

My Approaches to Your Work

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Experience

I have constructed new agencies and repaired old agencies, implemented state legislation, advised legislatures, governors, and commissioners, represented state interests to federal authorities, and managed the progress of my agencies toward their missions. As an applied policy and program researcher, I have designed, conducted, managed, and audited major investigations for **government agencies, foundations, and private industry**. Areas of applied policy and program analysis and regulatory solutions include:

- cultural competency and language access in health-care delivery, including hospitals, health care systems, managed health care plans, community health centers, and migrant health centers
- community-based reform of prevention and intervention services for children, youth, and families
- alcohol and substance abuse laws, programs, and policies
- workforce health practices in major industrial developments
- community social health and local empowerment
- mental health and other services program, process, and outcome evaluation
- industrial development and community impact assessment
- institutional discrimination by sex and race
- resmyce allocation by regulation
- tribal self-governance
- organizational strategy, practice, and evaluation
- public, community, and workforce health policy, health services, long-term care, and health care reform
- children's welfare, mental health, and educational services
- Indian child welfare practice and outcomes

I have extensive research and writing in minority health, particularly in cultural and linguistic services at the institutional level and community. I designed and led a multi-year meta-evaluation of over 30 distinct grant-funded language access advocacy, quality, technology, and research projects in California and the East Coast for The Strategic Language Access Initiative of The California Endowment; these projects were conducted by public and private hospitals, hospital systems, and HMOs, medical associations, minority advocacy organizations, and academic centers. I designed and initiated a national study of best practices under the CLAS standards for the Office of Minority Health, completed a book on cultural and linguistic competency for Medicaid patients for The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and conducted/is conducting proprietary studies of institutional best language practices for large hospitals (Swedish Medical Center) and community health centers, evaluation of interpreter training as an institutional

intervention (The California Endowment), language access advances (CHOICE Regional Health Network, Hablamos Juntos), minority community readiness for health care and other change (Annie E. Casey Foundation, Washington State Department of Health Tobacco Cessation Office, Centers for Substance Abuse Prevention, REACH Coalition, Seattle-King County Department of Public Health), community-based institutional change (Washington State Family Policy Council), mental health services for children (Division of Mental Health, Children's Center), and health care organizational change (LA Care, Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic, International Community Health Services). I also have extensive experience in cross-institutional, community-based participatory research and evaluation in minority settings and was a consultant/presenter to the National Institute of Environmental Health Services on community-based participatory research.

I have devoted my entire professional life to minority health and social health matters, by working directly with and for minority interests and constituents. I began my professional career in California on a national study of women in the health professions. I spent 15 years in Alaska as a health-care and policy researcher and administrator, working with Alaska Native communities and organizations to ensure their subsistence rights and protection from industrial development, helping Alaska Native governance structures to ensure local control over alcohol at the village level, evaluating the success of local partnerships in Native substance abuse prevention, and protecting Native villages from becoming overly-involved as laboratories for national disease research. Later, I worked extensively with Native American tribal governments on their human services information systems and their vital interests in Indian child welfare. As research director of the Cross Cultural Health Care Program, I assisted local hospitals in their language access and same-day access programs, negotiated with state officials on the funding of interpretation for Medicaid patients, conducted research with and for community health centers of cultural competence and language advances, designed an OMH study on CLAS best practices, collaborated on a study of the efficacy of trained dual-role interpreters in health care, and conducted community studies on minority community approaches to support of members with diabetes.

Role and Stance

In all of my work for government and for other clients, my purpose remains to make a difference. I am an activist only in that I want positive things to happen. More often than expected, something can and often must be made out of seemingly nothing; failure is not an acceptable outcome. When I must, I will operate on very tentative hypotheses; there is very little in social policy that I am absolutely sure of, that I would stake my life on. Stated positively, I am very flexible in the means required to reach the objective.

My experience tells me that even the largest governmental, corporate, or community systems are "person-based." What actually happens is often directly the result of "who" is sitting at the table, making the decision, or representing the vital interests of others. I have been lucky that, in my current and preceding roles, my being there has made some difference in what progress finally was made and what solutions worked, through a combination of grounded evidence and persuasive

argument.

That said, in most situations, I seldom have a particularly personal agenda about community, corporate, or governmental care policy, separate from answers to:

does a proposed course of action accomplish the public or social goals intended?

are policymakers aware of the most current theory, data, and politics before they determine their course of action?

In my experience, entering a contentious environment without excessive personal or conceptual baggage is a major asset, suggesting an essential neutrality to the wide array of players. I help others to think about their basic mission, to clarify their goals, to articulate their objectives, to define their methods, to measure their results against their objectives, and to correct and match their methods to achieve their objectives more often with more assurance and at less cost. Using self-reflection, experimentation, systematic inquiry, and critical information, I help them discover or recognize hitherto unseen solutions; this is more of an art than a craft. I seek to be ahead of the curl of the wave, not riding it or failing to find it. I am not afraid to ask naive questions of local experts in the community or organization about how things really work. I am not enslaved by the past, particularly others' past; if some solution has failed in the past, it may still succeed in the future.

My past experiences have produced a set of skills and insights in the areas of social and community health, solutions-directed programs, innovative program development, policy analysis, program evaluation, and the function of knowledge and information in institutional performance. These experiences have honed certain skills – evidence-driven spokesperson, analyst, integrator, facilitator, broker, trust-builder, and unconventional thinker.

Trans-Cultural Experience

My entire professional career has been involved with other cultures and sub-cultures, from indigent patients in eye ophthalmic clinics to women trying to enter medical schools to frontier families and individuals trying to maintain themselves in the midst of introduced large-scale industrial development to Alaska Native people confronting the most extreme and inescapable forms of cultural and economic assimilation. It is impossible to state, in a few words, what the 13 years of professional research practice with Alaska Native people (including my students, research associates and assistants, and artists and writers), Alaska Native villages, Alaska Native corporations, tribal governments, and heritage organizations, Alaska Native legal matters, and Alaska Native cultural artifacts has meant to me and what I have learned from them. It is equally impossible to capture what the subsequent years working with and on behalf of Washington Indian tribes, local rural and urban communities, community and minority service organizations, and compatriots within all of them have taught me, other than that much reality and wisdom lies within them and outside of the public policy or academic frameworks.

What I can say with confidence is this. One does not have to be a member of a cultural minority

community or share the explicit values of that minority to understand that those values are necessary for the survival of that culture and that the survival and success of that culture are necessary for the survival and success of the nation. In all of my work with and on behalf of women, frontier people, industrial workforces, Alaska Native people, Washington's Indian peoples, cultural minority people and communities, and patients and providers within the health-care system, in the form of advocacy research, organizational research, and cultural policy and presentation, I have never sought to become one of them. My stance has always been that I valued their great attachment to their own values and that, absent great overriding public purpose, government had no business to actively damage these values or their pursuit.

While it has always been a great privilege to be charged with responsibility for elements within the cultural array of others, it carries significant cost because the possibility of significant error in expression or action is ever-present, particularly when one's audience is an administrative, judicial, or legislative body. Social scientists and teachers are in no way immune, while trying to help, from being part of the process of blind cultural damage. They are also not immune from stress related to this kind of work, due to its equivocal nature. If one does not accept the notion that history is linear and determined, then the future of multi-cultural pluralism looks more bright. The problem is that its form is less predictable, not just to outsiders, but to different members and associations within the culture. Thus, when one is trying to be of diffident assistance to these persons and organizations as they express their desire for assistance, one is constantly dealing with absolute contradictions. There is a constant, underlying concern with "What am I really doing here" (translated more frankly as "What will history say about the effect of what I did on the health of this culture and these people?"). The answer is, quite often, "Who will do this work and represent the interests and concerns of these parties to the seats of power and influence, if I do not?" I end up being fantastically privileged to fill this role that I describe as The Accidental Researcher, less a planned career than a gift of fate.

Research Investigator or Change Leader

As an investigator or leader, I feel like a hunter. I

- constantly monitor my environment
- plan moves in advance, to always occupy the correct position
- see or make the opportunity, then seize it
- am flexible in what I chase, but organized, patient, and persistent in how I do it
- will change my strategy as reality requires
- am tireless and capable of sustained drive when hot on the trail of a finding
- am results-driven
- am a concrete thinker (how is this put together? what are the pieces? how does it work?)
- am willing to take risks
- appreciate the utility of talented and helpful colleagues.

The disparate and often competitive and conflicting community and organizational environments in which I work, full of “stakeholders,” requires:

- a high degree of tolerance for hearing, recognizing, and responding to the values and concerns of others (e.g., legislators, city and county governments, hospitals and professional health associations, purchasers, HMOs, university departments, tribal entities, significant communities-of-interest, ethnically or racially defined associations, advocacy organizations, foundations, and key individuals)
- an ability to communicate to widely different audiences the way the system and its parts operate in reality
- diplomatic candor with all parties, inducing mutual trust and acceptance and reducing the need for later conflict resolution and recrimination
- a commitment to getting things accomplished and quality products produced within a humane and coordinated timetable
- acceptance that there are many stakeholders, all of whom have valid competing vital interests that require respect and attention
- an ability to recognize, acknowledge, and work with different legitimate agendas and local conditions
- an ability to rapidly assimilate complex information from a number of sources
- an ability to embed and understand local situations in larger forces within the underlying social, community, political, financial, professional, and institutional environments
- a willingness to challenge others diplomatically to clearly state their assumptions, logics, supporting facts, and conclusions
- flexibility when confronted with unexpected facts and forces
- the logic to discriminate between and decide which facts and forces are critical or non-critical
- a high commitment to the purposes, values, and desired outcomes of clients
- the calm required when circumstances, arrangements, and persons fail to meet expectations
- tolerance of long-term ambiguity as actions take surprising forms or issues and misunderstandings remain unresolved for longer than is explicable.

Supporting Commissions, Boards, and Committees

My preceding community projects and administrative roles attest to a high level of experience with and knowledge of large and small communities, small and large organizations, diverse ethnic and racial populations, tribal governments, and special interest groups. I have served on, worked with, chaired, or worked for over 30 diverse decision-making bodies:

- executive level state and county boards, commissions, and advisory committees and coordinating councils
- policy advocacy coalitions (e.g., language access; patient safety; community service, such as support for diabetics and smoking cessation; hospitals; physicians)
- institutional, organizational, corporate, and agency executive leadership
- national policy advisory committees
- municipal permanent and ad hoc advisory committees
- two municipal planning commissions
- Indian child welfare associations
- Indian tribal governments and IRA councils
- City and village councils
- regional networks and voluntary associations
- state legislative and inter-agency staff committees
- regional and statewide Alaska Native, Eskimo, and Aleut governing bodies
- regional state agency administrator boards and area supervisor committees
- employee organizations and labor unions
- non-profit boards, and
- civic advisory boards.

My stance toward the collective bodies I support is to:

- provide the clearest argument twice, once orally and once in writing, then let it rest; boards do not like to be pushed around by their staff or advisors
- be fair to all arguments, but not present a false neutrality
- seek middling ground among conflicting positions to protect the most vital interests of the legitimately different positions
- start with a focus on basic assumptions, shared values, and enlarged and enlightened self-interest, not immediate solutions
- push policy logics and rationales to their limits, to test the links among them
- reach out equally to all stakeholders
- neither over-promise nor under-promise results.

Spokesperson

I have written numerous public policy reports and academic papers; made public, media, and legislative presentations; prepared and presented strategic plans; written successful grant proposals in science and the humanities, and directed book and film treatments; and written for newspapers and magazines. My training as a researcher has enabled me to “see into” issues and

explain to others how things work or could work for them. For example, for two years with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, I testified to and advised the Alaska Boards of Fisheries and Game, responsible for passing annual regulations implementing resmyce allocation plans. Since these boards as well as the parent department were hostile to the regulations' underlying legislation, I had two very challenging, high risk, but successful years. I routinely reported in person and in writing to the Governor, my Office of Policy Development and Planning, my Office of Management and Budget, and committees of the State Legislature. I advised the Governor in my negotiations with federal wildlife and habitat management agencies and represented my two agencies to the print and broadcast media, community organizations, national organizations, and cmyts.

In my six years as director of two state agencies, I prepared, allocated, monitored, expanded, and reported on my agency's budget to the State Legislature. I also reported the budgetary implications of both research and regulatory alternatives to the State Legislature. On both federal-state negotiations on resmyce management and state-federal discussions on control of state-held artifacts, I provided alternatives and advice to state legislative committees. I also negotiated solutions between the legislative and administrative branches directly and privately with key legislators and their staffs as well as between competing private economic interests, associations, and institutions.

In essence, however, I was routinely privileged to represent the perspectives of those whose voice was not represented, heard, or well-understood by authorities, such as regulatory bodies, legislators, public agencies, hearing boards, and so on. Due to my academic credentials and preceding work, these authorities could not readily ignore the well-evidenced research, its findings, and the policy implications flowing from the research I (and my often-many associates and subordinates) would present. While it would have been preferable for authorities to acknowledge the presentations of self-representing citizens, too often they did not. While working in the interstitial spaces between authorities and citizens, agencies and communities, state and tribal governments, regulatory bodies and the cmyts with oversight, and corporations and their customers was never comfortable, it was rewarding and, ultimately, often beneficial.

Working with Patrons and Partners

No one can approach a state legislature, Governor's Office, task forces, corporations, large institutions, unions, advocacy institutions, professional associations, governmental agencies, communities, or foundations with total confidence. Like many large patrons or partners, their goodwill, tolerance, or indifference can transform into anger or rejection. These patrons and partners can be like wild animals, deceptively mild and seemingly predictable, but dangerous when surprised, frightened, or just quickly moving about. Relationships with these parties must be nurtured systematically, following a defined plan. This includes constant engagement with persons at different levels and playing different roles.