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Jay Mechling, Robert Merideth, David Wilson

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JAY MECHLING
ROBERT MERIDETH
DAVID WILSON

University of California, Davis

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1. The Discipline

THERE IS A VAST SLOUGH OF GENIAL IGNORANCE ABOUT AMERICAN STUDIES. Consider the stock questions anyone moving to establish it on any given campus will be asked: has it been around long? what other universities have American Studies? are graduate degrees given? where can a faculty be found? who can know everything about America? is it intellectually sound? shouldn't we really conduct a feasibility study first? As this essay is being written and read faculty committees at a number of colleges and universities are at work inventing a curriculum and replaying past gropings as if the fund of experience accumulated over more than three decades were invisible. Not only in the natural world does ontogeny recapitulate phylogeny.

In fact, by 1972 at least 200 programs were in operation. Of these, 153 offered bachelor's degrees, 24 master's degrees and 29 doctoral degrees. *American Quarterly*, *American Studies*, the *British Journal of American Studies*, the *Canadian Journal of American Studies*, *American Studies News*, *Connections* and other professional journals, as well as professional societies in a number of countries besides the United States, testify that in one form or another American Studies exists. Professor Sigmund Skard in 1958 reported in two volumes on *American Studies in Europe*, as did Professor Robert Walker the same year on *American Studies in the United States*. Among the anthologies that bring together the work of American Studies scholars, the decade of the 1960s produced Kwiat and Turpie's *Studies in American Culture: Dominant Ideas and Images* (1960), Marshall

Fishwick's *American Studies in Transition* (1964), John Hague's *American Character and Culture* (1964), Browne, Winkelman and Hayman's *New Voices in American Studies* (1966), Hennig Cohen's *The American Experience* and *The American Culture*, both selections of the best scholarship appearing in the *American Quarterly* over the past twenty years (1968), Robert Merideth's *American Studies: Essays on Theory and Method* (1968), and Robert Lucid's collection of accounts of ten representative American Studies programs, published as a book-length supplement to the *American Quarterly* (Summer 1970). Biennial American Studies Association national conventions beginning in 1967, the emergence in the fall 1969 of a Radical Caucus, and the formation in July 1971 of a National American Studies Faculty funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities suggest, nationally at least, continuing movement, criticism and development.

These and a host of similar facts force an analysis of that slough of ignorance we began with, also a fact. Historically, American Studies has passed through two stages and should now be in a third. According to a standard account, it began in the 1930s with stirrings of discontent within single departments, usually English, sometimes history, over what seemed arbitrary limitations on teaching and writing. That was followed in the 1940s and early 1950s by programs and sometimes research relying on roughly equal contributions from at least two departments. By the middle 1950s a sense had developed that the achievement of a discipline of American civilization was needed, one that organized the multifold data describing a group of people living in a given place at a given time and did it with conceptual clarity and rigor.¹ One might wish to go back further, to scholars like Moses Coit Tyler or poets like Whitman, to find earlier beginnings. One might wish to analyze historical developments in American Studies not only in terms of concept, but as well in terms of the way they reflected larger cultural movements: changes in learning and teaching, general education, political and social institutions, perhaps also consciousness. But if its history consists essentially of that three-stage development, why is it that the third stage has not led to an adequately visible, established discipline? Why do American Studies scholars and students still find themselves obliged to confront the slough of ignorance? Why have not the facts of its presence and history had force? No single explanation will suffice, we believe, but as we try to answer such questions we find ourselves increasingly blaming the community of American Studies teachers and scholars. It seems to us to lack a sense of itself, the academic environment and its subject.

¹Robert H. Walker, *American Studies in the United States: A Survey of College Programs* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1958), p. 158.

University Reform. The American university is in trouble, attacked (often with justification) from inside and out. Conventional patterns of learning and teaching and conventional curriculums seem almost wholly inadequate. Reforms in the shape of "innovations" are the order of the day. Characteristically, the innovations are cosmetic and the reform palliative, controlled (if not always initiated) by those who wish the university to survive essentially unchanged, a fragile patchwork of often ancient reified compromises. One common, ambiguous kind of reform gesture is the establishment of various interdepartmental or multi-disciplinary curriculums (e.g., Black studies, women's studies, environmental studies, general studies or integrated studies). On the surface, such gestures have much in common with American Studies, which also started as an educational reform. Like them, it also often suffers an ill-funded, haphazardly staffed and generally unsystematic organizational structure which gives only the appearance of organic vitality, encouraging students to believe they are learning well simply because the education they are getting is somewhat more palatable than that offered by traditional departments. What is worse, it also unfortunately is often characterized by blurred vision, intellectual diffuseness and accommodative behavior. For that, there is not much excuse. Like the newer curriculums, American Studies is characteristically an unsatisfactory reform billed as a substantial transformation. But it has had longer to understand the situation. Indeed, such a situation is part of its subject.

There is no exciting future in such inadequately conceptualized, piecemeal innovations in the university system. They represent tinkers' work, meant to keep old pots from leaking, or Detroit work, meant to cut pollution from gas-engine automobiles instead of creating a new, humanized transportation system. To make such tinkering rewarding a system must be loved and lovable; gross messages conveyed by the whole vibrating mass have to be ignored in favor of tuning one's ear to minute signs of trouble. But the usual counter-cultural and counter-political critique of the university is also inadequate, and to consent to it is to agree to an antithesis instead of seeking a new synthesis. To consent is also, ironically, to allow the antithesis to serve the thesis (the counter-culture to serve social stability). The trouble the American university and American culture find themselves in is more systemic and more extensive than such consent implies. Any new synthesis ought to be far more rigorously conceived. American Studies has accommodated too quickly in the 1960s, on the one hand to the seductions of the critique of educational systems and to "innovation," on the other hand to the haphazard way administrations have organized it. Properly conceived, it has built into it a full, responsive and critical vision of the realities of American culture. To give up the organic activity the vision entails for the immediate advantages of approval by

colleagues, administrators or even students is to make a crucial mistake. Superficial reform may ease tensions for students and give them a sense of choice and an illusion of value, countering in small ways the message conveyed to them by the dominant institutions of their culture. Team-taught experiments and the like may ease the tensions of teachers who seek momentary, part-time escape from the rigidities that characterize conventional education. But intellectually and humanly liberating changes, if they are to last and be forceful, must make more sense.

Uncle Tomism. Uncle Tom was a good fellow whose belief system allowed him to adapt and for a considerable length of time to survive in an alien world, if in low-grade and demeaning fashion. Like him, the American Studies that goes on in conventional academic institutions exhibits, indeed advertises, its subordinate status by its adaptations to the dominant pattern of things. Perhaps it must adapt. But any academic activity that has no control over hiring, lacks a budget, gets administered by a casually appointed committee, staffs its courses by borrowing teachers from their regular work (often as an overload), creates courses in an ad hoc fashion, and the like must inevitably be a charity operation, a little better than an extracurricular activity, but not much. What is worse, if it then fabricates an argument *supporting* such adaptation, it surely deserves (as Uncle Tom did not) the demise in store for it. Later in this paper we intend to discuss briefly the adaptations and particularly the ideology justifying them in some American Studies programs. We mean to be sympathetic. That is, we think we understand very well how restive and well-intentioned university teachers and students, frustrated by the stagnation they sense in their institutions, come to allow themselves to be seduced by general talk of "cooperation" and "cross-disciplinary" activity and "breaking down departmental barriers." Within a rigid institution, even the role of token generalist or half-time participant in a hyphenated, interdepartmental curriculum may be personally exciting. But such half-way covenants should be seen for what they are: at worst, palliatives; at best, interim stages along a road toward true organic teaching and learning. If such people are ever to achieve real force in the academy, they are obliged to throw off their subservience to conventional departmental models of reality and to reject the roles they have been forced to adopt in order to survive. Both Uncle Tom and the Village Atheist are too easily tolerated. Neither has a vital vision and certainly neither is a threat to the system he presumably hopes to transform and humanize.

Discipline: Liberation or Tyranny? On the one hand, paradigms organize and telescope experience, allowing men to avoid rehearsing the invention of the wheel each time they confront a new problem: botanists need not rediscover classification systems; chemists already have oxygen and can

forget phlogiston; Marxists in confronting new data can appeal to a dialectical method; sociologists, Freudians, physicists and ethnomusicologists—all have their formulas, language, literature and assumptions. The history of thought in the last few centuries recounts how one academic discipline after another arose out of a sequential paradigmatic drama—first the physical sciences, then the social and psychological sciences and now (or perhaps soon) the “culturological” sciences (to borrow a term from Leslie White). Scholarship—and often knowledge as well—explodes when models of reality are adopted consciously and articulated fully. On the other hand, paradigms can tyrannize as well as liberate. They can provide a means of absorbing and thus ignoring anomalies long after ignoring them makes sense. They can make communities of scholars into coteries of self-serving academic entrepreneurs, coerce the imagination and the understanding, and stifle creative dissent. They can become the shibboleths of an encrusted, rigidified, Mandarin academy, obscuring by their irrelevance to the actual life of man in culture the systemic sources of suffering and injustice. They can channel live inquiry into a dead formalism. Indeed, such a movement from the excitement of a new formulation to the collectively willed stability of an established science has in the past seemed the rule rather than the exception.

To date, however, with distinct exceptions American Studies has been neither liberated nor tyrannized by a paradigm. It has not been paradigmatic, it may not even have been pre-paradigmatic, so much as it has been non- or anti-paradigmatic. For the most part, it has been a parcel of noble strivings tied loosely together by individual will and effort, driven by a variety of urges (such as are represented by the recent formation of the popular culture association or by urban studies, or ethnic studies, or studies in technology, ecology or women) and lacking methodological coherence at all three levels of theory, method and technique. To be sure, for a time myth-symbol-image studies—of which *Virgin Land* was the exemplar—seemed persuasive. But given the perspective of twenty years, clearly they were a false start. We do not wholly agree with Bruce Kuklick’s recent critical analysis of them, but it is significant that he found himself obliged to invent arguments that he thought made sense of their practice before he could engage them critically at the level of their assumptions.² We intend to engage neither Professor Kuklick nor the myth-symbol-image school here. The general inadequacy of both that school’s approach to American culture and the variety of urges animating much of American Studies seems to us obvious. We wish only to make it clear that what we will propose as the dis-

²“Myth and Symbol in American Studies,” *American Quarterly*, 24 (Oct. 1972), 435–50.

disciplinary basis of an American Studies curriculum arises in part out of the context of our discontent with what we have had in the past.

What we propose is that American Studies move self-consciously now from the chaos of a non- or (at best) pre-paradigmatic activity into what Thomas Kuhn, in his own second thoughts about his inconsistent use of the term *paradigm*, calls "the transition to maturity." It is during this transitional period that the *disciplinary matrix* of the community becomes refined, that the symbolic generalizations, definitions, models of process and structure, and values by which the models are to be judged all become the subject of increasingly focused debate. In this transitional period, one or two *exemplars* (i.e., concrete problem-solutions, which Kuhn hitherto had called "paradigms") may emerge from a field of several competing models or schools. The status of the emergent exemplar changes in the transitional period until finally it dominates the discipline, identifying challenging puzzles, supplying clues to their solution and guaranteeing that the "clever practitioner will succeed."³ As we see it, the culture concept belongs at the center of an American Studies disciplinary matrix. The necessary if not sufficient condition for engaging in American Studies is an applicable theoretical model of culture in the largest sense, embracing elements ranging from the biological heritage through institutions and belief systems to individual phenomenal experience. The concept locates the terms of our activities as scholars and teachers. If the "transition to maturity" in American Studies is to be rich in ideas, exciting in debate and efficient in focus, it is to the concept of culture that attention should be paid. We would begin by borrowing or revising theoretical models from any discipline that can contribute to cultural description or explanation when the object to be described is the United States (a functional model from sociology, a phenomenological model from psychology, a structuralist model from anthropology, a systems model from environmental studies, an aesthetic model from literary theory and so on). The definitions, descriptive generalizations, laws, axioms, structures and processes of those models then become problematic. Each model is tested against the others and found to be useful or wanting to this or that degree for American Studies purposes. Eventually, the range of models narrows, the debate becomes increasingly focused, an exemplar emerges.⁴

³*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1970 [1962]). See esp. "Postscript—1969" and particularly pp. 178–79.

⁴One problem we foresee, a problem endemic to transitional interdisciplinary communities, is that of the value-orientation by which the community is to judge whole theories. Kuhn (pp. 184–85) assumes some basic values—e.g., simplicity, self-consistency, compatibility with other knowledge—which natural scientists can agree upon and do employ to select the most persuasive theory from among several. We presume that scholars coming to the American Studies community from disciplinary home bases will have value-orientations which they share intra-

So as to avoid misunderstanding, we wish to emphasize that we are not advocating a monolithic consensus or rigidity. The concept of culture is a lush, important one, perhaps the most germinal idea in 20th century scholarship in the social sciences and humanities. Since A. L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn systematically surveyed some 160 different definitions of the concept in 1952,⁵ the thicket of formulations and counter-concepts has expanded, not thinned out. Which is as it should be, at least as it seems in retrospect. Kroeber and Kluckhohn's sources were severely limited, heavily weighted in favor of anthropologists, whose subject of inquiry is not, after all, complex industrial civilization. As the concept of culture comes to be applied to such civilizations, particularly at a time when historically they may be on the verge of massive structural transformation, inevitably it will be transformed. Intellectually, the kind of period we think American Studies should now be in—a transitional period from a pre-paradigmatic to a paradigmatic discipline—is the most exciting time in the history of a discipline's growth, and we would like to sustain that excitement for as long as possible. In fact, if we could have our way with history, we would arrange the scholarly world so that there was always a broad spectrum of points of view, none quite established and controlling, and thus never a tyrannizing paradigm. We do not expect to have our way. The tyranny will come. But that will be another generation's battle and excitement, not ours. Now it is not practically foreseeable. For now, we are proposing only that the concept of culture (not a single theory, not a single formulation, not a single set of techniques) become central to scholarship and teaching in American Studies. To propose any more, in this context, would be to try to force closure to a debate that has really only just begun, at least in American Studies as a field.⁶

but not inter-disciplinarily. Thus, not only might value-orientations differ sharply between the two camps of the most obvious dichotomy—that is, between the humanities and the social sciences—but disciplines within these two basic divisions as well might not share value-orientations. It may well be that these value-orientations themselves ought to be the subject of self-conscious debate and compromise, or at least clarification. We think so.

⁵*Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* (New York: Vintage, 1952).

⁶An earlier version of this paper was delivered at the spring meeting of the ASA of Northern California, May 6, 1972. The comments of our three critics on that occasion—Stanley Bailis (California State University, San Francisco), Robin Brooks (California State University, San Jose) and Gene Wise (Case Western Reserve University)—were taped and have been extremely helpful as we revised. All three doubted to some extent the sufficiency of the culture concept for organizing American Studies as a discipline and all three feared its tyranny. We hope we have dealt with their doubts and assuaged their fears somewhat in our rewriting. But their questions deserve separate essays. While we are at the pleasant task of acknowledging those who assisted us, we wish to thank both Brom Weber for his contributions to the essay and too many of our students to name for their critical observations on the first draft, but particularly Ray Cyphers.

While we are reluctant to propose jointly a single theory of culture and an exemplar for the American Studies community, we ask neither ourselves nor our colleagues to maintain that neutrality on an individual basis. Individuals who act as strong advocates of one or another formulation serve the whole community. For example, in the American Studies curriculum at the University of California, Davis, which we will describe by way of illustration in the third section of this essay, there are four permanent faculty members and four reasonably well articulated theories of culture operating: a structuralist theory formulated by someone whose interests are in applying socio-psychological methods and techniques to the past; a modified evolutionary theory that illuminates connections between nature and culture by focusing on belief, play, ritual and artifact; a theory that tries to argue the relationship between the nexus of cultural systems and the limits of individual experience and consciousness; and a theory that takes culture as, at its core, patterned traditional ideas and values. Each of these formulations, we are persuaded, has virtues. Arguing them through brings more light than heat. Presumably they will eventually be revised, rejected or understood as complementary. We see the debate between these positions (and others) as part of the politics of paradigm establishment. That such a debate, extended self-consciously into the whole of the American Studies community, should become the theoretical center of scholarship and curriculums in American Studies seems to us crucial. But, to repeat, that we find ourselves in a position to urge only a pre-paradigmatic debate is not for us a source of despair. On the contrary, we find ourselves exhilarated by the prospect.

In order to emphasize the shift we propose, we propose also a new name for our work. *American Studies*, even in caps, is reminiscent of the loose confederation American Studies has often been. Similarly, the use of terms like *interdepartmental*, *cross-disciplinary* and *multi-disciplinary* as adjectives to describe American Studies theory and method promotes the notion that other departments or other disciplines are basic realities of life, the parent on whose breast we feed, and that American Studies is a child, probably illegitimate. Even the term *interdisciplinary*, implying as it sometimes does group activity or team-teaching or putting at most two disciplines together in a scholarly tour de force, is inadequate. American Studies should be conceived as part of an inclusive discipline. *Culturology* can serve, despite its ugliness, to characterize that discipline in its broadest sense. The part of the activity that attempts to study the United States we propose calling *American Culture Studies*. American Culture Studies parallels and complements Russian Culture Studies, Japanese Culture Studies and the like, especially when those studies are engaged in by Russians and Japanese.

2. Curriculums

One man's realities are another man's variables. Thus, budgets, the departmental organization of the university, professional specializations and so on are realities to some; ennui, intellectual fragmentation, and alienation are dysfunctions to be coped with and hopefully resolved. May it not be wise for a time to reverse the usual relationship in universities between givens and variables, and to take as given the psychology of learning, the logic of study (in this case, the study of American culture during a transition to maturity in the discipline) and the dynamics and needs of a community of scholars and students, proceeding from these to design a curriculum? The present organization of the academy, present faculty capabilities, present student behavior, even the present physical plant—all these are variables to be adjusted to the realities of the new curriculum. At least that is the way serious enterprises should and often do operate. Anyone thinking about a curriculum in American Culture Studies will soon enough confront the intransigence of what he is (or ought to be) thinking of as a variable. He will discover that it is best to make compromises carefully. Beginnings quickly reify. If American Culture Studies on any campus is begun as an informal group of faculty members and students whose first allegiance is elsewhere, whose basic training is in one of the standard departments, and whose funding is erratic and dependent upon the good will of others, it will find it difficult to evolve. Only the most aggressive, sustained, collective energy can importantly alter such beginnings once they have become established, especially if they show some degree of success (by whatever measure). Indeed, the greater the success, the less likely it is that changes will be improvements.

We have compiled a short list of what we consider fallacies in constructing a curriculum in American Culture Studies. At the head of the list go fallacies about learning. In general in universities, especially with curriculums devised by those with a firm sense of the logic of the content (or results) of their discipline, almost no attention has been paid to the way people learn. For example, John Dewey's argument that individuals learn in much the same sequence as the sequence of development in the history of American Studies—from a dimly "felt need," through investigation of that need and a search for alternative actions, to a tentative hypothesis and a test (which may itself generate further needs or problems)—would suggest a flexible curriculum meant to *help* students individually invent order out of chaos, purpose out of groping, reality out of appearance, not hinder them. Again, the argument that real learning consists of re-orientation, a new point of view, a revised framework for understanding would argue against a curriculum that concentrates on conclusions, data or "stuff." Or again, the

proposition that one has not "learned" until he has integrated the cognitive and the affective would suggest a curriculum in which the existential life of students and their present and future life as citizens—usually undergraduates will not become scholars—is taken into account. However one turns the prism of learning theory, it has curricular implications. Conversely, curriculums imply a theory of learning. But in most universities what we find is a conventional (and often self-contradictory) wisdom about schooling that tends to block serious attention to the relation between learning and curriculums. The *PAY NOW, FLY LATER FALLACY*, for example, is widespread. It is the bureaucratically neat but educationally disastrous assumption that if only one can make students learn the basic skills and concepts at the beginning then ever after they will be free to engage in creative activity. Freshman English, Sociology I and Psychology I are often formed on this pattern and are anathema to students and teachers alike. No one would deny that students and teachers are obliged to start somewhere, but why this way? Two other widespread fallacies related to a lack of understanding about how people learn we would group under the heading of a version of American *laissez-faire* mythology, particularly appealing to those chafed by what seem repressive and artificial restrictions associated with conventional departments and educational patterns. The *EVERYMAN-HIS-OWN-DOCTOR FALLACY* reduces or abolishes "requirements" so that every student acts as a consumer in the university supermarket and elects whatever "grabs him" (or whatever he can grab) at the moment. The obvious flaw in this is that generally he must still choose from the goods on the shelves. The deeper and more serious flaws are that it represents an abdication of professional responsibility and wrongly assumes organically integrated students who already know who they are and what they need. The related *DO-IT-YOURSELF-SYNTHESIZER-KIT FALLACY* is particularly and ironically characteristic of American Studies curriculums. It not only encourages students to take whatever they wish from various disciplines (sociology, political science, philosophy, art, drama, speech, history, English, psychology), but directs them to put it all together—as in the spastic chant: two, four, six, eight—integrate!—perhaps with the help of a senior proseminar on some subject or other (the city, individualism, technology). Two or more departmental scholars will teach the seminar (historian one week, sociologist the next); or perhaps one faculty member will be in charge and have a series of guest speakers. But the task of synthesis, the study of culture, is dumped on the novice student, as if he with his uncorrupted, natural talents were better suited to the hardest imaginable intellectual work than those who ought to know better. Such a scheme in fact miniaturizes the disciplinary fragmentation the student experiences in the university at large and packages it attractively. It also reinforces the com-

partmentalization not only of his past schooling experience but of his acculturation.

Teaching as well as learning fallacies are pervasive. The ACADEMIC FREEDOM FALLACY involves the erroneous transfer of an idea. Faculty members who have come to deploy the idea of academic freedom as a shield to protect against ignorant interference in their work now refuse to consult with colleagues, to cooperate in relating courses in sequence or to submit their plans and practices to real scrutiny and criticism. A subcategory of this fallacy is the conceit that anyone whose subject happens to involve American data can teach American Studies, no matter what his training—the ANYONE-CAN-DO-IT FALLACY. Changing the name to American Culture Studies makes the vanity of this presumption more apparent, but it will not be abolished easily. To staff American Culture Studies programs entirely with persons who have never been educated in the discipline within which they propose to teach will help the fallacy persist. It serves to maintain the illusion that a hyphen is all the suturing required to make whole what has been fragmented for so long. Further, it announces that real work and preparation for American Culture Studies is nearly worthless. If anyone can do it, then presumably many have been doing it all along in their English classes, history classes and so forth. The claim is a common one. Whereas the opposite is more nearly true—few have been doing it, even in American Studies programs. How can an American Culture Studies curriculum operate adequately without a faculty trained, or at least retrained, in the discipline? The question is rhetorical, but in this realm of academic myth, answers that contradict each other are common. Thus, the EVERY-ONE-HAS-HIS SLOT FALLACY is the obverse of the academic freedom fallacy and denies the anyone-can-do-it fallacy. It is the notion that each course has its syllabus and must, like a symphonic score, be performed as written without variation by any musician assigned the part. A person gets hired to fit a precise speciality and teaches it. The specialities become standardized and remain that way. Academic freedom thus becomes a trivial matter of freedom of opinion within prescribed limits and not everyone can do it. In part, such a notion is related to the BODY-OF-KNOWLEDGE FALLACY. But the problem here is as much psychological as anything else. Teachers atrophy and students wilt in such situations. Teachers psych themselves up like an actor before a performance, students psych themselves down with tranquilizers so they can tolerate their passivity. It is much better to build courses whose topic, texts, tactics and instructors, *but not principles* can be changed without destroying their place in the sequence of learning. (When the curriculum is conceived systematically, there are sequences.)

There are, of course, other fallacies to name and other names for the fallacies we list. We mean to be suggestive, not inclusive. Yet we cannot

resist naming and illustrating at length one further fallacy, the HALF-WAY HOUSE FALLACY. (Perhaps half-way houses are not so much fallacies as symptomatic flaws, the product of arrested histories or of the beginnings we noted earlier.) The metaphor is borrowed from the temporary homes convicts released from prison are sometimes provided to ease the tensions generated by the prospect of autonomy after a long period of repression and control. Most American Studies curriculums are like half-way houses, at least from the perspective of anyone fully into American Culture Studies. A review of several of the best known and some representative American Studies (or American Civilization) programs, as described in a special 1970 summer supplement to the *American Quarterly*, ought to illustrate the past experience anyone making an American Culture Studies curriculum would wish to absorb and adapt or reject and avoid.

The curriculums of the ten programs described in the *American Quarterly* are basically very similar, though the rationalizations deployed to justify them are intricate and diversified. Commonly they follow one or another version of the "cooperating-specialities" or "balance-between-disciplines" model of organization and depend upon one or more undergraduate subject "seminars" or projects to mold the student's experience into a final lump. A general and genuine concern for wholeness underlies the various curricular structures but an attendant fear of disciplinary or academic irresponsibility pervades the rationalizations and justifies one's requirements in history (Yale), another's distribution of credits between two or more disciplines (Bowling Green and Pennsylvania), and a third's defense of student-centered integration (Minnesota). Only one—Raymond College of the University of the Pacific—accompanies its account of itself with an account of a thoroughgoing revision of conventional university patterns. And only one—Pennsylvania—seems to have made a sustained effort at developing a theoretically and methodologically coherent center for the discipline.

All require their students to select courses from standard disciplines and some ask for upper-division disciplinary "seminars." Some insist on courses from five or more disciplines (art, English, history, political science and philosophy—Yale and Bowling Green); others advise even greater flexibility within the cafeteria model (history, English, political science, geography, fine arts, philosophy and sociology—Pennsylvania). Bowling Green "aims at the recreation of phases of American experience as wholes, using adequate research to create patterns which do not isolate American life, but rather reveal its rich heritage from and its relationship to all of Western civilization." It appears to depend entirely upon conventional disciplines for "basic" concepts and vocabulary as well as cognates (24 semester hours). "At least three semester hours in a senior seminar in the department of

concentration" is required and "as high as thirty-six hours" may be taken in one department. Clearly "interdepartmental" American Studies, not American Culture Studies, is its ideal.

Similarly, Yale (as well as Indiana) still operates on the assumption that "any special theory of *American Studies*" is "implausible," and depends instead upon individual "scholarship that consciously seeks to illuminate the civilization as a whole—either by its disciplinary versatility, its breadth of concern, its mode of deploying a single discipline or (when it assumes a more distinct theoretical stance) by a systematic application of the social sciences to the study of the American past and present." Only the social sciences, one gathers, could plausibly apply theoretical models to the study of culture. Attention to the past and special emphasis on an "area of concentration" are encouraged, and "core seminars" provide the occasion for bridging departmental boundaries. But underlying all is the fundamental integrity of the conventional disciplines. Yale "does not seek to make any student or faculty member departmentally homeless." One may wander outside into American Culture Studies but his loyalties and basic training are controlled by some standard department.

With several lower-division service courses Minnesota attempts to exemplify what it means by holistic study (e.g., *Religion in American Life*) but otherwise its undergraduate curriculum is a cafeteria with a senior seminar for dessert. The emphasis there is on the student and on releasing and focusing his versatility and intellectual energy and on stimulating him to improvise ad hoc tactics to unify two or more disciplines for an attack on a problem. Unified theories and methods may indeed depend, as they imply, on further research of the kind done by Bowron, Marx and Rose in their essay "Literature and Covert Culture," but the students and America exist now, they believe: "In short, at Minnesota we have felt it less profitable to strive for a philosophic view of the relations among the disciplines than to concentrate on specific problems and whatever methods or bodies of content seem relevant to their solution." There is no concentration on theoretical models of culture and culture study. Nor are students taught explicitly the methodologies appropriate to culture study. Their liberation and discipline depend on the inspiration their teachers provide and on self-generated problem-solving tactics.

Of all the programs, only Pennsylvania seems systematically to have confronted and translated into a curriculum the theoretical and methodological problems implicit in American Culture Studies. The cafeteria experience is integrated by two large lecture, introductory core courses and one senior conference course (and one more for honors students). Their stress on historical culture, their admiration for the social sciences' success in quantifying cultural data, and their nearly archaeological attention to

material residues of the past have led them increasingly to solve the methodological problems of American Culture Studies by two strategies: 1) the integration of theories and methods which facilitate the manipulation of typical data and 2) the banishment of concern for the unique cultural event, "if such a thing exists." For them almost alone among American Studies programs, most of which retain a bipolar cooperation and mutual respect between history and literature, the artistically exceptional monument or document has no special worth: even more, aesthetic and evidential value relate inversely. No other program shows the disciplinary spirit and imagination of the Pennsylvania program, though each possesses some special and interesting dimension: George Washington, its proximity to the Federal government; Amherst, its Deweyesque orientation to problem-solving; Michigan State, its American Thought and Language institutional home and its colloquial approach to seminar topics.

It is clear that nearly all of these programs, whatever their administrative and conceptual inadequacies, do successfully stimulate versatility and excite intellectual energy. They focus attention on difficult and important American issues and promote serious attempts to understand how America's past relates to its present and how one aspect of contemporary American culture relates to others. That is to say, students do come away educated, often better, probably, than they would have been had they been trapped in conventional curriculums. But that is not enough, or at least so we think. As we have discussed our own curriculum over the past three years, and as we made substantial changes in it, we have become increasingly critical of the low level of interest our colleagues over the country seem to display in the theory controlling their work and in the methods that make up its practice. Pennsylvania and one or two others provide a shining alternative in this respect. But the lack of interest there in the individual person or in unique events, documents, and monuments seemed to us also an error, though at least one that grows out of a logic instead of the hoary "realities" of the maintenance of traditional departments, of budgets or of balancing the diets of cafeteria patrons. What we were looking for was a discipline and a curriculum that evades the fallacies we have listed, has a coherent and adequate logic, focuses on the culture concept and can be fairly described as socio-humanistic.

3. The Discipline and the Curriculum at Davis

In some respects American Culture Studies at Davis has in its short life recapitulated the history of American Studies in the United States once again, as do many programs at their beginning. It was preceded by one curriculum called American Civilization and then a second one called

American History and Literature. The earliest proposal to establish American Studies was presented to the faculty in November 1967. An interdepartmental committee made inquiries of 50 ongoing programs and in November 1968 recommended a program to the Dean. The first courses were offered in the fall 1969 by faculty members borrowed from existing departments, mostly history and literature. The first curriculum, made by an interdepartmental committee rather than by a group itself fully committed to American Culture Studies, was bold and well conceptualized, but limited by "realities" and resources. On the other hand, the initial interdepartmental committee had the good fortune to have on it two faculty members housed in existing departments but with doctorates in American Studies, one of them (Brom Weber) with extensive experience as a scholar, teacher and administrator in American Studies. Other members of the committee were strongly supportive and knowledgeable, and one other member of the faculty, not on the committee, had an American Studies Ph.D. and participated in the early teaching and organization (David Wilson). Further, the program was given a budget, secretarial assistance, space and faculty positions. In the spring of 1970, the first full-time appointment in American Studies went to someone with both administrative experience in the field and a strong interest in its theory and methods (Robert Merideth). He became chairman. The next year a second full-time appointment was made, a person with a special commitment to socio-psychological inquiry (Jay Mechling). Brom Weber and David Wilson remained each half-time in American Studies. At present, all permanent faculty members have Ph.D.s in American Studies and, what is quite as important, identify themselves professionally as members of the larger American Studies community.

We are not chiefly interested here in rehearsing the details of development, however. We want to focus on the curriculum that was argued out over the summer and early fall of 1971 in a series of eight or ten extensive meetings, first on its assumptions about university education, second on its process and the assumptions it operationalizes about the subject, American culture.

We make three major assumptions, some of which have been implied already in this essay. (All curriculums and teachers make such assumptions, whether or not they are clearly articulated.) First, we reject the proposition that our students' highest priority should be to absorb a standardized body of information. There may have been a time when the higher learning in America could collectively and plausibly act as if certain kinds of prescribed information were important to every student's future, or when it was appropriate and possible that a student be taught occupational skills and role-specific value orientations which would prepare him to find a slot in American society. There may even be some disciplines (but where?—the

sciences, engineering, business?—more likely the humanities and arts) which can provide their students knowledge which will be central to their lives, five, ten, twenty years from graduation, but we doubt it. And we certainly doubt, on many grounds, that a socio-humanistic enterprise like American Culture Studies should make its primary activity the teaching of role-specific skills or “knowledge.” On the contrary, we assume that American Culture Studies students—we would extend our proposition to all American university students—need cognitive and evaluative resources by which they can identify, investigate and resolve problems stemming from their felt needs. They need analytical skills. They need to learn how to organize, process, reformulate, test, selectively accept or reject and act upon information. They need theoretical structures from which to think, understand and criticize. Second, we assume certain things about the process of such learning. Generally, John Dewey and the progressive education movement seem to us on the right track. For example, the university environment and particularly the curriculum is a framework for the resocialization of the individual student. He absorbs the cognitive and evaluative resources we talked of above by actively working step by step through problems that count for him. The learning cannot be passive. Yet in the sense that for McLuhan the medium is the message, so for us the logic of a curriculum *is* a large part of what a student learns. We assume that a well-constructed curriculum will have a learning sequence, a logic, which itself instructs the student as much as do the activities in each step in the sequence. Thus, as advisers, we spend a great deal of time talking about the logic of the curriculum. We also spend a great deal of time talking about cultural change, since resocialization, the tradition of progressive education and the decision to concentrate on felt need all imply not only adaptation to the world but transformation of it. Third, we reject the teacher-as-fount-of-all-knowledge model, which one of our colleagues has called “the fallacy of the unmoved mover.”⁷ Generally, we assume that the teacher acts as a sort of midwife in the learning process. But we do disagree in practice on questions involving the style and degree of intervention which the instructor should bring to his midwifery. Presumably the disagreement has to do with questions of personality, abilities and ethics, and to some extent with different levels of trust in nature and unassisted birth. One of us characteristically acts as radical critic, asserting alternative frameworks for understanding a problem as a challenge and denying assumptions in order to build new ones on the ruins of the old. Another might be fairly described as seducing and otherwise infiltrating students’ minds, trying to get them to cherish their own initial (if dimly perceived) understandings and to develop them more fully and

⁷Robin Brooks, May 6, 1972, meeting of ASA of Northern California.

confidently into strategies for coping with problems. A third favors models of logical inference and concentrates on the persuasive power of reasoned argument. A fourth thinks out loud as a kind of problem-solving illustration of minding which students may wish to emulate. Whether students develop intellectual and cultural autonomy best by being weaned from a strong teacher-personality or by identifying strongly with such a personality in order to draw ego strength from it (learning and personality theories are divided on the question), that sort of autonomy is our aim.

Taken together, these major assumptions—about the needs of our students, the learning process and the teacher—imply, among other things, a curricular sequence of activities in which the student moves with the assistance of teachers from some vaguely held “felt needs” regarding himself and American culture to (ideally) a new mode of perception through which he is able to be in yet not entirely of his culture. The Davis curriculum translates the three basic steps in classic problem-solving—namely, identifying the problem, learning the conceptualizations and skills needed to solve the problem, and finally testing or acting out hypothesized solutions—into a three-stage sequence. At each stage there are American Culture Studies core courses, supplemented by other university courses appropriate to that stage.

We think of American Culture Studies as an upper-division (junior-senior) major, though in the normal sequence of events the student enters the major in the third quarter of his sophomore year, when he takes a course called “Introduction to American Studies” (AS 45). AS 45 represents the first stage in the problem-solving sequence, the stage at which students are urged to articulate vaguely felt needs and their experience and to connect them to the exploration of the culture concept going on daily in the class. All of the student’s experience, in and out of the university, is considered raw data to be restructured in AS 45, and we take pains to insure (insofar as the University’s inadequate lower-division advising allows) that included in the past two years’ experience there will be some knowledge of American history and institutions (such as is available in a survey course in American history), some understanding of social structure (available in a lower-division survey course in sociology) and some previous working with the culture concept (available in a survey course in cultural anthropology). We ask for the knowledge, but not necessarily the course. (That we do ask for the knowledge should serve to indicate, if only parenthetically, that we do retain considerable reverence for conventional ways of organizing data and for the data itself.) Ideally the student will take one or more American Culture Studies lower-division courses (1-sequence courses), each designed to give students some idea of what American Culture Studies is all about and to contribute to general education on the

campus by dealing with large, problematic, important subjects: religion, science and technology, race and nationality, tradition and revolution. We can imagine an indefinitely large number of other possible courses: on women in American culture, nature and culture, the city, the liberal (or conservative) tradition, millennialism and so on. What we teach in these courses is not so much data or "stuff," though that is obviously of interest, as ways to give American data context and meaning. The peculiar status of these 1-sequence courses in the logic of the curriculum is worth further comment, which we will defer until we get to the senior year.

When we advise students during their first two years, we try to urge them to make sense of their course choices by appealing to what they need to know to understand their subject (American Culture) in terms of their special needs, experience and interest. We recommend a whole series of alternate course designs, all related to the upper-division organization of the curriculum. We recommend that they choose courses preparing them for their upper-division emphasis, for example, or courses preparing them for upper-division cross-cultural study, or courses that not only meet College distribution requirements (in the usual pattern: natural sciences, social sciences, humanities) but as well contribute to the study of American culture. But we are fully aware that in the first two years of their university work, American students seldom have a clear idea of their options or real interest. We often find ourselves recommending exploration. All this recommending and exploring we see as preparation for AS 45, about which we will say more than about any of the other core courses because it is pivotal and because it reveals best the way we deal in the curriculum with what we argue should be the disciplinary center of American Culture Studies, namely the culture concept.

In AS 45 the student is asked to begin to integrate seemingly disparate, unrelated, compartmentalized courses and experience into a consistent perspective on culture in general and American culture in particular. After a brief introduction to American Studies in the United States, the student spends seven intensive weeks exploring the culture concept issue by issue. At each step, he may be asked to relate what he has learned from sociology, psychology, anthropology, history, literature, political science and economics to the issue. He may be asked to relate what he learned in biology to an organic functionalist theory of culture or to questions about the extent to which physical and mental health are culturally determined. (Making the latter connection is sometimes a real delight.) He may be asked to describe his own (usually culturally derived) notions of identity, role, value, order, time, space, freedom, God, logic, legitimation and the like in the terminology he finds in one or another theory of culture. The aim is to make the student's past courses and his own experience both contributory and prob-

lematic. The classroom strategies are in part standard ones—reading, writing, discussion. But the class is kept small, fewer than twenty if possible. Students explore each issue inductively before they turn to specific readings for terms to name and define their ideas. Given our model of the teacher as midwife and the general aim of reconstructing and articulating frameworks of understanding or points of view, the discussion is sometimes very intense. And the readings on the concept of culture—e.g., Berger and Luckmann, E. T. Hall, Anthony Wallace, Robert Merton, C. Wright Mills, Leslie White, Jaeger and Selznick, Richard Sykes . . . we are not yet satisfied that we have found the most helpful readings—are specifically selected, insofar as possible, to pose different concepts of culture against one another. The tone of the course is quite definite: there are no established right answers to the question, “What is culture?” (or better: “How is culture to be construed?”). Presently there is a spectrum of answers. Students are encouraged to explore, criticize and evaluate each of them—to emerge from the exploration with at least a tentative and hopefully a workable definition of culture, one that seems to make sense of all they know about the United States. In this, the teacher’s own formulations may serve as a model, but if the teacher is meant to serve as a model to imitate, he is not to be copied. His formulations represent only one possibility among a spectrum of possibilities. We try to wean students from their characteristically excessive deference to the teacher as authority and from old modes of classroom inquiry by asking them to deploy *some one set* of ideas or terms they find within the course in order to reorganize what they have learned and experienced elsewhere. One useful device has been to ask each student to keep an intellectual diary in which he tries to connect his own experience to the various theories of culture and culture related issues he encounters. Another has been the “reformulated project,” in which the student rewrites a term paper he has done for another course or reformulates a non-American Culture Studies course he has taken. In either case, he is to choose a paper or course representing his best work in some discipline and reformulate it in light of new methods, questions and perspectives he has discovered or developed in AS 45. The one device leads to connections between self and culture, the other to connections between theories of culture, other disciplines and data. But there are many such devices, and this is meant as a commentary on curriculum, not as a pedagogical treatise. It must suffice to say that a chief thrust of AS 45 is to argue by demonstration that, though there is no established right answer to the question, “What is American culture?,” it is possible to work fruitfully in American Culture Studies with different theories of culture and not possible without one.

The final step in AS 45 is briefly to sketch for the student the broad

methodological approaches to aspects of culture taken by traditional disciplines, prolegomenon to the four core courses of the junior year and the second stage of the curriculum. AS 45 is the capstone of the student's first two years in the university. He is encouraged to identify problems springing from his felt needs and to develop a theoretical structure which will help him clearly name, describe and understand them. The second stage in the curricular sequence begins with two methodological classes, one in the first quarter of his junior year and the other in the second. One (AS 140A) is devoted largely to the logic of quantitative inference and to testing ideas about culture on large numbers of persons, events or objects. The other (AS 140B) is devoted chiefly to qualitative inference, providing the student with models of analysis and synthesis with which he may deal with unique persons, events and artifacts. In both, the teachers emphasize less the relatively mechanical process of arming the student with a battery of techniques than they do the *possibilities* available in both conventional and unconventional disciplinary modes. Thus, AS 140A concentrates on the logic, the rationale, of quantitative inquiry and its uses in the study of culture. It does not substitute for a statistics course, for example, which the student may take if he is persuaded he needs statistical skills. AS 140B works from a list of readings (Fuller, Chomsky, Huizinga, Hayakawa, Panofsky, Polanyi, Eliade, Boorstin and others) and asks students to choose some, write summary critiques, and try out methodological maneuvers suggested by the readings—pilot assaults on data. The writing becomes public property in a class notebook rather than a series of private exchanges between student and teacher, and everyone in the class reads and criticizes (in marginal notes or one-page critiques) what other students and the teacher are doing. A kind of suspended responsibility effectively encourages students to play with diverse models for engaging in the study of culture, to fail miserably with some and learn from their failures, but eventually to discover from the collective nature of the process and the play a wider variety of approaches and resources than they ever would in a course in which the teacher held the reins tight and controlled the exercises. Qualitative inference is a more protean subject than quantitative, but for all that quite as important to the study of culture; its difficulties suggest that it requires more attention rather than, as is often the case, less.

The two other junior-year core courses each serve a special purpose in this middle methods stage of the curriculum. We are firmly committed to cross-cultural study as perhaps the single empirically reliable source of cultural comparison and evaluation, not to mention the clarity it brings to understanding the United States. Thus, during the second quarter in an Introduction to Cross-Cultural Study course (AS 110), students explore the specialized body of theory and method designed for cross-cultural study.

They develop a theoretical rationale for synchronic and diachronic comparisons. They have the opportunity to work directly with primary sources from other cultures, at present through research exercises in the Human Relations Area File and the Index of American Cultures, in the future, we hope, in the context of a quarter of serious study abroad. California's unique mixture of minority groups offers a chance for actual field work, and the campus' ethnic studies programs offer courses that are useful in this respect. But the function of this course, like the courses on quantitative and qualitative inference, in the end is to assist the student to engage in his own work. Thus, the final core course in the junior year is a "problems course" (AS 140C) offered during the third quarter. It is meant to be an integrating demonstration of the theory and methods learned in the earlier core courses, a model of inquiry for the senior projects to come. In the past it has dealt with the problem of the individual and culture, for three years focusing on Frank Lloyd Wright and this year on Paul Goodman. Though the individual and culture is an important and live problem in our time, there is no reason, given the logic of the curriculum, why the course cannot just as well take up any problem (e.g., national character, popular culture study, the cultural analysis of literature) to which the content of earlier core courses may be applied. Characteristically, the topic of AS 140C has been one in which the teacher has considerable current interest—a book in progress, an article, an extended area of study and research—so the course contains a forceful example to students of the way in which a theory of culture and appropriate methods may translate a felt need into an actual problem solution. The lesson is important and pressing, for it is during this spring quarter that students are asked to settle on a general topic or area of inquiry for their senior projects. We expect that the summer between the junior and senior years will serve as a period of casual, yet relatively focused reading or, at the very least, a period during which students can digest their learning to date. The goal is some live synthesis in the senior year.

By the time AS 140C and the junior year are finished, then, American Culture Studies majors have worked through both the problem-identification, culture theory stage and the skills-learning, methods, problem-solving stage of the curriculum by means of working through five American Culture Studies core courses. But these core courses are just that—a core, around which supplementary courses are arranged in a pattern designed by the student within broad but firm limits. By early in his junior year he has to begin to make a series of decisions, perhaps the most important of which is his decision about an *emphasis*, to which he will devote at least the equivalent of five courses and out of which will probably come his senior project and his vocational or postgraduate possibilities. He has

three general categories available, and within them numerous subchoices to make: to emphasize *a discipline*, such as history, literature, anthropology or art, focusing on American subjects; to emphasize *a problem* (such as socialization, the arts as political expression, or justice in American culture—we name actual examples of recent proposals) and to plan a pattern of courses from several disciplines, all converging upon that problem; or to emphasize *cross-cultural* study, specializing in course work on one or several cultures or subcultures as a comparative base for his understanding of American culture. The decision about an emphasis controls to some extent also the other major curriculum decisions the student is obliged to make. He selects courses from two of the three following categories: *cross-cultural study*, that is, the equivalent of three courses which will provide a body of raw data to which the models learned in AS 110 can be applied; *supplementary theory and methods*, that is, three courses from a very long approved list in which a student may explore in more detail the theories, methods and techniques of other disciplines applicable to the study of American culture; and *the data of American culture*, that is, four courses from another very long list, courses which can provide large informational contexts for specific problems—the facts of the American past, the literature and arts of the American people, the institutions of American society and so on.⁸ In all these decisions the faculty tries to make options and implications clear and sometimes the negotiations are long-term ones. We believe the pattern has at least the twin virtues of allowing the student a great deal of freedom within categories—to a very large extent he makes his own curriculum—while, at the same time, providing him with a struc-

⁸We referred earlier to the “peculiar” status of our 1-sequence courses on religion, science and technology, race and nationality, and tradition and revolution. We have a number in the catalogue by means of which a senior can enroll in these 1-courses as a tutor. Part of their peculiarity is that on different levels they make sense to at least two groups of students. For the freshmen and sophomores enrolled in Religion in American Culture, for example, the focus is on conceptualization, application, demonstration and their own experience. The culture concept is always explicit and controls the flow and logic of the course. By means of it the student is learning to understand in a different way what he may already in some sense “know.” But chiefly he confronts the human problem of studying the culture into which he has been socialized. He gets a feel for the push and pull between objectivity and engagement in the subject matter, American religion. He engages in participant observation, interviews faithful informants and keeps a journal in which to record experiences and somehow integrate the data. Presumably he learns how the substance of experience in an American cultural system can become important to American Culture Studies. Seniors, on the other hand, usually “take” the 1-sequence courses on a wholly different, but equally useful, level. For them, the subject provides more data (the course is included in the data of American culture category in the curriculum) to which they can apply the perspectives they have developed in the American Culture Studies core courses. And they can see in practice the uses of that perspective as they tutor freshmen and sophomores. While they almost always do their tutoring in 1-courses which they did not take as lower-division students, a strong case could be made for their taking *again* as seniors a 1-course they initially took two or three years earlier.

ture across categories that we think contributes to his learning and for which we take responsibility. The curriculum takes up nearly all of a student's academic space his last two years, but the subject is large and difficult, we have sizable hopes for what he will come away with, and it is a way for him to make sense out of the fragmentation of the university.

One tentative test of whether or not he has been able to make sense comes in the three-quarter, year-long senior seminar. Call it the third and final stage in the classic problem-solving sequence, the point at which the student comes full circle, returning to the felt need which first prompted his coming to American Culture Studies, but now after having clarified and named that need in terms of theories of culture, and after having explored a wide variety of methods and techniques that might help him cope with it more adequately. The seminar offers him one full school year of intensive, sustained work on a question central to his interests. The opportunity is invariably perceived as a crisis point. After all, the project the student decides to engage in represents him. He is responsible for it. It is something more than part of the grade/credit/degree game. The faculty urges only that the project be related to the study of American culture and that it be extensive, conceptually coherent, serious (though it may be serious in a playful way) and the best the student can do. Most of the projects take the form of senior theses (roughly fifty pages long), but some students have taken to heart our invitation to try new formats. We conduct the seminar much like a contract or tutorial course. Early in the fall, each student proposes to his peers (the three faculty members in the seminar are at least partially peer-members of the community) both the problem and the strategy which will occupy his attention for the remainder of the academic year. The proposals are quite public. They are dittoed so that everyone in the seminar has a copy and each proposal is scrutinized and criticized at length during a fall weekend at a University facility on the ocean. In a sense, the student negotiates a contract with other members of the seminar and most importantly himself, articulating as precisely as possible at this point the problem and the ways he proposes to explore, expand, refine and dissect basic questions. The contract is renegotiated throughout the fall and early winter quarters to the extent that tutorial discussions with faculty members, informal discussions with other seniors in the American Culture Studies library-office, and finally a formal "demonstration" of a troublesome portion of the project in the winter may persuade the student to narrow his focus or change his tactics. The completed projects are made public for final criticism by the group the first week of the spring quarter—papers are duplicated, exhibits are set up, aural or visual projects are performed. The projects are taken up one by one during the first half of the spring quarter. Everyone analyzes and criticizes, both verbally during the seminar meeting and in a three-page (or

so) written critique. Each student consequently ends up with between ten and twenty written critiques of his project and the experience of nearly two hours' discussion of it by peers.⁹ He has until the end of the term to revise his project in light of those comments he accepts and what he learns from the critiques of other projects. Only when that revision is finished does the faculty undertake the unattractive and generally meaningless task of assigning it and him a grade.¹⁰

In fact, in that end of the year grading exercise the faculty in part grades itself. If there is any single test of the wisdom of building an American Culture Studies curriculum as we have, surely the senior projects provide it. They represent the point at which, yearly, we discover whether such a carefully designed learning sequence makes one bit of difference in the quality of mind and capability of students. Generally we are persuaded that it does make a marked difference. Students do work from their needs with conceptual understanding and skill. The culture concept does give their work meaning and focus. For one student, the presence of a prominent playwright as artist in residence becomes the opportunity to make problematic the tension between theater as art and theater as culture creating act. For another, an internship with a private, prepaid medical care program becomes the opportunity to map the complicated web of nonmedical institutions and roles which must be considered before the program can be judged a success or failure. For still another, the pleasing surprise of a modernized Catholic liturgy at a campus chapel provokes a high-powered theoretical consideration of the "shared meanings" in ritual. None of the students use all of the theoretical formulations or methods or techniques they have developed in their careers as American Culture Studies majors. We do not encourage methodologies in search of a question. On the contrary, we urge from the beginning that students return to their own, most basic questions as the fundamental core of their projects. Their felt needs and the questions that evolve from the needs dictate the theory and methods at work, not vice versa. Nevertheless, each project is made all the more plausible by the multiplicity of options the student has at his disposal. If a student wishes to ex-

⁹The critiques he writes are valuable elements in his learning also. But the point we would make here by the way is that the writing of critiques symbolizes the commonality of the group's work. Even though the immediate subjects of others' papers may be distant from a given student's own expertise and interest, he should be able to (and usually can) make helpful critical remarks. Ultimately the subject is American culture and the explanatory mode is cultural. We have that in common. By the end of the senior year, the seminar usually also has in common enough of a sense of community to be able to be a critically supportive environment, which every year amazes us.

¹⁰We despair of making all the details of the course (or for that matter the curriculum) clear. But we should note that we also ask students to read and report to the faculty on ten books over the year, five dealing with methodological questions applicable to their project and five dealing with usable data. And the critiques (see note 9) are also part of the grade.

plain the treatment of the mentally ill in the United States, a functional model of culture may serve him well, but so also will a neofunctional model; quantitative methods will help, but so also will qualitative ones. Another, conservative student, wanting to make a statement about student revolts, finds in cross-cultural data partial evidence for a generational explanation of the subject. In both cases, decisions about point of view and method contribute to the need that is being worked out.

We say that the projects provide a measure of the success or failure of the way we organize American Culture Studies as a discipline and curriculum. On the whole we are gratified by the level of thinking and understanding our students display. But there is still no finally persuasive way of arguing that they do find new ways of thinking, new frames of mind, new perspectives on culture and experience. Our evidence is qualitative and informal. If we were teaching history we might ask for a list of the seven (or ten or fifteen) causes of the Civil War, or if we were teaching American literature we could ask for an analysis of *Moby-Dick*. But we are not teaching "stuff," though a great deal of data has been absorbed along the way. Our students cannot look back upon their American Culture Studies class notes and say, "Here is a body of knowledge I have learned." The result we aim at is much more subtle. Furthermore, the structure we have described is still evolving. Since students do not always emerge from it with adequately revised and penetrating frameworks of understanding—naturally there are such cases—we continue to try revisions in the structure, if only to test whether or not revisions will help. That structure is the subject of considerable conversation in our offices and its details are invariably undergoing criticism and refinement. We tinker with it because on the whole we are persuaded that it is a liberating structure, and part of the liberation is the discipline it insists on. At times small things loom large (though nothing looms so large as our focus on culture, our notion that true liberation emerges from discipline that is for real, and our collective commitment to American Culture Studies as a center for thinking, learning and teaching in and about the United States). We might illustrate our past and present tinkering in small and large things by making a miscellaneous list (which in some instances implies our own criticism of what we are now doing or not doing): a) About half of our upper-division majors are junior transfer students from California State Universities and particularly community colleges. These students, along with those Davis students who wait to become American Culture Studies majors until the summer before their junior year or later, pose a problem for us. We can usually work them into the curricular sequence (e.g., we offer the AS 45 course in the fall as well as the spring quarter). But often they lack the courses we depend on in AS 45. We are therefore attempting to make some changes in the situation by

means of a small NASF grant, which provides the means to encourage the development of AS 1-sequence (or even AS 45) courses or their equivalents in the community colleges. b) We have tried to nurture the sense of a real community among the students, faculty and staff. Several factors converge to create that sense—our relatively small numbers, the fact that each generation of majors takes eight core courses where there is much in-class discussion together, having a physical place (library room and coffee machine next to the faculty offices) where students and faculty can congregate, our style as teachers. But whatever the source, the sense of community undeniably contributes to the intensity of the resocialization which the student undergoes as he moves through the formal sequence of courses. Yet a sense of community is a fragile thing, easily lost. It is a matter we are obliged to be constantly conscious of. In 1970–71, for example, the junior class proposed, and we supported, the establishment of an American Studies House in which married and single majors could live cooperatively, in which some classes might be held, and in which a small library of books, records and slides could be located. The planning and conception were excellent, but the plan aborted because we could not procure funds. We need to revive that plan or a variation on it; indeed, we should like to become part of a new college, either a residential college on the Raymond model (see above) or a college of culture studies. Unfortunately, unlike the curriculum, that implies a massive institutional effort beyond our offices. c) Really useful texts for AS 45, 140A and 140B are hard to find. We are writing correspondence versions of some of our courses, but that will not solve the text problem. We may end up writing our own. In 1973–74, for the first time, two faculty members will teach AS 45 together twice, one whose primary orientation is the social sciences, the other from the humanities. The aim is to give the course a balance it has not had previously, each time being weighted in favor of the expertise of the person teaching it. Perhaps out of that experience will come a text. d) We have proposed once, and will again, that there be constructed a multimedia resource and teaching complex for the study of American culture, where we might more effectively organize the visual and aural materials we often try (and often inadequately) to deal with in courses. e) An undergraduate curriculum can be vitalized by the presence of graduate students, but as yet we have no graduate curriculum. The reasons for that are all realistic and thus bad ones. Probably no other single indirect change could have such a considerable impact on the undergraduate curriculum as the establishment of a graduate one.

As we said, then, we tinker with the structure in small and large ways because we find it a liberating structure. By necessity, we find, American Culture Studies implies a substantial transformation in usual attitudes toward student needs, the learning process and the model of the teacher. It implies

structural revisions in the usual American Studies curriculum. And it implies a re-examination of where American Studies is historically. We argue for a conception of American Studies as in a transition toward maturity, toward a disciplinary matrix centering on the culture concept. But our educational theories, our curriculum and our argument for the culture concept converge most persuasively when it is understood that we are writing from the point of view of Americans, particularly American undergraduate students, studying the culture that has designed their being, construed reality for them, limited and channeled their biological processes, organized their possibilities, and allowed for life, death and contingency. The situation is a perfect one for dealing with human needs and providing for objective inquiry simultaneously. The objective inquiry is not inevitably alienating—as it often is in conventional disciplines—because it is undertaken in order to cope with a felt need. The concentration on felt needs is not impossibly subjective, as it often is in experimental university curriculums, because the needs are articulated and resolved or acted upon in terms of their source in culture. What more interesting educational situation than American Culture Studies could an American teacher ask for?

