation philanthropy, the IIE, and the geographies of educational exchange', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 48, 2015, pp. 36–46.

41 MSUBL, WP, box 33, file 7, 'Program for special study in the United States of principles, organization and methods of extension work in the United States by extension service directors from India', 22 August 1952 (henceforth 'Program for special study'), pp. 2–3. For a general overview of the tour and its relation to broader international exchanges at the time, see Brooks, 'Ignorance of the uneducated', pp. 44–5.

42 ASM, SP, box 3, folder 12, Wilson to Spicer, 19 June 1952, and Wilson to Spicer, 2 September 1952.

43 ASM, SP, box 3, folder 12, Wilson to Spicer, 2 September 1952; Leighton, 'Cornell southwestern program'; 'Program for special study'.

Indian entourage would thus present particular south-western communities as living laboratories of more universal challenges in cross-cultural development administration. ‘We believe’, Wilson noted in his request for cooperation from the BIA commissioner, ‘that there are some principles about educational work with people’s living cultures decidedly different from our own that can be demonstrated in the field, using the experience of a Mexican, Pueblo, and Navajo community as case studies.’⁴⁴

Beyond its immediate value for the Indian visitors in their ongoing extension work back home, Wilson and some of his colleagues in the Ford Foundation and the Point Four programmes in Asia saw even greater possibilities for the seminar. In planning the south-western course, Wilson discussed its merits with his old colleague and friend Chester Davis, who was second-in-command at the Ford Foundation and responsible for its work in India and additional overseas programmes.⁴⁵ Davis responded enthusiastically and envisioned its potential as a model for future training of overseas technicians. As Wilson confided to Spicer:

I have been told that the Ford Foundation wants to do something in the training field to assist in social change in undeveloped countries, but don’t quite know how to do it. They are going to be looking very critically at what we do the week of October 5 [Spicer’s seminar] and if we sell them and enthuse them on the idea, I think they will work decidedly in that direction.⁴⁶

Another influential ally here was John Provinse, quoted at the beginning of this article. Earlier that year, Provinse had moved from the BIA to the State Department, in charge of Point Four programmes in South and Southeast Asia. With his long-running and eclectic career in Native American affairs, applied anthropology, and community development work at home and abroad, he was a strong advocate of the Cornell seminar’s ‘immersion’ approach in the south-west and the general infusion of cross-cultural methods into the design of development programmes. In conversations with Wilson and Spicer regarding the upcoming tour of officials from India, Provinse emphasized Spicer’s ‘fund of knowledge about the kind of things Extension workers anywhere in the world need to know’ and the absolute necessity of this form of experiential ‘human relations’ training for overseas development assistance work. In Wilson’s estimation, Provinse saw Spicer’s seminar as a testing ground of wider international application: ‘I think that John feels that if we can be successful in this week and get the Indians interested and the Ford Foundation, we may profoundly affect a training programme in relation to Point 4.’⁴⁷ Along these lines, Wilson also invited the head of his division’s training section, Mary Louise Collings, to participate in Spicer’s seminar and evaluate ‘how more of this kind of training can be used both for teaching extension and for other oversea[s] purposes in connection with Point IV’.⁴⁸

By the time of Spicer’s seminar in early October 1952, the visiting Indian officers had already completed several weeks on their whirlwind tour of diverse examples of extension

44 ASM, SP, box 3, folder 12, Wilson to Dillon Myer, 24 July 1952.

45 Sackley, ‘Foundation in the field’, p. 239.

46 ASM, SP, box 3, folder 12, Wilson to Spicer, 2 September 1952.

47 ASM, SP, box 3, folder 12, John Provinse to Spicer, 7 September 1952; ASM, SP, box 3, folder 12, Wilson to Spicer, 2 September 1952.

48 ASM, SP, box 3, folder 12, Wilson to Spicer, 2 September 1952.

work across the country. After introductory lectures by various USDA authorities in Washington, DC, the group embarked on visits to land-grant institutions and agricultural research centres (in Maryland, Tennessee, Alabama, and Missouri); a tour of the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, to study the programmes ‘developed for the express needs of the negro people, [and] how they have become inspired’ through higher educational and extension opportunities; and personalized stays with farming families in central Missouri. The cross-cultural seminar was then held in Santa Fe, Albuquerque, and Gallup, New Mexico, with occasional field trips to outlying communities and some lectures by Wilson.⁴⁹ Assisting Spicer throughout the programme was the agricultural officer from Bombay, Shripad Bedekar, who had so enthusiastically participated in the Cornell seminar a few months earlier, and who was enlisted to liaise with the other visitors about their experiences in the south-west and their relevance to development situations in India.⁵⁰

Overall, Spicer and Wilson attempted to instil the guiding assumptions and agendas of the larger Cornell seminar in abridged form.⁵¹ As Spicer summarized it:

I simply set out to raise the question of why the Spanish, Pueblo, and Navaho farmers were backward as compared with those which they had seen elsewhere in the United States. Then M.L. [Wilson] and I tried to point out cultural factors which could be seen as influencing the situation. We called their attention to successful and unsuccessful techniques of change which extension workers in the area had employed.⁵²

In his lectures to the Indian trainees, Spicer was also quite explicit about the cultural and political mission universally underlying development work among such ‘backward’ populations: ‘Extension is a special technique of changing customs [and] culture’. He thus provided examples of tactical anthropological techniques for making ‘the culture work for you’: ‘getting people to express their felt needs’, recognizing local people’s perspectives on technological change, learning how to ‘spot resistance and define it’, and utilizing all such knowledge to overcome recalcitrance and gain communities’ acceptance and confidence.⁵³

Not surprisingly, the Indian officials involved responded in a variety of ways to the seminar’s cross-cultural orientation and the comparative exposure to south-western Native American contexts and development predicaments. In individualized post-seminar interviews, the trainees extensively reported on their positive and negative impressions of the experience, commenting frankly on the relative merits of particular development policies instituted by the US and Indian governments. One senior agricultural minister even expressed outright scepticism about the transferable utility of the seminar to situations in India.⁵⁴ What is striking overall, however, is that the overwhelming majority of trainees

49 ‘Program for special study’. Following Spicer’s seminar, the group visited academic and government extension services in Arizona and California, before returning to India via a brief tour of extension work in Japan.

50 ASM, SP, box 3, folder 17, small spiral notebook, untitled notes for 1952 India seminar, n.d.; ASM, SP, box 3, folder 12, Wilson to Spicer, 2 September 1952, and Wilson to Spicer, 25 September 1952; ASM, SP, box 3, folder 18, Spicer to Wilson, 28 September 1952.

51 ASM, SP, box 3, folder 12, Wilson to President R. A. Harvill, University of Arizona, 18 August 1952; ASM, SP, box 3, folder 17, small spiral notebook, untitled notes for 1952 India seminar, n.d.

52 ASM, SP, box 26, ‘Part 1’ folder, Spicer to Provinse, 3 November 1952.

53 ASM, SP, box 3, folder 15, handwritten notes for Spicer’s lecture to India trainees, n.d.; ASM, SP, box 3, folder 17, small spiral notebook, untitled notes for 1952 India seminar, n.d. On the concept of ‘felt needs’ and its application in community development programs in India, see Immerwahr, *Thinking small*, pp. 73, 79, 92–4.

54 See, for example, MSUBL, WP, box 40, file 21, p. 6.

praised the cross-cultural framework of Spicer's seminar and its value in diagnosing administrators' common challenges in 'developing' both Native Americans and farmers in India. For example, for J. C. Ramchandani, Director of Agriculture for Saurashtra State, the lessons from Spicer's seminar had 'direct correlation with the extension work which we have to carry out with the people of the states [in India]'. The cultural differences witnessed in the American south-west reminded him of the challenges of introducing technological changes among adherents of Jainism back home; administrators in both contexts needed to be sensitive to local cultures and religions and thereby 'translate' development innovations 'to fit the characteristics of the people'.⁵⁵ B. T. Narayanan, Joint Director of Agricultural Extension in the southern Mysore State, saw similar comparisons in the 'little or no progress' resulting from past ideological tensions between government administrators and Navajo and Hopi communities: 'it possibly shows why in certain situations of antagonism, extension programs in my own country have not progressed'.⁵⁶

Several others commented on the immense value in learning from and averting the BIA's administrative and cultural missteps when engaging in development work back home. For instance, Amrit Mukerji, Joint Director of Agriculture in Tripura State, noted how instructive Spicer's seminar was, since in Tripura 'we have some aboriginal tribes like the Navaho, Hopi, and Pueblo Indians'; he now hoped 'that we should be able to avoid mistakes which have been committed here so that the human relationships with such tribes could be most happy and contributive of progressive ideas amongst them'.⁵⁷ Similarly, K. Balachandran, Director of Community Projects in Assam State, described the Spicer seminar as 'the most instructive week of the whole tour in America'. From the sentiments and practices of Navajo farmers with whom he interacted in the Fruitland, New Mexico area, it was abundantly clear that the government's 'wrong approach' of the past, 'based on a complete ignorance of cultural values of the Indian tribes', had caused long-lasting 'damage' to meaningful development.⁵⁸

Many of the trainees further reaffirmed the seminar's underlying development principles and presumptions. As Nicole Sackley has described, though significant differences separated Indian community development planners from their American counterparts in the early 1950s, they shared some common perspectives: state-led technological change was necessary, trained experts should ultimately wield its reins, and, despite the 'professed admiration for village culture', modifying local community culture was a vital strategy for transforming rural economies and minimizing political resistance.⁵⁹ Such viewpoints were repeatedly echoed in the seminar trainees' testimonies. For example, B. P. Akhuary, Director of Extension for Bihar State, reflected on the need for administrators to sensitively interpret and manipulate local people's culture in stark technical terms: a government expert merely adjusted development work according to the levels of culture concerned, much 'as we treat different plots in a farm with different doses of fertilizers depending on their requirements'.⁶⁰

55 MSUBL, WP, box 40, file 23, Ramchandani, pp. 5–6.

56 MSUBL, WP, box 40, file 22, Narayanan, pp. 6–7.

57 MSUBL, WP, box 40, file 21, Mukerji, p. 6.

58 MSUBL, WP, box 40, file 20, Balachandran, p. 4. See also MSUBL, WP, box 40, file 23, Sabhlok, pp. 4–5.

59 Sackley, 'Village models'.

60 MSUBL, WP, box 40, file 20, Akhuary, p. 6.

Other trainees particularly praised Spicer's tactical tips on how administrators could best 'get the culture to work for you' and thereby 'overcome resistance'. Whereas previously, Sukumuran Nair, a land development officer from Travancore-Cochin, had felt the need to 'induce' certain Indian communities 'sometimes even by force to adopt better farming practices', the understanding of the importance of cultural variation that he had gained in the American south-west would now lead him to strategically 'adapt' more of his 'propaganda' and extension work to local cultural differences.⁶¹ The Deputy Director of Agriculture in Vindhya Pradesh, G. G. Phadke, offered by comparison his own experiences in utilizing local cultural and Hindu religious practices to lay the groundwork for agricultural innovations. 'When the religious instinct of a farmer is touched' by proper extension approaches, Phadke explained, 'his brain wave begins to move and he thinks of improvements and then the foundation is prepared to impart other improved methods.'⁶²

The south-west seminar thus provided opportunities for these visiting Indian officials to make what they saw as meaningful, comparative interpretations of the development scenarios of local Native American communities and the cross-cultural challenges of assisting similarly 'underdeveloped' populations back home. In the process, they further helped to underscore and reaffirm many of the presumptions, perspectives, and cultural and political approaches shared by the seminar organizers. For these reasons, Wilson, Spicer, and Provinse viewed the programme as an overall success, and as fulfilling its larger purposes.⁶³ Wilson, in particular, had a unique opportunity to assess the broader impact of the tour in the following months, during an extended international trip that included a few months in India, observing rural development work and reuniting with some of the recent seminar participants. As he wrote to Spicer in early 1953, many of the Indian officers still continued to rave about their seminar experiences in the south-west. Some months later, Wilson went so far as to claim that 'the success of the visit of the Directors of Extension has reverberated throughout India'.⁶⁴

Wilson was so enthusiastic about the event's success, in fact, that he continued to promote such south-western field experience as a model for future international training programmes. During his transition in 1953 from USDA to a new position in the Ford Foundation's overseas division, he schemed about different ways for the foundation to initiate new programmes, which would be focused on similar immersion in cross-cultural development experiences of the south-west. Over the course of 1953, he strategized with Spicer and administrators at both the University of Arizona and the New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts (NMCAMA) about establishing a more robust programme for training foreign extension workers. With funding from the Ford Foundation, it would be modelled on the field experiences of the Cornell south-west seminar, and would build on Spicer's achievements in the India

61 MSUBL, WP, box 40, file 22, Nair, pp. 6–7.

62 MSUBL, WP, box 40, file 22, Phadke, p. 3.

63 ASM, SP, box 26, 'Part 1' folder, Spicer to Provinse, 3 November 1952, and Provinse to Spicer, 26 November 1952; ASM, SP, box 3, folder 12, Wilson to Spicer, 3 November 1952; NARA2, RG 48, entry 879, box 4, folder 'Department of Agriculture land-grant college contacts – programs OFAR', 'Foreign program letter' 74, 'Some reactions from Indian extension group', 7 November 1952.

64 ASM, SP, box 35, Wilson to Spicer, 24 April 1953, and Wilson to Spicer, 16 July 1954; Brooks, 'Ignorance of the uneducated', p. 44. Further spreading the word about the American tour and the south-west seminar was a 1953 film – *Rural U.S.A. (through Indian eyes)* – produced by the Ford Foundation and widely distributed to extension departments across India.

extension tour.⁶⁵ The following year, Wilson again repeatedly discussed with Spicer various ideas for bringing foreign and domestic students of agricultural extension to field seminars based in the south-west, for some six to eight weeks, ‘operating in three communities – the Navaho – Hopi and one rather typical community of northern New Mexico’. This would be followed up by placement in projects in South or East Asia.⁶⁶ Although nothing seems to have come directly from these various discussions and proposals, they reveal the momentum generated by the India tour experiment, as well as the persistent influence of the broader Cornell seminar approach among a variety of academic, foundation, and government actors, centred on their collective confidence that Native American situations could provide valuable transnational development insights.

Widening the seminar’s global reach: from India to the Middle East

Beyond the India extension tour and related follow-up schemes that Wilson and others promoted, the Cornell seminar further directly led to a related initiative spearheaded in 1953 by Point Four administrators for the Middle East. One of the key organizers behind this programme was Gordon Macgregor, an individual with great admiration for the seminar’s approach, as well as deep experience with US government programmes among Native Americans and internationally. Originally trained as an anthropologist, Macgregor had by this time moved from various roles in the BIA and the Interior Department’s Office of the Territories to serve as a deputy administrator and cultural advisor for Point Four programmes in the Near East and African Development Service (NEADS).⁶⁷ It was from this latter position that he helped create a training programme for Middle Eastern technicians in the American south-west, which melded his career interests in applied anthropology and development administration among ‘underdeveloped’ peoples in the US and overseas. Modelled explicitly on the Cornell seminar and its immersion in Native American case studies, this NEADS course also served to further replicate and circulate the Cornell programme’s underlying development assumptions and approaches.

Over the course of late 1952 and early 1953, Macgregor and other NEADS officials were busy thinking up novel ways to build upon the department’s existing training practices, whereby individual technical specialists from Point Four-recipient countries in the region came to study at partnering American land-grant institutions. Evolving out of these discussions was the idea to organize new, thematically focused, group training programmes in the US. In the process, a programme on agricultural extension and community development work for government officers from various Middle Eastern countries was developed in coordination with administrators at NMCAMA. As planning commenced in early 1953, Macgregor saw an

65 ASM, SP, box 35, Wilson to Spicer, 7 May 1953; ASM, SP, box 35, Wilson to Dean R. A. Nichols, College of Agriculture, New Mexico State College, 7 May 1953; ASM, SP, box 35, Spicer to Wilson, 15 May 1953; ASM, SP, box 35, Dean Phil S. Eckert, College of Agriculture, University of Arizona, to Spicer, 26 May 1953; ASM, SP, box 35, Eckert to Harvill, 1 July 1953; ASM, SP, box 35, Wilson to Eckert, 7 October 1953; ASM, SP, box 35, Eckert to Wilson, 12 October 1953.

66 ASM, SP, box 35, Wilson to Spicer, 16 July 1954; ASM, SP, box 35, Spicer to Wilson, 17 September 1954; ASM, SP, box 35, Wilson to Spicer, 28 October 1954; ASM, SP, box 35, Spicer to Wilson, 10 November 1954.

67 Gordon Macgregor, ‘Anthropology in government: United States’, *Yearbook of Anthropology*, 1955, pp. 421–33, noting his biography.

opportunity to incorporate here some form of a Cornell-like field programme involving local Native American communities.⁶⁸

Macgregor was already quite familiar with the work of the Cornell seminar and the involvement of Point Four representatives in years past and had been particularly impressed by the recent Ford-sponsored India tour and the achievements of Spicer's condensed version of the seminar.⁶⁹ He thus turned to one of the Cornell programme's key organizers, John Adair, to solicit his advice and potential participation in running a similar training project for Middle Eastern officials: 'We especially want to introduce a short program patterned on the Cornell Field Training Seminar to get the Arab trainees to see technical assistance from the people[']s point of view.'⁷⁰ The course would last some six to eight weeks and would be led by a selected cultural anthropologist, who could best help the trainees 'translate their training to their own country situations'.⁷¹ When Adair eventually declined to take on the job, Macgregor instead hired another pillar of the former Cornell seminar – Tom Sasaki, field director of the university's ongoing research project in the south-west.⁷²

After months of planning, the Middle East development course finally began in late September 1953, with representatives attending from three countries in which Point Four agrarian assistance programmes were expanding: eight from Iran, seven from Egypt, and one from Iraq.⁷³ The group's itinerary lasted four months and consisted of orientation, classes, and tours at NMCAMA. This was followed by some five weeks of 'field experience' in outlying counties, which included tours of various Indian communities, social centres, and extension programmes, particularly Navajo farm visits organized by Sasaki in the Fruitland and Shiprock areas. There were also some background lectures on local Indian societies and BIA programmes, and an intensive week-long seminar, led by Sasaki and based on the Cornell model, that concentrated on Pueblo and Hispano communities in Santa Fe and Rio Arriba counties. Throughout the programme, the trainees were regularly encouraged to apply their field experiences in the south-west, and their immersion in cultural anthropology, to potential development strategies in their home countries. They were then assigned formal papers on the topic towards the end of the course. Following this larger group programme, the participants pursued more individualized academic training in their particular areas of interest, at the college or in other states, for a few more months, before returning home to their respective countries.⁷⁴

68 NARA2, Record Group 469 (henceforth RG469), 830, folder 'Animal husbandry-project', 'NEADS training unit: Mr. Pierce' to E. R. Fryer and staff, 5 June 1952; WMAI, AP, box 9, folder 337, Gordon Macgregor to Adair, 2 April 1953.

69 WMAI, AP, box 9, folder 337, Macgregor to Adair, 2 April 1953; WMAI, AP, box 15, file 606, Adair to Wilson, 28 August 1953.

70 WMAI, AP, box 9, folder 337, Macgregor to Adair, 2 April 1953.

71 *Ibid.*

72 WMAI, AP, box 9, folder 337, Adair to Macgregor, 27 April 1953, and Adair to Macgregor, 13 June 1953.

73 Nathan J. Citino, *Envisioning the Arab future: modernization in U.S.–Arab relations, 1945–1967*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017; Jon B. Alterman, *Egypt and American foreign policy assistance 1952–1956: hopes dashed*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002; Sara Ehsani-Nia, "'Go forth and do good": US–Iranian relations during the Cold War through the lens of public diplomacy', *Penn History Review*, 19, 1, 2011, pp. 76–116.

74 Cline Library, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ, Dorothea C. and Alexander H. Leighton Collection, box 2, folder 70, Fred P. Frutchey, Foreign Student Branch, Division of Extension Research and Training, Federal Extension Service, USDA, 'Evaluation of Middle East extension short course of the New Mexico A. & M. College, Las Cruces, N.M. September 30, 1953 – January 30, 1954' (henceforth 'Evaluation'); MSUBL, WP, box 46, file 17, 'Outline: Near East extension methodology and community development training program'; NARA2, RG469, 1268, box 1, folder 'Agriculture, Tech Service – Sep 1953–April 1954', H. G. Bolster, Middle East and Eastern Europe Division, OFAR, to Eugene W. Whitman, Amman, Jordan, 7 October 1953.

At the tail end of the programme, the participants were interviewed about their perspectives on their training experiences, and Sasaki's field seminar in particular. Although the summary evaluation report unfortunately only records these responses selectively, briefly, and without attribution, the limited remarks are nonetheless revealing.⁷⁵ They suggest some of the ways in which the trainees drew connections between local Native American contexts and their own development situations back home, and how they shared and shored up some of the central assumptions and takeaway messages that the programme strove to impart.

Overall, the trainees found profound 'similarities in cultural conditions of the Indian tribes' and rural populations in their home countries. Moreover, Sasaki's seminar had underscored for them that cultural difference was ultimately the central obstacle to be overcome to achieve developmental success. 'Sometimes people don't follow the recommended practices because practices are contrary to the customs and traditions of the people', one concluded. An Iranian official determined from his observations of Navajo and Pueblo programmes that development work needed to be specifically adapted to particular cultures, and he would now work towards a similar plan 'for special Extension work with the Ghasghai tribe' of south-western Iran. Some other comments revealed the underlying interest in fostering cultural change in 'backward' communities. One individual asserted that a common challenge in the Middle East and in 'work with Indians' was 'how to work in Extension with people who are different and do not realize the value of Extension'. As another trainee complained, the 'Indians don't seem to practice very much the information given them'. Another drew from his experiences at home and observations in the south-west to conclude: 'The more religion is free from superstitions which prevent progress the more the people progress', such as he saw in the contrasts between 'Anglo' and Native American religions.⁷⁶

The programme's evaluation report also outlined the final group session, in which the cultural and political aspirations of the seminar's approach were addressed and reinforced more explicitly. Over a few days, the participants discussed a range of 'best practices' for the selection, training, and administrative support of government development agents, drawing out comparative lessons from their south-western observations. A more extended conversation then ensued regarding one of the underlying emphases of the Cornell seminar in its various iterations, namely identifying local cultural dynamics to serve the larger agenda of developmental change – or, as Spicer had stressed during the previous India tour, getting 'the culture to work for you'.⁷⁷ As Nathan Citino has recently described, such attentiveness to local knowledge and perspectives was a strategy commonly valorized by many American and Middle Eastern planners implementing state development schemes across the region in the early 1950s: 'incorporating local knowledge permitted community designers to claim that they were giving residents what they really needed'.⁷⁸

In Sasaki's seminar, the participants similarly shared their views of how an extension agent, whether working among Native Americans or rural communities in the Middle East, could most productively utilize local people's understandings to 'gain their confidence' in moving

75 Frutchey, 'Evaluation'. Some of the participants from Egypt and Iran are also noted in USDA Foreign Agricultural Service and International Cooperation Administration, Office of Food and Agriculture, 'Development of the Iranian agricultural extension service: a case study by Andrew J. Nichols', unpublished report, Washington, DC, May 1957, p. 63.

76 All quotes from Frutchey, 'Evaluation'.

77 ASM, SP, box 3, folder 15, handwritten notes for Spicer's lecture to India trainees, n.d.

78 Citino, *Envisioning the Arab future*, 99.

forward with programmes of technological change. In fact, the main goal that the trainees agreed upon and discussed in the seminar's final session was how they could best draw from their diverse cross-cultural training in the south-west to advance extension in communities in Egypt, Iran, and Iraq 'without starting a revolution'.⁷⁹ As with earlier versions of the Cornell seminar, a shared purpose here was to equip these specialists with transnational anthropological insights, drawn from Native American examples, that could be deployed for the more effective implementation of developmental change among 'backward' populations anywhere, including the significant political work of diluting local resistance to state-led interventions.

Conclusion

Beyond Sasaki's seminar, confidence in the value of the Cornell seminar model for global development work would continue to influence some additional educational projects in the early to mid 1950s. In 1953, for example, Cornell faculty helped devise an international seminar, run by the American Friends Service Committee, which was based in Arizona and which borrowed directly from the Cornell seminar. Immersion in Native American 'underdevelopment' became the centrepiece of the programme's training in global cross-cultural relations.⁸⁰ And from 1952 to 1955, Cornell faculty and other past seminar allies (including Provinse and Macgregor) helped organize and run a Cornell-modelled immersive, cross-cultural winter session, involving fieldwork in Cherokee communities in western North Carolina, for a professional training programme in international technical assistance, which was launched by Haverford College, Pennsylvania.⁸¹

When viewed alongside the training initiatives explored in this article, these various transnational 'laboratories' encourage a rethinking of many accounts of America's expanding global developmental engagements in the immediate post-war era, in which Native American realities are routinely absent.⁸² The organization of the Cornell seminar and its multiple spin-offs, through the collaborative efforts of influential actors in various American universities, government agencies, and foundations, placed Native American scenarios at the centre of numerous transnational discussions, among a wide diversity of American and foreign trainees, regarding how best to implement developmental change among 'backward' recipient populations around the world.

The process of deriving global lessons from Native American cases further facilitated the wider affirmation and transnational circulation of certain universalizing premises regarding the cultural basis of 'underdevelopment', the imperative and prerogative of 'experts' to direct technological assistance, and the importance of applying culturally 'sensitive', and politically expedient, methods to achieve desired developmental changes. As other scholars have begun to examine, engagement with native communities' 'difference' and 'underdevelopment' would later play a significant role in American technical assistance training programmes and the

79 Frutchey, 'Evaluation'.

80 For more on this programme, see the various files in Archives of the American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia, PA, 1953, International Seminars, 'Verde valley, general'.

81 Harry W. Pfund, 'Haverford's "Point Four" training program', *News Bulletin*, Institute of International Education, March 1953. For more details, see Haverford College Library, Special Collections, Haverford, PA, Theodore Brinton Hetzel Papers, box 7, folder 'Social and technical assistance program'.

82 Rosier, 'Crossing new boundaries'.

construction of ways of imagining and managing global development and poverty, particularly during the launching of the Peace Corps and other service initiatives in the 1960s.⁸³ The post-war examples described above suggest the importance of exploring further how Native American realities were implicated in, and inflected, the making of transnational development knowledge during earlier, formative chapters in the history of US global interventions.⁸⁴

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83 Michael E. Latham, *Modernization as ideology: American social science and 'nation building' in the Kennedy era*, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000, pp. 146–8; Goldstein, *Poverty in common*, pp. 77–110; Sheyda Jahanbani, 'One global war on poverty: the Johnson administration fights poverty at home and abroad, 1964–1968', in Francis J. Gavin and Mark Atwood Lawrence, eds., *Beyond the Cold War: Lyndon Johnson and the new global challenges of the 1960s*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 97–117.

84 Rosier, 'Crossing new boundaries'; Black, 'Interior's exterior'. For more on the related significance of American global expansion for Native American politics during the Point Four era, see Cobb, *Native activism*; Rosier, *Serving their country*.