

**STANFORD UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION**

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**The Creation of Stanford's Program in Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity<sup>1</sup>**

**"How do these programs come into existence,  
from faculty impetus or student impetus?"**  
(Schofield 1998)

Stanford's program in Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity (CSRE) was created in 1996, some thirty years after the first ethnic studies programs were established on college campuses across the country. At a 1998 meeting of Stanford's Faculty Senate, some members expressed a sense that CSRE—which offered majors in comparative, Chicano, Asian American and Native American studies—might be distinct from other academic programs, specifically with regard to its connection with student demand and protest. To what extent was the CSRE program a product of student demand or a reflection of faculty interest, and what processes explain its emergence? This case study is motivated by consideration of these questions and illuminates the factors that shaped CSRE and contributed to its emergence in 1996.

**Background and Organizational Environment**

Student protest preceded Stanford's first ethnic studies and affirmative action programs, which predate CSRE by nearly 30 years. On April 8, 1968, four days after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., Stanford's Black Student Union (BSU) "took the mike" from provost Richard Lyman at a university wide convocation," (Anonymous 2007). The BSU used the occasion of the event, titled "Colloquium and Plan for Action: Stanford's Response to White Racism," to present ten demands to the university, including the increased recruitment and enrollment of minority students, the hiring of minority faculty, and changes to "make the curriculum relevant to minority students" (*Stanford Daily*, April 9, 1968, cited in Anonymous 2007).

In response to this protest, Stanford committed to an affirmative action policy that began in the fall of that year and enrolled record numbers of Black and Mexican

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American/Chicano students. The university promised a commitment to increasing the numbers of minority faculty and staff as well. Curricular changes came soon thereafter with the creation of the African and African American studies major in 1969. Courses (but not majors) in Asian American, Chicano and Native American studies soon followed.

In the early 1970's African American, Asian American, Chicano, and Native American theme residences were established to further support minority students and create unique opportunities for dialogue with the campus community. From the mid-1970s to early 1980s, Stanford organized ethnic community centers under the dean of students, in response to student advocacy for culturally supportive environments for student activities, community service and learning outside the classroom setting. Finally, in spite of student demands for Chicano, Asian and Native American studies majors through the 1980s, no progress was made in these areas.

In 1992, Gerhard Casper was inaugurated president of the university and appointed Condoleezza Rice to the position of provost. Casper's two primary concerns for the university during the first years of his tenure included budgetary issues (exacerbated by a dispute with the federal government over the indirect cost rate), and a desire to improve undergraduate education (Casper 1993).

**"The history of CSRE begins with the hunger strike."**  
**Professor Albert Camarillo (Camarillo 2005)**

### **Student Demand**

Though student demands for Chicano, Asian American and Native American studies programs at Stanford began decades earlier, professor Albert Camarillo cited a hunger strike in May 1994 as the beginning of the history of CSRE. The strike by five Chicana/o students on Stanford's Main Quad, began on May 4 and was organized by the Stanford chapter of *Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán*<sup>2</sup> (MEChA). Strikers and their supporters noted that the act was the culmination of a year of frustration as the group endured verbal abuse from fellow students as they attempted to raise awareness about the United Farm Workers grape boycott (Gallegos, Gallegos et al. 1994), lost funding for their campus activities, and were stunned by the recently-announced layoff of Cecilia Burciaga. Mrs. Burciaga, the university's highest-ranking Latina administrator with more than 20 years of service to the campus, was also a beloved mentor, student advocate, and resident fellow at Casa Zapata, a Latino-themed student dormitory. In addition to calling for the creation of a Chicano studies major, the strikers demanded the reinstatement of Mrs. Burciaga, university support for the grape boycott, and the creation of a community center in East Palo Alto (Strikers 1994).

The strike began in the early morning hours of May 4<sup>th</sup>. A group of about 25-30 students

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<sup>2</sup> "Chicano student movement of the southwest".

were present, in support of the five students who had pledged to fast indefinitely<sup>3</sup>. Some held signs supporting and advertising the hunger strike (“Strike! Chicana/o Studies Now”), while others talked in small groups. A tent had been erected for the strikers to sleep in. During the first day of the strike, a student negotiating team was created, and a handful of faculty and staff were invited to observe the students’ first meeting with the president and provost<sup>4</sup>. After listening to the students, the president and provost refused to directly meet the student’s demands. Explaining the need to follow the university’s usual decision-making processes, Provost Rice told students that her office could not act unilaterally to grant a Chicano studies major, reverse employment decisions, or create new initiatives. In particular, Rice detailed the procedure for creating new degree programs, which required the development of proposals by faculty and the approval of the Faculty Senate. Further Rice indicated her willingness to support a proposal for a Chicano studies major if it were to be developed by faculty according to the usual channels.

#### SUPPORT FOR THE STRIKE

The strike mobilized the support of individual students and united a coalition of student groups. Hundreds of students gathered at the encampment created in front of Memorial Church and at impromptu rallies and community meetings. Led by MEChA, a coalition that supported the strike emerged with a core that included the Black Student Union (BSU), Asian American Students Association (AASA), and Stanford American Indian Organization (SAIO), as well as the Students of Color Coalition and other groups.

Sixteen Chicano faculty members signed a public letter of support that called on President Gerhard Casper and Provost Condoleezza Rice to negotiate with the strikers and monitor their health. The letter offered explicit support for several of the striker’s demands, including the call for a Chicano studies major (Busto, Camarillo et al. 1994).

### Organizational Processes

#### AGREEMENT REACHED, COMMITTEES FORMED

On May 6, the strike ended with an agreement that did not meet, but did address, each of the strikers’ demands. The most significant outcomes included the creation of two committees. First, the agreement specified that the Provost would “entertain a proposal from the Dean of Humanities and Sciences to consider establishing a Chicano Studies Program” and that the School of Humanities and Sciences would “examine the requests that have been pending concerning Asian American studies” (1994b). In addition to charging the School of Humanities and Sciences with creating the committee, the agreement also called for the school to “report on a schedule that (would) allow consideration of the findings in the context of the next planning and budget cycle” (1994b). A committee was also established to “assess and, if necessary, recommend changes to the university’s present policy on grapes” (1994b).

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<sup>3</sup> Four Stanford student hunger strikers were widely identified by the press: Tamara Alvarado, Julia Gonzalez Luna, Elvira Prieto, and Eva Silva. They were joined by a fifth student, Felipe Barragan, whose name was not carried in the local media.

<sup>4</sup> One of the authors of this case study, Chris, observed this meeting at the request of students and in his capacity as assistant director of the Chicano student cultural center (El Centro Chicano) at Stanford.

Though Asian American studies was not part of the striker's demands, it was included in the press release issued by the president and provost. John Shoven, the Dean of Humanities and Sciences, formalized the connection between Chicano/a and Asian American studies and introduced a new concept, comparative studies, at a meeting of the Faculty Senate less than two weeks after the strike. Before the meeting was interrupted by students who attempted to present the body with a petition in support of Asian American studies, Shoven announced the formation of an Asian American studies committee to "work in parallel, considering whether ethnic studies should be placed, for instance, within American studies or whether the school should establish comparative ethnic studies," (1994a). Shoven named highly regarded faculty members Dan Okimoto and Ramon Saldívar to chair the Asian American and Chicano Studies committees, respectively. During that time, Saldívar also served on the Asian American studies committee as well as under Shoven in the Dean's office of H&S. Shoven commented that Saldívar's placement on both committees "was natural because of his role in the administration" (Rapalus 1994).

The Chicano/a and Asian American Studies committees began their work in the face of some student skepticism. Supporters of the strike claimed that the committees were a diversionary tactic intended to quell student protest without making a concrete commitment to their demands. Some felt that the agreement to end the strike was made too quickly. These students believed that their movement was just gaining momentum as a result of increased media attention, and that the negative affect on Stanford's reputation would put students in a stronger position to win their demands outright. Others pointed to the success of Chicano student protesters at UCLA who had conducted a hunger strike earlier that year, made similar demands of their administration, and seemed to win more substantive concessions.

**"This is an idea whose time has come for us at Stanford."**  
**Ramon Saldivar (Wine 1995).**

The Asian American and Chicano Studies committees, chaired by Okimoto and Saldivar and comprised of faculty and students, began to meet that spring quarter. Participants in the committee processes included several faculty members, including Saldivar and Albert Camarillo, who had previously participated in interdisciplinary faculty seminars on comparative studies of race and ethnicity that was supported by the James Irvine and Mellon Foundations. In February 1995, Shoven and the committees reported to the faculty senate, and announced his intention to develop a proposal for a new program in comparative studies in race ethnicity. The two committees revealed that they had come to the similar conclusion that "Stanford should establish a 'cutting edge' program based on comparative analysis, involving social sciences and with an international component" (1995b). A comparative framework would build upon work already done by faculty members in the previous year through the Irvine and a Mellon-supported faculty seminar on race and ethnicity in 1993 (Wine 1995). Further, after consulting with black faculty, including those affiliated with the extant African and African American Studies program (which already offered an undergraduate major), Dean Shoven suggested that the CSRE program would offer two new majors in Chicano Studies and Asian American Studies, as

well as integrate the existing African and African American Studies major. Finally, Shoven announced his vision of an affiliated research center that would compliment undergraduate study with faculty and graduate research.

The social science involvement and comparative emphasis of the CSRE program would make Stanford's offering unique and would avoid allow the university to "avoid some of pitfalls (other university's) have encountered," according to Okimoto (1995b). Emphasis would be placed on public policy issues such as immigration, education, and discrimination in an effort to engage social sciences in dialogue with concerns of ethnic studies scholarship. Additionally, Shoven's announcement at the Faculty Senate cited the common desire of the two committees and the black faculty for additional faculty resources to teach in the three tracks. Without promising specific billets, Shoven expressed his willingness to direct some hiring toward these ends, and to provide at least one visiting professorship to each of the three tracks.

#### THE PROPOSAL ENCOUNTERS OPPOSITION

After the February, 1995 announcement by Shoven, the CSRE proposal was fully developed by curriculum committees for the new majors. Town hall conversations with students and interested parties were held that winter quarter. Despite Shoven's previous assurance that he consulted with black faculty, some African American students and faculty opposed the CSRE proposal and argued that it was a step backward for African and African American Studies, an independent program with a history of over 25 years. These students and faculty argued that inadequate university support had been a hindrance to AAAS reaching its full potential and that placing it under a new program would further marginalize African and African American Studies. The opposition to the proposed changes from the perspective of AAAS supporters was complicated by the BSU's support for the creation of Asian American, Native American and Chicano studies. As a result BSU members expressed opposition to a "defacto demotion" of the AAAS program and critiqued the proposal on procedural, structural and intellectual grounds while providing conditional support for the creation of Chicano, Native and Asian American studies (1995a).

#### A NEW PROPOSAL AND AUTHORIZATION

In October 1996, Shoven forwarded the proposal for CSRE to the Committee on Undergraduate Studies. The proposal contained important changes from the 1995 idea. First, Native American studies had been brought under CSRE which now included four majors: Native American studies, Chicano studies, Asian American studies and comparative studies in race and ethnicity (1996). Additionally, African and African American Studies was mentioned, along with Jewish Studies, as affiliates rather than core members of the CSRE program.

On February 21, 1996 the interdisciplinary program in Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity with majors in Asian American studies, Native American studies, Chicana/o studies, and comparative studies in race and ethnicity, was approved by the Faculty Senate. Shoven announced that he expected that there was "growing interest on the part of the leadership of the African and Afro-American Studies Program to become a full

partner with CSRE” and that Jewish Studies would become more strongly affiliated (Schofield 1996). The absence of the AAAS major from the proposal generated some confusion in the Faculty Senate. In response to questioning, Saldívar and Camarillo noted that AAAS and Jewish studies were not included “because the initial charge to the planning committees was to create programs where they did not exist” and that conversations to formalize affiliation with the two programs were underway (Schofield 1996). Saldivar suggested that the program’s comparative model represented a “ground breaking way of discussing the increasing importance of ethnicity and race.” Provost Rice commented that the new framework suggested “methodological rigor” that should become a fundamental part of the undergraduate educational experience (Schofield 1996). In subsequent years African and African American Studies continued to be connected with CSRE as an affiliated, yet independently authorized major program of study. Similarly, a Jewish Studies minor and individually designed major organized through the Taube Center for Jewish Studies became affiliated with CSRE and independently authorized.

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