REPRESENTATIONS OF REDFACE:
DECOLONIZING THE AMERICAN SITUATION COMEDY'S "INDIAN"

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ABSTRACT

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This study critically analyzes the thematic development of representations of redface, or of playing “Indian,” by non-Native characters in live-action and animated American sitcoms. Predominantly White characters have played “Indian” to reenact nostalgic colonialist versions of historical events, to gain fame and fortune deceptively, to be honorary members of a tribe, to acknowledge heritage through a distant “Indian” relative, and to be in “Indian” clubs. This dissertation also discusses the dehumanizing roles of rare on-screen “Indians” as cultureless dupes or subservient, vanishing Natives who legitimize and authenticate non-Indigenes’ constructions of redface. Representations of redface in American sitcoms, from their appearance in the 1951 *I Love Lucy* “The Adagio” to the 2006 *The Suite Life of Zack and Cody* “Boston Tea Party,” have largely defined the sitcom’s “Indian.” The result is a redface collective that emphasizes the recurring visibility of (mis)leading “Indian” players that represent, or stand in for, the mostly invisible Indigenes. American sitcoms have set forth a restricted logic on how “Indians” in comedic television should appear. In turn, this limited logic of the sitcom’s “Indian” transmits a narrow, non-fully human view of real Indigenes to non-Indigenous and Indigenous audiences. A major objective of this study is to interrupt the perpetuation of “Indian” play by decolonizing the stereotypical, mythic, and fabricated representations of redface through *decolonized viewing*. As a media-focused area of decolonization that responds to media colonialism, decolonized viewing is a critical approach for Native and non-Native audiences to apply to their interpretations of American sitcoms. After
explaining decolonized viewing in one chapter and applying it to the next three chapters of analyses, this study concludes with explaining the importance of shifting from the sitcom’s “Indian” to the *Indigenous sitcom*, a crucial part of Indigenizing television.
For my four favorite ladies of four generations:

Gran, Mom, Maria, and Maya Grace
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And thanks/ura to those of you reading this page. I hope you’ll continue with the next page and the next and …
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INTRODUCTION

HOW TO BECOME A (MIS)LEADING “INDIAN” IN LESS THAN THIRTY MINUTES

“It seems [...] that the question of telling Indian stories is still at the heart of what America believes to be its narrative of self.” Elizabeth Cook-Lynn (Crow Creek Sioux), 112, 1998.

On December 31, 1951, I Love Lucy (1951-1957), a Desilu production still in its infant season, aired “The Adagio.” In this episode, the writers used a typical ploy found throughout the six-year original run of the series. Lucy wants to break into show business; but Ricky, her husband and a nightclub performer and owner, repeatedly rejects her and her seemingly inadequate performance skills. As soon as Ricky mentions his search in “The Adagio” for an authentic Apache dancer to perform at his club, Lucy responds, “Apache, huh?” Triggering a moment of reflection in response to her own inquiry, she then proceeds to perform a generalized and disrespectful version of a fabricated Apache “Indian” dance at which a presumably non-Native studio audience laughs. For Lucy, “Apache” appears to be synonymous with all “Indians” as she claps hand-to-mouth, chants “hey-yaw-yaw,” and shuffles her feet. After Ricky explains that he is looking for a Parisian Apache dancer, Lucy concocts a French “Indian” dance with the same gestures except she replaces “hey-yaw-yaw” with “oui-oui-oui.”

Thus begins a scene in an early American situation comedy, or sitcom, of playing “Indian.” For a few seconds, Lucy—in black slacks and white blouse—transforms into a generic, mocking, pseudo-Native sitcom character that has, like Jacquelyn Kilpatrick says of Hollywood stereotypes about Indigenes, its “origins in over five centuries of perceptions—and misperceptions” (1). To mass audiences at least faintly familiar with visual and audible “Indian” representations, Lucy’s erratic steps and chants promptly signify who Lucy impersonates. Then
Lucy quickly slips out of her feigned “Indianness” without being held responsible for reinforcing and perpetuating “Indian” stereotypes that continue today in the U.S.

This example is not an isolated instance of playing “Indian” in sitcoms. Lucy, for one, would return to her pseudo-“Indianness” as an “Indian” singer in *I Love Lucy* “The Indian Show” (1953) two seasons later and eventually would “marry” an “Indian” who incredibly gives her the state of Utah as a wedding gift in the later series *Here’s Lucy* (1968-1974) in “Lucy and the Indian Chief” (1969). As this dissertation will explain, Lucy in her several guises was not alone in her on-screen “play” of Indigenous Peoples in sitcoms. Over the next five decades, numerous non-“Indian” sitcom characters have donned headdresses, carried tomahawks, spoken broken English, attended Thanksgiving gatherings, received “Indian” names, danced wildly, or exhibited other examples of what I call *representations of redface*. In this study, I will critically analyze these representations in American sitcoms.³

*Representation*, as defined by Stuart Hall, is “the production of meaning through language” (“The Work of Representation” 16). Encompassed within Hall’s acute but general definition, representations of redface entail those specific images of and discourses about Indigenous Peoples as enacted and spoken by non-Native characters that play “Indian.” In fictional television and cinema, to play “Indian” is a process in which non-Native characters appropriate and/or fabricate Indigenous identities and perform on-camera as “Indians.”⁴ It is very similar to the broader concept *ethnomasquerade*, which Kader Konuk defines “as the performance of an ethnic identity through the mimicking of clothes, gestures, appearance, language, cultural codes, or other components of identity formation” (393).

Before proceeding further, I also wish to clarify my use of ethnic identifiers. Because of its colonialist connotations, “Indians,” which is arguably the most common term that Indigenous
Peoples say around each other, will be stated in quotes. Like Devon Mihesuah (Choctaw) and Waziytawin Cavender Wilson (Wahpetunwan Dakota), I will write “Indigenous Peoples,” “Indigenes,” “Native Peoples,” and “Natives” to refer to the original inhabitants of the land now generally referred to as the United States of America. However, there is not a unanimous term or set of terms. Anyone born in the U. S. is a “native American.” While “Native American” with a capital “N” is often used to refer to “Indians,” the literal interpretation of who is “native” to “America” is problematic for identification of Indigenes. The cultural identifier “American Indian” is fallible, too; it suggests that Indigenous Peoples were non-existent until there was an “America.”

Additionally, I should comment on how I have categorized television programs as sitcoms. Literally, sitcoms generally entail storylines of comedic situations. Larry Mintz describes the sitcom as “a half-hour series focused on episodes involving recurrent characters within the same premise.” Furthermore, “[W]hat happens in a given episode is generally closed off, explained, reconciled, solved at the end of the half hour” (Mintz 114). While live-action sitcoms, such as *Friends* (1994-2004) and *Arrested Development* (2003-2006), are readily accepted into the genre, certain animated programs cross between cartoon and sitcom. In *The Television Genre Book*, John Hartley and Kevin Donnelly, respectively, refer to *The Simpsons* (1989-Present) as a sitcom (65, 74). In *Prime Time Animation*, Carol Stabile and Mark Harrison refer to *The Flintstones* (1960-1966) and *The Simpsons* as examples of the “domestic sitcom,” “prime time animated sitcom,” and “cartoon sitcom” (9). Because my dissertation focuses on representations of redface in sitcoms, *The Simpsons, King of the Hill* (1997-Present), *Family Guy* (1999-Present), and other animated sitcoms are fitting subjects for this study. In line with cultural studies work that traverses traditional academic boundaries and encompasses diverse sets of
sources, more scholars are including both types—live-action and animated sitcoms—in their research. In, for example, “Ralph, Fred, Archie, and Homer,” Richard Butsch traces the development of White male working-class sitcom characters Ralph Kramden (The Honeymooners 1952-1978), Fred Flintstone (The Flintstones), Archie Bunker (All in the Family 1971-1979), and Homer Simpson (The Simpsons).

**HISTORY OF REDFACE**

Representations of redface in sitcoms did not suddenly appear without predecessors. Thus, in a project that tries to comprehend Lucy’s and other sitcom characters’ reasons for enacting redface, I turn early on to a brief history of playing “Indian” in American culture and its relationship to representations of redface in sitcoms. It is through the study of history that one comes to better understand the contemporary and to see the intersections between the two.

“From the colonial period to the present,” Philip Deloria observes in his seminal 1998 book *Playing Indian*, “the Indian has skulked in and out of the most important stories various Americans have told about themselves” (5). One of the most well-known recorded instances of playing “Indian,” as Deloria and others have discussed, occurred at the 1773 Boston Tea Party where the Sons of Liberty, White American men, disguised themselves as Mohawks and then dumped tea overboard in the Boston Harbor to protest England’s tax on tea. Earlier representations of redface were found in seventeenth-century “Indian” plays and continued in the popular play *Metamora* in the 1830s and 1840s. In staged reenactments of the 1675 “King Philip’s War” between Algonquians and English settlers, Edwin Forrest, who Jill Lepore calls “the most celebrated American actor of the nineteenth-century stage,” portrayed Metamora, or King Philip (194). Beginning in the 1840s, Shari Huhndorf explains, “Indian-inspired men’s and boys clubs began to spring up […] and proliferated in the following decades” (“From the Turn”
Dime novels in the 1860s, Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show in the 1880s and 1890s, radio programs of the early twentieth century, and Hollywood movie representations throughout much of the twentieth century are additional parts of a long line of creative representations of redface. Today, playing “Indian” continues to surface in Hollywood and elsewhere at sporting events, New Age gatherings, whiteshaman poetry and literary readings, Mardi Gras, summer camps, and any backyard or playground where kids play cowboys and “Indians.” Secret societies are sites of “Indian” play, too. American men can join “tribes” in the fraternal organization The Improved Order of Red Men, which claims to descend from the aforementioned Sons of Liberty. The Red Men’s auxiliary group for women (and men who are Red Men members in good standing) is The Degree of Pocahontas, a title, the group explains, “taken from the celebrated character in Native American history, Pocahontas, whose brief life presents a touching and beautiful picture of grace, beauty, and virtue as well as constant friendship to the palefaces” (“Who Are the Pocahontas?”). Although today’s Indigenous Peoples do not need non-Native organizations to preserve their ways of life, both the Red Men and Pocahontas organizations take it upon themselves to play “Indian” by attempting to continue “the beautiful legends and traditions of a once-vanishing race and […] some of the traditional customs, ceremonies, and philosophies” (“Who Are the Red Men?”). The use of historical and contemporary representations of redface in sitcoms builds upon many of the aforesaid examples. For instance, Disney’s The Suite Life of Zack and Cody “Boston Tea Party” (2006) flashes back in time to show its non-Native main characters dressed as “Indians” at the Boston Tea Party. Reminiscent of 17th-century “Indian” dramas in redface, I Love Lucy “The Indian Show” depicts Lucy, Ricky, Ethel, and Fred as staged “Indians” for a nightclub act. The Brady family receives “Indian” names from a “chief” and transforms for one
episode into the “Brady Braves” in *The Brady Bunch* (1973). *Yes, Dear* “Dances with Couch” (2002) and *My Wife and Kids* “Michael’s Tribe” (2002) feature club “Indians” who exclude real Indigenes and bestow “Indian” names upon themselves. The writers of these episodes reveal an American cultural awareness of some of the ways non-Natives have historically played “Indian.”

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

The purpose of this literature review is to familiarize readers with relevant work that has helped to shape this dissertation. Generally speaking, my project falls within the interdisciplines of Indigenous Studies and Television Studies. For this literature review, I narrow the focus to three major bodies of work: playing “Indian,” sitcom studies, and televisual “Indians.” Until this dissertation, the former two areas had not merged for extensive discussion. I include the section on “Indians” in film and television to give credit to preceding work on fictional cinematic and television representations of “Indians.”

**Playing “Indian”**

To analyze the process of playing “Indian” in any of its American forms, including sitcoms, requires one to look critically at historical and contemporary non-Native-constructed representations and imaginings of Indigenes. Robert Berkhofer’s 1979 *The White Man’s Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* is a foundational text for understanding how Whites have perceived, imagined, interpreted, and represented Indigenous Peoples. Continuing Berkhofer’s work, Raymond Stedman’s 1982 *Shadows of the Indian: Stereotypes in American Culture* examines American popular culture stereotypes and distorted caricatures of “Indians.” In the 1992 book *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture*, Daniel Francis, in an approach comparable to Berkhofer’s, focuses on non-Indigenous Canadians’ representations of First Nations Peoples, which often overlap with White
Americans’ constructions. The 1996 anthology *Dressing in Feathers: The Construction of the Indian in American Popular Culture*, edited by S. Elizabeth Bird, contains essays on non-Natives’ representations of “Indians” in photographs, advertising, pageantry, film, journalism, tourism, and television. Together, these works provide a basis for understanding how non-Natives facilitate their self-designed process of playing “Indian.”

The most noteworthy historical scholarship on this process is Deloria’s *Playing Indian*. Illustrating predominantly White Americans’ fantasies of redface masquerade, Deloria contends that “playing Indian has been central to efforts to imagine and materialize distinctive American identities” (129). For Rayna Green in her 1988 article “The Tribe Called Wannabe: Playing Indian in America and Europe,” “Indian” play is rooted “in the establishment of a distinctive American culture.” “Playing Indian,” Green adds, is “one of the oldest and most pervasive forms of American cultural expression, indeed one of the oldest forms of affinity with American culture at the national level” (30). Both Deloria and Green provide insight to how “Indian” play has contributed to nationalistic formations of American identities.

A significant amount of research, in conjunction with Green’s and Deloria’s work, has been devoted to explicating many of the forms of “playing Indian” and their relationship to White Americans’ attempts to establish an American identity. In addition to her 1997 article “From the Turn of the Century to the New Age: Playing Indian, Past and Present,” Shari Huhndorf’s 2001 *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination* discusses non-Natives’ transient or extensive transformations into becoming “Indians,” especially as played out in American history, literature, and New Age rituals. Huhndorf keenly observes that “playing Indian […] has historically aided European Americans in various quests for identity and authenticity since the Revolutionary Era” (*Going Native* 7). Additional analyses of non-Natives’
racial masquerades as “Indians” in relation to building new identities and character can be found in Jay Mechling’s 1980 “‘Playing Indian’ and the Search for Authenticity in Modern White America” and Sharon Wall’s 2005 “Totem Poles, Teepees, and Token Traditions: ‘Playing Indian’ at Ontario Summer Camps, 1920-1955.”

Several articles have concentrated on “Indian” play in film. Included are Robert Baird’s “Going Indian: Discovery, Adoption, and Renaming Toward a ‘True America,’ from Deerslayer to Dances with Wolves,” Pauline Turner Strong’s “Playing Indian in the 1990s: Pocahontas and The Indian in the Cupboard,” and Alison Griffith’s “Playing At Being Indian: Spectatorship And The Early Western.”

In this line of research on representation, television comedy has been overlooked.

Sitcom Studies

To this point, no publication has explored “Indian” play in the sitcom, arguably the most popular American television genre. To some extent, this disregard is likely related to sitcom studies in general not being prominent in academia, even in media and television studies, which is what led Paul Attallah to observe that sitcoms are viewed by the academy as an “unworthy discourse” (91). A major task in Cultural Studies, Brett Mills observed in 2006, is “to investigate popular forms by examining both their production and reception, [but] this has been done without much engagement with the genre of sitcom” (2).

Among the few older academic exceptions to Mills’ outlook on sitcom studies are David Marc’s 1997 Comic Visions: Television Comedy and American Culture and Darrell Hamamoto’s 1989 Nervous Laughter: TV Situation Comedy and Liberal Democratic Ideology. Richard Taflinger’s 1996 “Sitcom: What It Is, How It Works” is an historical survey and theoretical analysis of the sitcom. Less extensive studies include Mick Eaton’s 1981 “Television Situation
Comedy,” Janet Woollacott’s 1986 “Fictions and Ideologies: The Case of Situation Comedy,” and Patricia Mellencamp’s 1986 “SitCom, Feminism, and Freud: Discourses of Gracie and Lucy.”

Recent publications are attempting to bring sitcom studies into more academic respectability. Mills’ 2006 *Television Sitcom* outlines theoretical and methodological approaches to the sitcom in its relation to genre, representation, and performance. Two readers have been published. The 2003 collection *Critiquing the Sitcom: A Reader* analyzes representations of race, class, gender, and family in sitcoms. A 2005 anthology with a similar scope is *The Sitcom Reader: America Viewed and Skewed*. Josh Ozersky’s 2003 *Archie Bunker's America: TV in an Era of Change, 1968-1978* offers a critical look at the interrelationship between American culture, politics, and sitcoms.


“Indians” in Film and Television

While the texts described in the preceding two sections are important and have helped to inform my project, their respective sources are different from mine. Studies on playing “Indian” have ignored the presence of the process in sitcoms. Likewise, studies on sitcoms have ignored “Indian” characters and instances in which non-Native characters play “Indian.”

A considerable amount of work is devoted to Indigenous representations in film. One of the best texts in this area is Jacquelyn Kilpatrick’s 1999 *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film*. Kilpatrick “examines the layers of social, ideological, and political construction that have resulted in seemingly simple stereotypes of Native Americans” (xvi). Kilpatrick also discusses the space within Hollywood for Indigenous filmmakers and actresses/actors to respond cinematically. That opening up of aesthetic space is at the center of Beverly Singer’s 2001 *Wiping the War Paint off the Lens: Native American Film and Video*. Singer studies Indigenous filmmakers’ attempts to give audiences alternatives to Hollywood’s versions of on-screen “Indians.” Other notable film scholarship includes John O’Connor’s 1980 *The Hollywood Indian: Stereotypes of Native Americans in Film* and Gretchen Bataille and Charles Silet’s 1980 *The Pretend Indians: Images of Native Americans in the Movies*, a collection of articles by such scholars as Vine Deloria, Jr. (Standing Rock Sioux), and Richard Slotkin. In the 1995 *From Savage to Nobleman: Images of Native Americans in Films*, Michael Hilger presents a chronological discussion of “Indian” representations through the 1990s. *Hollywood’s Indian*, edited by Peter Rollins and John O’Connor in 2003, examines various “Indian” representations in individual films, such as *The Vanishing American* (1925), *Powwow Highway* (1989), and


Another Indigenous audience-response study was conducted by the organization Children Now in the 1999 “A Different World: Native American Children’s Perceptions of Race and Class in the Media.” Children Now researchers showed a “sitcom reel” of clips from sitcoms airing in December 1997 to three Native youth focus groups from twenty Indigenous nations—from Arapahoe to Wichita. Subsequent interviews with the youths revealed multiple Indigenous perspectives, including calls to see real Natives in sitcoms and to exclude stereotypical portrayals. The Indigenous youth participants expressed discontent with the lack of Indigenous exposure on television.

A more recent study by Children Now is the 2004 “Fall Colors 2003-2004: Prime Time Diversity Report.” Children Now conducted an “analysis of the state of diversity in prime time television programming by examining the prime time series offered on the six major broadcast networks [NBC, CBS, ABC, Fox, UPN, and WB] for the 2003-2004 season.” Not surprisingly, “No Native American characters were represented in any episode in the study’s sample” (2). After just 0.2% and 0.3% of actresses/actors listed in the opening credits of major network shows were Native in 2000 and 2001, respectively, the 2003-2004 season showed 0.0%, the same as in 1999. “Native Americans,” Children Now concludes, “have remained nearly invisible throughout the past five years” (11). With Native actresses and actors as the invisible on American television, representations of redface stand in as the visible.
SITCOMS AND REDFACE

In determining why we should look at redface in sitcoms, we would do well to respond briefly first to the related, broader question of why we should study sitcoms. As indicated by the recent increase in sitcom studies, numerous scholars (and publishers) are finding the sitcom to be a worthy discourse for analysis. The sitcom’s “popularity and longevity since it debuted on radio in the 1920s” leads Mary Dalton, co-editor of *The Sitcom Reader*, to contend that “the genre has become a barometer of American culture and warrants academic study” (qtd. in Maggie Barrett). Joanne Morreale adds, “Sitcoms address significant ideas and issues within seemingly innocuous narrative frames, and analyzing them can help us account for the complexity and complications involved in the production and reception contexts of popular culture” (xi). As textual sources, rich with audio and video, American sitcoms have depicted comically familial (e.g., *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* (1952-1966) and *Father Knows Best* (1954-1960), political (e.g., *M.A.S.H.* (1972-1983) and *Spin City* (1996-2002), social (e.g., *All in the Family* and *The Jeffersons* (1975-1985), historic (e.g., *F Troop* (1965-1967) and *Happy Days* (1974-1984), racialized (e.g., *Julia* (1968-1971) and *Good Times* (1974-1979), gendered (e.g., *Laverne and Shirley* (1976-1983) and *Rhoda* (1974-1978), classed (e.g., *Roseanne* (1988-1997) and *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air* (1990-1996), and sexualized (e.g., *Ellen* (1994-1998) and *Will and Grace* (1998-2006) versions of “America” through a wide contextual array of characters, situations, settings, and jokes.

I chose the sitcom episodes to be analyzed in this dissertation primarily due to their content. Each episode that receives extensive discussion fits into one of several arranged themes of playing “Indian.” Together, the episodes form a substantial sample of texts that covers a range of reasons for non-Native characters’ enactments of redface. In addition to the thematic redface
content, I selected sitcoms based on their availability in re-run form on cable and DVD. The availability of these sitcoms can be attributed to their popularity among millions of fans over the years.

The sustained appeal of the sitcom genre is evident in rankings of the most popular American television shows. In particular, three of the sitcoms under analysis in this study are in the top twenty of www.classic-tv.com’s “Top 100 Shows of All Time” and TV Guide’s “TV Guide 50 Best Shows of All Time” (2002) lists: I Love Lucy, #1 and 2; The Andy Griffith Show (1960-1968), #4 and 9; and The Simpsons, #15 and 8, respectively. According to Nielsen ratings, the highest ranked television shows have included sitcoms I Love Lucy (during the 1952-1955 and 1956-1957 seasons), The Beverly Hillbillies (1962-1964 seasons), The Andy Griffith Show (1967-1968 season), and Happy Days (1976-1977 season). These and several other well-known sitcoms have aired representations of redface and will receive discussion in subsequent chapters.

As the primary source for this project, the American sitcom contributes significantly to the ongoing formation of imagined “Indians” and “Indian” play in the dominant American consciousness. Episodes in this study with their trite signifiers for “Indian” do not teach viewers about “Indians”; they teach audiences what predominantly White scriptwriters think of “Indians” as revealed through the non-Native characters who talk about and perform as “Indians.” The American sitcom thus warrants attention due to these visual illustrations of postcolonial media.

As stated earlier, playing “Indian” as an act of cultural appropriation and theft has garnered much attention in academia. To provide a more thorough account, each form of “Indian” play should be addressed. A neglected racial and cultural area in the critique of postcolonial media is the perpetuation of representations of redface in sitcoms, which is entangled with ideas of colonization, hegemony, fabricated identities, stereotypes, and myths.
Writing on the presence of redface in “Indian” mascots, C. Richard King says, “Accounts of the history and significance of [playing ‘Indian’] rightly underscore the articulations of power, representation, and racialization, unpacking the ways whites have used (enacted, really) signs of difference to formulate identities, craft community, author national narratives, and consolidate racial hegemony” (193). In accordance with King, I examine how these “ways” of “unpacking” in representations of redface in sitcoms do similar post-colonial cultural work through the interactions between “power, representation, and racialization.”

In general, is playing “Indian,” as it appears in sports, television, and elsewhere, “a particularly insidious (because it’s rarely recognized as such) form of colonialism,” Huhndorf asks, “designed to appropriate Indian things and erase real Indian identities?” (“From the Turn” 182). Couple Huhndorf’s questioning of “Indian” play as an “insidious […] form of colonialism” with Morreale’s earlier observation that the sitcom has “seemingly innocuous narrative frames” (xi). What results are dialectical inquiries about representations of redface. Can they simultaneously be insidious and innocuous? Can one be dangerous yet appear to be harmless? Does one mask the other? The redface in sitcoms entails forms of playing “Indian” that could be seen as respectful and honorable to “Indian” mascot supporters, but redface, in any of its (post)colonialist guises, is racist. “Red Face Does Not Honor Us,” as Matthew Barkhausen III, Cherokee and Tuscarora, explains. Because, though, opposing views about the intentions and effects of representations of redface are extant today, further study is justified.

METHODOLOGY—CRITICAL TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

As I determined my methodology for this study, questions of epistemological rationale arose. How do we know what we know? How have we arrived to that point of knowing or at least thinking that we know? To better understand my analytical approach as a way of knowing
in this dissertation, one might inquire what are the epistemological reasons for analyzing sitcom
episodes via my selected method of critical textual analysis.

My choice of method is the approach that the majority of work in sitcom studies has
utilized. In line with the analytical work discussed earlier (e.g., *Critiquing the Sitcom* and
*Hollywood’s Indian*), textual analysis requires its practitioners to closely scrutinize the texts
under study. As a humanistic and empirical approach (i.e., knowledge through perception) to
understanding communication and to making meaning out of television texts, textual analysis
entails attempts to see (and not see) who and what is represented (and not represented) on screen
and to interpret and to make sense of those representations (and non-representations). Harold
Laswell’s model of communication from the 1940s encourages its practitioners to ask multiple,
related questions: “Who says what in which channel to whom with what effect?” (37). Through
these general inquiries, textual analysts work towards constructing what Alan McKee calls “an
educated guess at some of the most likely interpretations that might be made of that text”
(*Textual Analysis* 1).

This work in textual analysis is important because media representations, including those
in television sitcoms, can potentially influence audiences in their real-life perceptions and
subsequent conceptions of who they see in the media. As Mills explains, “Representation is a
vital concern of Media Studies generally, for the ways in which individuals and groups are
presented to mass audiences are seen to presume something […] about the ways such individuals
and groups are understood outside the media” (7). For the majority of non-Natives in the U.S.
who rarely, if ever, interact with Indigenes, the media serves as a principal source for knowing
“Indians.” In a 2000 *Indian Country Today* poll of 450 Natives, 45% of respondents identified
media stereotypes as the “primary cause of anti-Indian sentiment.” In two studies with students
in Texas, Wisconsin, and North Dakota, researchers Jeffery Hanson and Linda Rouse determined that 95% of their subjects have learned about “Indians” primarily through film and television. Despite historians’ and other academics’ attempts to be more accurate and to include Indigenous perspectives in their work, “most Americans are learning from television,” Diana George and Susan Sanders contend, “not from historical scholarship” (433). Television, they argue, is “one of the primary educators of young people” (431). “Unfortunately,” Adare states, “movie and TV fiction have become accepted as America’s facts (and the world’s for that matter) when it comes to ‘Indians’” (2).

Representations of redface continue to appear in sitcoms as if to suggest that their existence in an occasional episode in a series can be ignored or be considered acceptable because the representations are intended to be humorous. For viewers to interpret the representations as more than that, so this argument goes, is to be too uptight and overly analytical. A consequential question might be, “Can’t you take a joke?” In response, who is to say that one cannot take seriously another’s sense of what is humorous? For example, if American sitcoms treat colonization, a serious topic, comedically, then can critics not take comedy in sitcoms seriously? “[T]elevision sitcoms […] may be entertaining,” Dalton and Linder explain, “but they are never just entertainment” (12).

By gathering individual episodes from nearly thirty sitcoms over six decades, I engage in a process of resisting normalization by disrupting the mainstream acceptance of redface. I prefer to label the disruption and the related efforts to dismantle widespread non-Native-constructed perceptions of Indigenous Peoples as respectful intervention into audiences’ sense-making practices. Through my critical interrogation, close viewing, and conclusions on the implications of the sitcom episodes in this study, textual analysis serves effectively as a means to conduct a
serious and subjective look at the cultural and historical development of representations of redface in American sitcoms.

POSTCOLONIAL THEORY

To apply textual analysis to the sitcom episodes in this study opens up a space to learn more about the American sitcom as a postcolonial production that continues to be watched and re-watched. Beginning with its foundational 1978 text Orientalism by Edward Said, postcolonial theory has explored how Western colonizers have framed their understandings of the “Other” through Western colonial epistemologies. Homi Bhabha, one of the leading postcolonial theorists, defines postcolonial as “a social criticism that bears witness to those unequal processes of representation by which the historical experience of the once colonized comes to be framed in the west” (qtd. in Eduardo Duran and Bonnie Duran 126). When it is applied to media studies, postcolonial theory often examines colonialist conceptions and representations of colonized peoples in the media.

However, as Anne McClintock explains in “The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term ‘Post-Colonialism,’” I find the term postcolonial to be potentially misleading. “Post” indicates “after.” The term post-colonial, or literally after colonization, can be problematic when applied to discussions of Indigenous Peoples in the U.S. because it suggests that colonization is finished business. While early colonization in American history through the Euro-American creation of colonies and the displacement and systematic genocide of Indigenous Peoples in New England is past, the effects of historical colonization are felt and seen today in Indigenous communities. Jean Paul Sartre’s observations on the objectives of Western colonialism—“to wipe out [the Indigenous inhabitants’] traditions, to substitute our language for theirs and to destroy their culture without giving them ours” (1)—is applicable to Indigenes in America. Furthermore,
colonization continues in the form of federal “Indian” law carried out by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington D.C.. Perhaps the more fitting term to describe the BIA today is as an agent of neocolonization, or what Chela Sandoval refers to as that which “represent[s] the policies through which a powerful force maintains or extends its control over foreign dependencies” (186). With the BIA’s agency to make decisions supposedly in the best interests of Indigenes, a postcolonial state could be regarded as a myth when applied to Indigenous Peoples. As Robert Yazzie (Navajo) explains, “Postcolonialism will not arrive for Indigenous Peoples until they are able to make their own decisions” (46).

Postcolonial theory, as I generally apply it, is that which questions the colonizing “West” and its ways of representing, imagining, understanding, knowing, and constructing marginalized peoples. Additionally, like Emma Perez in The Decolonial Imaginary, I employ postcolonial to mean “a hopeful utopian project” (33). Although the term decolonization and the phrase decolonize the mind sound more active as processes than postcolonial and more coherent and accurate than postcolonize your mind, postcolonial theorists like Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak do act as de-colonial theorists who attempt to decolonize the master narrative. In conversation with critical postcolonial analysis, I work towards decolonizing American sitcoms by attempting to unravel how they situate their normalized inclusion of what Said would call “colonial discourse,” or sets of ideas in Western colonizing thought.

As part of the aftermath of early colonialism, the American sitcom is a far-reaching contemporary perpetrator of hundreds of years of misinformation about Indigenous Peoples. As a media form of postcolonial “entertainment,” the representations of redface in American sitcoms carry on the cultural work of their redface predecessors. Representations of redface in sitcoms, produced and written by non-Indigenous writers, constitute one form of an ongoing
(post)colonial discourse. Through non-Native characters’ constructions and implementations of “Indian” identities in sitcoms, one sees postcolonial perceptions of what “Indian” means. The use, then, of postcolonial theory in this study draws attention to the continued marginalization of “Indians” in American sitcoms.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

This study critically analyzes the thematic development of the representations of playing “Indian” by non-Native characters in sitcoms from 1951 to 2006. Furthermore, this dissertation discusses the roles of on-screen “Indians,” when present, in the non-Indigenes’ constructions of redface. The textual examples are drawn from individual episodes in respective live-action (e.g., The Andy Griffith Show) and animated (e.g., Family Guy) sitcoms. Collectively, these representations of redface were chosen to demonstrate how non-Native characters quickly and transiently navigate across racial borders to play “Indian,” occasionally with the assistance of Indigenous characters, in less than thirty minutes on television.

What, though, are the implications of these representations for both Native and non-Native audiences? The representations under analysis here raise additional questions. How and why did these non-Indigenous characters play “Indian”? What roles have guest-starring Indigenous characters played in the process? How have these representations of redface evolved since their early form in I Love Lucy? How can these representations be “read” through a non-colonial perspective that moves us towards decolonizing these representations and viewers’ mindsets? Finally, by taking into account Philip Deloria’s assertion—“To understand the various ways Americans have contested and constructed national identities, we must constantly return to the original mysteries of Indianness” (Playing 4)—I ask, how has playing “Indian” contributed to forming these national American identities?
By engaging with these questions, we can better understand the evolution of redface in American sitcoms. Moreover, to concentrate on the act of playing “Indian” in a specific medium (television) in a particular genre (sitcom) may reveal new theoretical insight about the broad processes of racial masquerades and transformations. By playing “Indian” for less than thirty minutes, non-Native characters exhibit fluid identities as they slip in and out of non-Native and Native personas. Generally, Indigenous characters are non-existent and, thus, imagined as remnants from a fictitious static past. When they do appear, they serve in limited and subservient roles with an objective to transform the main non-Native sitcom stars into “Indians.” An analysis of these representations of non-Natives and Natives facilitates opportunities to deconstruct non-Native characters’ desires to play, but not to become, “Indian.”

Decolonizing the American Sitcom’s (Mis)Leading “Indians”

One objective of this study is to interrupt the perpetuation of “Indian” play by decolonizing the stereotypical, mythic, and fabricated representations of redface. Decolonization, Haunani-Kay Trask (1999) argues, is “a collective resistance to colonialism” (251). The word “decolonizing” is fitting in my dissertation’s subtitle, for my analysis of postcolonial Indigenous representations in sitcoms is intended to go against the dominant narrative. This dissertation opens up further room for dialogue in response to scholars, like Michael Yellow Bird (Sahnish/Hidatsa), Taiaiake Alfred (Kanien’Kehaka), Devon Mihesuah, and Waziyatawin Angela Wilson, who call for Native Peoples to decolonize their minds. These Indigenous academics/activists justly explore the historical and contemporary injustices committed against Indigenes and discuss ways to empower Native Peoples.

My contribution to this work in decolonization is to argue that sitcoms and their Indigenous representations negatively affect contemporary Indigenous lives. In particular, I
respond to Yellow Bird’s “antidotes to colonialism” for Indigenous Peoples: “courage, intelligent resistance, development of a counterconsciousness and discourse, and a fierce ongoing critical interrogation of American colonial ideology” (42-43). Indigenous scholars must critically interrogate forms of media “entertainment,” including sitcoms, and their interrelated influences on Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous nations, and non-Native viewers. To decolonize Indigenous representations is, on one hand, a task that looks to negate what has already occurred. These sitcoms aired on television and reached millions; one cannot dispute or change those facts. However, since these sitcoms continue to be aired and continue to disseminate stereotypes and one-dimensional pseudo-“Indians,” my dissertation serves to combat those images that many would claim to be mere entertainment. “While popular television programs were created to entertain,” Jonathan Pearl and Judith Pearl contend, “researchers would be remiss were they to neglect their deeper and more lasting value as unique historical and cultural records of American life” (13). If Indigenes are to develop a thorough counterconsciousness and discourse, as Yellow Bird urges, then each area of mainstream media must be challenged.

What I attempt to contribute to these efforts are alter-Native readings of particular sitcom episodes that have long been accepted in dominant discourse as harmless, escapist entertainment. Many television scholars have written from a colonial perspective and failed to recognize how programs with all-White casts may not provide escape for viewers of color. All-White casts do not erase race; they enforce racial homogeneity. In 2003, Harry Castleman and Walter Podrazik, for example, called the all-White (my noted observation, not theirs) sitcom Petticoat Junction “pure escapism, a sort of ‘chewing gum for the eyes and mind’” (197). What are Indigenous viewers to make of Petticoat Junction “The Umquaw Strip” (1964) in which Native-owned land becomes home to a White-owned railroad? Is that escape or another reminder of colonization for
Native viewers? Similarly, in a 2006 article for Newsweek, Marc Peyser casually referred to I Love Lucy as “pure escapism.” I assume Peyser, like the producers and writers of I Love Lucy “The Adagio” and “The Indian Show,” do not have Indigenous viewers, let alone respect for Indigenes, in mind.

I wish for Castleman, Podrazik, Peyser, and others to recognize and to understand that sitcoms are not a simple form of escapism or just innocent fun and mindless drivel for everyone. At whose expense are non-Native, especially White, viewers able to “escape” and poke fun? At whose expense are they entertained? In The Andy Griffith Show “The Pageant” (1964), for example, Barney Fife did not smear black coal over his face in blackface fashion and sing an Al Jolsen-like rendition of “Mammy,” but he did wear a headdress, smoke from a “peace pipe,” and talk Tonto-like broken English—all of which are elements of “redface” racism. This series of acts by Fife sends a message in rerun form that redface is acceptable today (even as blackface has become taboo). 14

ORGANIZATION—THEMATIC ANALYSIS

In trying to determine the organizing principle for this dissertation, I amassed the representations of redface in sitcoms to look for intersections between them. As I collected the televised data for this study by watching sitcoms in rerun form on cable and by consulting TV.com (for factual information on episodes, such as original air dates) and TVGuide.com (for television schedules), what stood out were the choices of non-Native characters (as constructed by the scriptwriters) who enacted redface. I began to see similar and dissimilar reasons for why non-Native characters play “Indian.” Then I situated the representations into sets of themes by identifying and subsequently categorizing the reasons as follows: playing “Indian” to recreate historical events; playing “Indian” to deceive in order to gain fame and fortune; and playing
“Indian” to be honorary members of a tribe, to briefly acknowledge heritage through a distant “Indian” relative, and to be in “Indian” clubs.

For the purposes of this study, a thematic structure proves to be more useful than a chronological organization of representations. For one, a thematic organization has allowed me to synthesize a large amount of data into workable chapters. Second, similar reasons for the appearance of representations of redface sometimes occur in sitcoms from different decades. The themes in this dissertation cut across time to bind together as one evolving colonial discourse. Although television historians could attempt to develop temporal-based phases for representations of redface in sitcoms to unravel the evolution of the representations, I have searched for storylines involving “Indian” play to emerge through theme. I do take time into account to present surrounding historical contexts related to respective sitcoms during their original airing. For example, what might one make of *Saved by the Bell* “Running Zack,” in which non-Native Zack Morris is transformed into a Nez Perce “Indian,” airing within a few months of the premiere of Kevin Costner’s 1990 film *Dances with Wolves*?

By arranging episodes from different series into single chapters of thematic analysis, I assume poststructuralist Julia Kristeva’s concept of “intertextuality,” which contends that each text is the result of its having been influenced and shaped by previous texts. In addition, an individual’s potentially multiple responses to one text is influenced by her or his interactions with previous texts. Janice Radway argues that audiences “fashion narratives, stories, objects and practices from myriad bits and pieces of prior cultural productions” (362). “Indians” and what the word signifies, for example, do not become “known” through a single text (though Costner’s *Dances with Wolves* and its immense popularity could unfortunately contend otherwise, possibly more than any other film and television show could). Sitcom intertextuality would argue that no
televised sitcom is without its previous influences and related predecessors. Many of the sitcoms in this study have aired alongside of each other during daily and nightly lineups on TV Land, Nick @ Nite, Superstation WGN, or other networks. These networks assume that audiences of one sitcom may likely view other comparable sitcoms and come to understand the generic conventions and codes of the sitcom through these repeated viewings. For instance, NBC’s original Must See TV lineup on Thursday nights in the early 1980s encouraged viewers to watch one program and then stay tuned in for the following shows, which, according to the ratings, many viewers did during the 1980s and most of the 1990s.

OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

This dissertation contains five chapters after the introduction. The first chapter presents an analytical television viewing model for the critical textual analyses that follow in chapters two, three, and four. Chapter five, the conclusion, summarizes my research findings and speculates about the future of redface and “Indian” representations in American sitcoms. The following discussion outlines each chapter.

To analyze themes of redface, a crucial question for audiences to ask is how they can view the representations of redface in decolonizing ways. In response, the first chapter, “Decolonized Viewing: A Process for Reading American Sitcoms,” provides readers with an explanation of the process and importance of decolonized viewing. This non-colonial approach to watching sitcoms with representations of redface serves as a foundational way for Native and non-Native audiences to analyze them critically, as I attempt to do in subsequent chapters. Decolonized viewing is a hybrid model of postcolonial-poststructuralist-textual analysis frameworks. By naming this analytical model, I contribute to the ongoing vocabulary of critical Indigenous discourse and articulate a concise name for what many Indigenous viewers already
implement in their watching of American sitcoms. As a media-focused area of decolonization that responds to media colonialism, decolonized viewing is an intellectually active approach for Native and non-Native audiences to apply to their interpretations of American sitcoms. It requires viewers to “look,” to borrow from bell hooks, to raise consciousness (Black Looks). By engaging in the process of decolonized viewing, audiences are taking critical steps towards decolonizing their minds.

Strategies of decolonized viewing are then applied to the next three chapters of critical textual analysis. Arranged, as stated earlier, by differing, though intersecting, functions of roles for why non-Native characters play “Indian,” chapters two, three, and four analyze representations of redface in sitcoms in historical reenactments, deceitful measures, and “Indian” adoption, heritage, and clubs. Although this list is not exclusive, it does reveal principal reasons for the enactment of redface in sitcoms. This study reveals that the purposes for “Indian” play are multiple, the process varies over time, and the “Indians,” when present, are cultural dupes that help to legitimize non-Native characters’ actions. Together, the chapters serve as an introduction to a range of representations of redface performed by non-Native sitcom characters. The following chapter outline identifies sitcom episodes that receive extensive analysis. Other relevant episodes will be mentioned in appropriate chapters.

Chapter two, “‘I Wanna be an Indian!’: Situating the Sitcom’s ‘Indian’ in Historical Reenactments,” looks at reenactments in sitcoms of key American moments in which “Indians” appear. In The Suite Life of Zack and Cody “Boston Tea Party” (2006), Zack dreams that the sitcom’s non-Native characters become colonial revolutionaries who construct and don “Indian” headdresses for rebelling against the British tea tax. Brady Bunch “Un-Underground Movie” (1970) imagines the Brady family into pilgrims and “Indians” at the first Thanksgiving gathering
for the purpose of Greg Brady’s documentary school project. *The Andy Griffith Show* “The Pageant” (1964) transforms Barney Fife into Chief Noogatuck as he reenacts his part in the colonial settlement of the town of Mayberry in a local pageant. As demonstrated here, “Indians” are often relegated to history, not contemporary life. By having non-“Indian” characters play “Indian” parts, sitcoms may remind viewers, though perhaps not explicitly or intentionally, of the attempted systematic genocide of Indigenous Peoples by the U.S. government and military. Without direct references to genocide, however, playing “Indian” can erase such memories by recalling a romanticized past. Other sitcom episodes include talk of “Indians” in historical contexts without any mention of contemporary Indigenes.

Chapter three, “Deceitful ‘Indians’: Playing ‘Indian’ for Fame and Fortune,” analyzes *I Love Lucy* “Indian Show” (1953), *The Beverly Hillbillies* “The Clampetts in Washington” (1970), “Jed Buys the Capitol” (1970), and “The Indians are Coming” (1967), and *Family Guy* “The Son Also Draws” (1999). The characters who play “Indian” in these episodes reveal that trickery in identity can be performed for ill-gotten gain. Lucy yearns for the spotlight at her husband’s nightclub. Unknown at first to her husband, Lucy replaces the star who was to portray Hiawatha in the “Indian” show. Flo Shafer, an occasional White female character in *The Beverly Hillbillies*, transforms into Princess Sitting Hawk and, along with her crooked partner Honest John, tries to sell her Washington Capitol to Jed Clampett. In “The Indians are Coming,” the excessively money-hungry banker Milburn Drysdale dresses in generic “Indian” garb and claims “Indian” red brotherhood with two Ivy League-educated “Indians” in hopes that they will become new clients. In *Family Guy*, White husband and father Peter Griffin claims to be “Indian” at an Indian casino to receive casino profits and to regain the family car that his wife Lois gambled away. These instances of masquerade for deceitful gain implicate real-life
Indigenes, through the construction of pseudo-“Indians,” with treachery and greed. The recent deceitful “Indians” in *Family Guy* and other animated sitcoms signals that the negative associations between real “Indians,” false “Indians,” identity politics, fame, and fortune converge at the “Indian” casino, the latest locale for representations of redface.

Chapter four, “What’s Your ‘Indian’ Name?: Newly Found ‘Indians’ and Tomahawk Clubs,” merges the redface-related ideas of adoption, heritage, and “Indian” clubs. The former two concepts are the focus of the first half of the chapter. *The Brady Bunch* “The Brady Braves” (1971) exhibits tribal adoption of the White Brady family by Chief Eagle Cloud. *Saved by the Bell* “Running Zack” (1990) has Zack Morris transformed from an uneducated White with a supposed family picture of an “Indian” into a proud “Indian” claiming his Nez Perce heritage through the assistance of his new “Indian” friend Chief Henry. The two “chiefs” in *The Brady Bunch* and *Saved by the Bell* serve in the literary tradition of educating White characters about and guiding them towards Native pathways of life. Through their appearance and assistance, the “chiefs” provide credibility and “authenticity” for the White characters’ transient transformations. Furthermore, they may justify ideas of playing “Indian” for viewers. Yet the respective transformations for the Bradys and Zack into “Indians” are, as usual with “Indian” play, only for one episode, and Chief Eagle Cloud and Chief Henry do not appear again in another episode.

The second half of chapter four shifts focus to club-“Indians.” In *My Wife and Kids* “Michael’s Tribe” (2002), a “tribe” of non-Native children and an adult male play “Indian” in an Indian Princesses group. Unlike in *The Brady Bunch* and *Saved by the Bell*, no “Indians” are needed to play “Indian.” Instead, *My Wife and Kids* continues the centuries-old tradition of non-Indigenes imagining they are “Indian” by donning plastic feathers and giving themselves
“Indian” names. Chief Henry and Chief Eagle Cloud are replaced with *My Wife and Kids*’ Chief Bald Eagle, portrayed by African American main character Michael. Despite the current American state of multicultural celebration and the huge increase in Indigenous actresses/actors, this twenty-first century episode excludes real Indigenes, much as non-African American blackface performances did to African Americans over a hundred years ago. Instead of moving towards meaningful intercultural communication, *My Wife and Kids* shifts back in time and continues what predominantly White Americans of previous generations have done; it utilizes non-Native imaginings and constructions of real Indigenes to play “Indian.”

Chapter five, “Conclusion: Going Beyond the Sitcom’s ‘Indian,’” brings the aforementioned analyses together for comparative discussion of what I call the limited logic of the sitcom’s “Indian.” Based on my research findings that the preceding chapters reveal through my utilization of decolonized viewing and textual analysis of past representations of redface, the conclusion also speculates about the future of “Indian” play in American sitcoms. I close with explaining the importance of shifting from the sitcom’s “Indian” to the Indigenous sitcom. This shift, in line with postcolonial work, is from Natives being devalued by others to Natives empowering themselves. Similar to Kilpatrick’s and Singer’s demonstrations of how Indigenous filmmakers offer alternatives to Hollywood’s cinematic absurdities and offenses, I reflect on possibilities for comparable work in television. Similar to Christine Acham’s conclusion in the 2004 *Revolution Televised: Prime Time and the Struggle for Power*, I wish to reflect “on the possibilities and problems of using television as an instrument to impact social change.” Specifically, Acham asks, “Does cable television offer the space for resistant black voices?” (xiv). I pose that question to explore the relationship between television and Indigenous voices. In particular, I call for an Indigenous television network with Indigenous programming that
would bring a tremendous increase in opportunities for Indigenous actors, directors, producers, and writers, all of which is necessary in the process of Indigenizing television.
CHAPTER I.

DECOLONIZED VIEWING:

A PROCESS FOR READING AMERICAN SITUATION COMEDIES

“I’m a sit-com kid. All in the Family, Brady Bunch, Three’s Company. So my timing, my sense of humor, my world outlook is definitely partly shaped by situation comedies.” Sherman Alexie (Couer d’Alene/Spokane), “No Reservations.”

From *I Love Lucy* (1951-1957) to *South Park* (1997-Present), American sitcoms have been a major form of entertainment in millions of American homes over the past six decades. As a citizen of the Comanche Nation of Oklahoma, I grew up watching many of those sitcoms, including *The Andy Griffith Show* (1960-1968), *The Beverly Hillbillies* (1962-1971), and *Three’s Company* (1977-1984), in rerun form. Like Sherman Alexie, I was “a sit-com kid” whose worldview was and “is definitely partly shaped by situation comedies” (“No Reservations”). Many of my childhood memories, in fact, revolve around seeing re-runs of *Dennis the Menace* (1959-1963), *The Donna Reed Show* (1958-1966), *My Three Sons* (1960-1972), *Mister Ed* (1961-1966), and *I Love Lucy* on then-cable newcomer Nick-at-Nite. As Nick-at-Nite and other networks situated me into half-hour blocks of escapism, I naïvely thought these sitcoms—literally intended to present situations of comedy—were just for entertainment. I was “entertained” through sitcoms with their constant barrage of images of White characters and occasional, if at all, representations of the subservient and minor “Other,” including Indigenous characters. I did not question at whose expense target audiences, predominantly Anglo middle-upper class viewers with purchasing power of sitcom sponsors’ products, were entertained.

My mind was subjected to a televised form of media colonialism, the roots of which began centuries ago in American colonization. “Colonization,” as defined by Michael Yellow Bird (Sahnish/Arikara and Hidatsa) and Waziyatawin Angela Wilson (Wahpetunwan Dakota),
“refers to both the formal and informal methods (behaviors, ideologies, institutions, policies, and economies) that maintain the subjugation or exploitation of Indigenous Peoples, lands, and resources” (2). As a form of colonization, media colonialism in the U.S. occupies vast sites of power and control through widespread infiltration of non-Indigenous-owned mainstream television, film, and news sources.

Media colonialism in sitcoms of the 1950s-1960s operated through the televised dissemination of representations of redface based on old colonizers’ viewpoints and stereotypes of “Indians.” These sitcom narratives act as daily and nightly televisual reminders of racism, power, and colonization. Despite occasional, yet still flawed, attempts in a few sitcom episodes to disrupt the master narrative, more recent sitcoms’ depictions of and dialogues about “Indians” and non-Natives who pretend to be “Indians” have continued to rely on deeply-rooted stereotypical and dehumanizing representations. For numerous contemporary sitcoms, notably animated programs, their latest constructed (and generally alarming) representation of redface is the figure of the “casino Indian.” Still, many sitcoms since the 1950s have ignored Indigenous Peoples by not including Native characters.

Without a template for how to read media texts containing representations of redface, audiences may continue to view Indigenous Peoples through a colonized lens. The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to provide a critical framework for the process of what I call decolonized viewing for analyzing episodes of American sitcoms in which Indigenous characters and/or non-Native characters play “Indian.” I am concerned specifically with explaining what decolonized viewing entails, how Native and non-Native viewers can watch sitcoms in a non-colonizing approach, and what are the contributions of decolonized viewing.
My reasons for focusing on sitcoms, besides my having been a “sitcom kid,” are to fill in the current gap in critical analysis of sitcoms’ representations of redface and to test decolonized viewing’s applicability in a single study to a reasonable sample of televised programs with similar generic conventions. Although my study will examine American sitcoms, decolonized viewing can likely be applied, with modification, to other American television and film genres with on-screen redface representations. Through decolonized viewing’s potential application to most televised and cinematic content, audiences may then be able to articulate more effectively the relations and intersections between television/film and colonization/decolonization.

**COLONIZED VIEWING AND THE CURRICULUM OF COLONIALISM**

In/visible “Indian” Representations

Growing up, I had little concern with the absence (i.e., invisible representations) of “Indians” in “comedy” when Dennis played “Indian” in the Junior Pathfinders Club in *Dennis the Menace* (1959-1963), Pinky Tuscadero questioned Tonto’s gender because he wore a feather in *Happy Days* (1974-1984), Mr. Ferley prepared for a poker game and placed his fingers behind his head to signify feathers as he said, “Poker-hontas” in *Three’s Company*, and Brad described the Aztecs as killers who cut people’s hearts out in *Home Improvement* (1991-1999).

I also had no problem with visible “Indian” representations (even if the Indigenous characters were portrayed, as they often were, by non-Native actors). I saw Granny shoot at “Indians” in *The Beverly Hillbillies*, Mr. Haney control what he called his “Indian rain-making machine” Chief Thundercloud in *Green Acres* (1965-1971), Lucy involuntarily marry an “Indian chief” who offered her the state of Utah as a wedding present in *Here’s Lucy* (1968-1974), and Captain William Parmenter tame (read: civilize) the “savage” Bald Eagle and tell him that he is “a good boy” in *F Troop* (1965-1967).
Sitcoms largely have privileged White and, on occasion, Black characters in relation to representations of redface. White privilege has allowed dozens of Anglo characters to slip in and out of a temporary “Indianness” as they played “Indian” for various reasons. To name just a few, Lucy Ricardo played “Indian” to have the spotlight in a nightclub act in *I Love Lucy*, Flo Shafer played “Sitting Hawk” to swindle the Clampetts out of millions in *The Beverly Hillbillies*, and the Brady family became the “Brady braves” through an “Indian” naming ceremony in *The Brady Bunch* (1969-1974). Michael Kyle, an African American character, played “Chief Bald Eagle” for his daughter’s “Indian Princesses” group in *My Wife and Kids* (2001-2005).

Sitcoms on American History

Very early in my sitcom watching, I learned a version of American history from primarily White male characters in sitcoms that reinforced the version taught to me in public schools. In *The Andy Griffith Show* “Andy Discovers America” (1963), Sheriff Andy Taylor recounted to his young son Opie and Opie’s friends a story of the founding of America by focusing on the role of Paul Revere and the efforts of the boys’ “[White] great-great-great granddaddies” who united to start their own country. Whether their grandfathers were in the New England area, let alone America, at that time was sidestepped through a unifying theme of White nationalistic American pride.

In *The Andy Griffith Show* “Goober Makes History,” Floyd, the local barber, started his history lesson at an earlier point in time: “I’ll tell you when American history began—when the Pilgrims stepped on that wet rock.” Pre-Pilgrim history is ignored. A recent promotion for the rerun network TV Land incorporated Floyd’s line but prefaced it thusly: “*The Andy Griffith Show* isn’t just entertaining; it’s also educational. Floyd on colonization.” A ploy used for ratings and laughs, TV Land’s advertisement merged sitcom discourse, entertainment, and education by
privileging the Pilgrims (the colonizers) over unmentioned colonized peoples (possibly symbolized through “that wet rock”).

Unconscientiously touching on the painful subject of colonization and without showing concern for Indigenous Peoples, TV Land could just as well have treated lightly the subject of enslavement of Africans by borrowing an excerpt from The Beverly Hillbillies “The Grunion Invasion” (1971). The hillbilly Clampetts believed that grunions were foreign invaders in California. When Jethro captured a woman whom he believed to be a grunion, he tried to persuade his Uncle Jed to make her a Clampett family servant.

JED. We won’t make slaves out of people.

GRANNY. We [the South] fought a war to get those Yankees to stop that foolishness.

JETHRO. Granny, you sure get things twisted.

“Twisted,” indeed, on the issue of who fought for what, but more twisted is that Granny, a Tennessean, reduced the implied racist atrocity of slavery to the playful term “foolishness.” If TV Land were to broadcast a comparable advertisement to The Andy Griffith Show promotion, it could begin, “The Beverly Hillbillies isn’t just entertaining; it’s also educational. Granny on slavery.”

American sitcoms also educated me in the celebration of predominantly European and Euro-American males through Euro-American accounts. At the start of the celebratory indoctrination, long before Jerry Seinfeld jokingly called him “Eurotrash” in 1991, was Christopher Columbus.22 Echoing how the dominant non-Indigenous version of history had been told for centuries, Wilbur Post in Mister Ed “Ed Discovers America” (1963) said, “Columbus discovered America. Any child knows that.” Post’s comment on children’s knowledge rested on
what American schools had taught young minds, many of which during Mister Ed’s original airing in the 1960s would already have memorized the lines of an instructional colonizing poem: “In fourteen hundred and ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue.” Cornel Pewewardy (Comanche/Kiowa), Dean of the Comanche Nation College, recounted his “learning” experience, which was similar to mine and countless other Native Peoples’, about Columbus:

In public school I was taught that Christopher Columbus discovered America. Later, I found out that the man was totally lost on his voyage and named the Indigenous Peoples he ‘discovered’ Indios because he was looking for the country of India. Throughout my entire public school education, I was led to believe by my teachers that this was a true story. (Renaming Ourselves)

What is revealed here is a shift in Pewewardy’s thinking from colonized learning (“Columbus discovered America”) to decolonized knowledge (“the man was totally lost”).

Curriculum of Colonialism

The American school system’s curriculum of colonialism is nothing new to Native Peoples. Its federally-run institutionalized setting for Indigenes dates back to the 1860s in Indian boarding schools where White missionaries tried to assimilate “savage” non-Christian “Indians” into the “civilized” Christian White culture. As Richard Pratt, the founder of Carlisle Indian School (1879-1918), pronounced, “The Indian must die as an Indian and live as a man” (qtd. in George and Sanders 439). Racist assimilating strategies worked to deculturalize young Indigenous students of their Native tongues and ways of life and to acculturate them into what Claude Denis calls the “whitestream.”

Along with recent generations of Indigenes before me, I learned very little about these stories of cultural genocide in primary and secondary public schools. In fact, I learned very little
at all about “Indians” in a public school system I attended in Texas approximately sixty miles south of my Comanche Nation’s home area in Oklahoma. Topics about Numu (Comanche People), like all Indigenous Peoples, received little to no attention in my classes. That lack of exposure to discussion of the original inhabitants of this land is echoed by Robert Odawi Porter (Seneca), who grew up in New York on the Allegany Territory of the Seneca Nation, where Whites outnumber Indigenes five to one. Porter explains,

“The public schools are located on the territory, and so everyone goes to school together. The school curriculum is set by the New York government and so, like public schools everywhere, is designed to produce hard-working, self-sufficient American citizens. Because of this objective, very little is taught about the unique history of the Seneca Nation and its people and how the United States and the state have influenced us. This is rather amazing, since the entire city where I grew up is located on lands owned by the Seneca Nation! (90)

While it could be seen as “amazing,” a curriculum of colonialism normalizes that absence.

For those who attended public schools in which Indigenes were discussed, non-Native textbook authors, the authoritative sources, often spoke of “Indians” as a homogenous, violent group of pagans who impeded the supposed Manifest Destiny of Euro-American expansion and progress throughout what is now known dominantly as the United States. Yellow Bird, reflecting on his education in a Bureau of Indian Affairs institution, says, “We [Native students] learned that we did not know anything of value, nor did we have anything important to contribute from our culture unless it supported the myths of white supremacy” (39). White authors further dehumanized Indigenes by exoticizing them into a mysterious and uncivilized breed. As a telling joke from the Pine Ridge Reservation goes, “Being Indian is […] [h]aving your teenage child
come home from school and ask you about ‘the strange beliefs’ of Indians that her/his teacher mentioned in school today” (317).

Colonized Viewing

Like South Asian Indian Raka Shome, who “learned Indian history from the *Oxford History of India* written by Western authors,” I did not question the “Western modes of historiography […] , for so normalized was this colonialist curriculum” (114). Such learning and silent acceptance in school can translate to one’s interactions with (and lack of resistance to) television programming. With such a weak educational foundation for understanding Indigenous-White relations, not to mention Indigenous-Indigenous relations, I did not question the representations of “Indians” I saw on television. Why would I have? Rather than interrogate and resist the norm, I accepted the normalized images of what was on American television as entertainment.

This acceptance forms part of what I call *colonized viewing*, which requires a viewer to do very little: watch the programming, not question what is said or not said, not situate the representations of redface within their larger contexts, and not try to interpret or to formulate a way of reading the televisual content that can move the self towards decolonizing the mind. It is closely related to “dysconscious racism,” which, Pewewardy explains, “unconsciously accepts dominant white norms and privileges” (“Educators” 257). Colonized viewers can hear Floyd’s (*The Andy Griffith Show*) and other White male sitcom characters’ versions of American colonization, as normally written by White male scriptwriters, without considering Indigenous interpretations of colonization. Colonized viewers can see Granny shoot at “Indians” in rerun form in *The Beverly Hillbillies* “The Indians are Coming” without interrogating the implications of this action by a White female character, who repeatedly demeans Indigenes in the series. For
instance, in “The Family Tree” (1963), Granny recounts a story of when two “redskins tried to
snatch” her great-great-grandmother’s hair for no reason other than that she had “beautiful hair.”
One must not separate a single violent scene of shooting at “Indians” or a single story of
attempted scalping from its place within the master narrative.

The habits of colonized viewing, like the educational curriculum of colonialism, can start
at a very young age. For Indigenous youth, colonized viewing can contribute to negative self-
images and unhealthy mindsets. Speaking on how demeaning, disrespectful media stereotypes of
Natives affect young Indigenes, Cayuga actor Gary Farmer says, “Consider the impression left
when they see themselves portrayed this way time and time again. It’s hard for them to have a
positive image of themselves.” Non-Indigenes enact colonized viewing, too. Beverly Daniels
Tatum describes a disturbing collision between education and media colonialism. When one of
Tatum’s students asked a group of predominantly White pre-school children to draw portraits of
an “Indian,” “[a]lmost every picture included […] feathers,” Tatum explains. Numerous
drawings depicted violent “Indians” with weapons. As for their inspiration for these images,
children cited animation, especially “the Disney movie Peter Pan, […] as their number-one
source of information.” Images of “Indians” from a fictional movie were invoked for images of
“Indians” in a classroom.

DECOLONIZED VIEWING

It would be many years before I realized that the majority of fictional film and television
representations of Indigenous Peoples contributed to the ongoing process of cultural
colonization. As a colonized viewer, I suffered from what Porter calls “colonization amnesia,”
which “occurs when Indians have little or no knowledge of how their lives have been shaped by
the colonists” (90). Growing up, I obviously did not hear of terms like colonial discourse and
master narrative. Moreover, I did not realize that the cultural work of these expressions of dominance was carried out in, among other sites, television fiction like sitcoms. Instead, I learned the content that was within these terms. As Ngugi Wa Thiong’o observes, “[T]he colonial child was made to see the world and where he stands in it as seen and defined by or reflected in the culture of the language of imposition” (17).

My exposure to the master narrative, in particular, began at a very early age through education and television. I grew up watching and reading accounts of “Indians” as seen primarily through the eyes of White upper-class males. If it were not for these primary storytellers of the master narrative, textbooks and Hollywood would have almost totally excluded Indigenes. According to Paul Chaat-Smith, “The Master Narrative [...] is like an infinitely elastic spider web that [sic] grows] stronger with every change of pattern and wider after each assault. Subversion appears impossible” (“The Big Movie”). Yet television viewers of color “often have to read against the grain,” S. Elizabeth Bird explains, “and review representations through a lens that places ethnic identity in the forefront” (“Tales” 105). Recognizing that television audiences see images and hear dialogues related explicitly to Native Peoples and Native identities, I ask how viewers—Indigenous and non-Indigenous—can approach sitcoms’ representations of redface in decolonizing ways and attempt to subvert the power of a form of media colonialism found within the master narrative of colonization.

What is Decolonized Viewing?

I situate decolonized viewing within larger discourses of decolonization. Yellow Bird and Wilson define *decolonization* as “the intelligent, calculated, and active resistance to the forces of colonialism that perpetuate the subjugation and/or exploitation of our minds, bodies, and lands, and it is engaged for the ultimate purpose of overturning the colonial structure and realizing
Indigenous liberation” (5). Decolonization, or what Haunani-Kay Trask calls “a collective resistance to colonialism” (251), seeks to address what colonization has done and continues to do to Indigenes. As a media-focused area of decolonization that responds to media colonialism, decolonized viewing is an intellectually active, non-colonizing approach for Native and non-Native audiences to apply to their watching and subsequent interpretations of American sitcoms. Decolonized viewing, a way of reading television through an Indigenous lens, is a process of respectful intervention into audiences’ rational sense-making practices of television.

In line with poststructuralist textual analysis, which allows for a variety of plausible polysemic readings, decolonized viewing is not the only way to read sitcoms. Post-structuralists believe there is a “variety of different ways of making sense of texts, of making sense of the world” (McKee Textual Analysis 69). It does not mean, however, that overtly random readings are adequate. Poststructuralists contend that arbitrary, non-culturally-informed readings are not acceptable due to the limitations of sense-making in cultures.

Decolonized viewing is particularly informed by Yellow Bird’s antidotes to colonialism: “intelligent resistance, development of a counterconsciousness and discourse and […] critical interrogation of American colonial ideology” (43). All three of these decolonization strategies are closely interrelated in confronting media colonialism. Although a goal of many Indigenous philosophies is interdependence, or an equal sharing of space, non-Native mainstream media has dominated through its far-reaching control in influencing audiences in the millions. Because, for instance, most non-Native-constructed representations of redface in sitcoms demean Indigenes, the representations negate spaces of respectful coexistence.

At the heart of decolonized viewing, “intelligent resistance” provides a means for audiences to speak out against these representations in sitcoms. Like Stuart Hall’s “oppositional
code,” decolonized viewing is an “alternative framework of reference” through which viewers can read Indigenous representations without accepting the status quo of the encoded messages of colonization (“Encoding/Decoding” 517). For bell hooks, marginality, as experienced by Peoples of Color, can function as a site of resistance, which “offers the possibility of radical perspectives from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds” (“Talking Back” 341). In conversation with what hooks calls the “oppositional gaze,” I extend her focus on black women viewers to Indigenous audiences: “Critical black female spectatorship emerges as a site of resistance only when individual black women actively resist the imposition of dominant ways of knowing and looking” (Black Looks 128). The antithesis of resistance would be to internalize media colonialism, an act of accepting and embodying colonized viewing, which does not facilitate critical Native spectators’ challenges to sitcoms. To follow hooks’ words of encouragement, resistance is mandatory. James Riding In, a Pawnee who sees, too, possibilities of alternative views through work carried out in the process of decolonization, believes that Indigenous Peoples must utilize their cultural epistemologies “to liberate our minds, bodies, and spirits from the residual effects of colonization” (6).

Informed by the ongoing work of Indigenous scholars in decolonization studies and academics in cultural and television studies, decolonized viewing works towards the formulation of what Yellow Bird calls a “counterconsciousness and discourse” to the dominant readings of mainstream televisual representations of Indigenes. These subversive readings, as Mimi White argues, highlight a “marginal voice [that] exposes the contradictions of the dominant context within which it emerges” (192). When Indigenous viewers, in particular, do not readily accept what they see on the screen and begin to scrutinize the American colonialism of post-Columbian history, they start to form a critical counterconsciousness to mainstream television.
Decolonized viewing also highlights what is not said and not shown in television. As Diana Rose explains, “[W]hat is left out is as important as what is present” (246). In fact, how can we watch representations of redface in sitcoms without considering what they say or leave unsaid about Indigenous Peoples in relation to whiteness, racism, gender, class, sexuality, and/or cultural appropriation within the majority of the texts? One must interrogate these and other aspects to uncover the “American colonial ideology” to which Yellow Bird refers because sitcoms, like other texts, do not magically appear without being informed by outside sources (43).

To adequately analyze sitcoms, a decolonized viewer engages in intellectual work beyond, though still related to, television by considering the non-sitcom contexts, or what Hall calls the “terrain of past articulations” (“Encoding/Decoding” 34). Alan McKee encourages those engaged in textual analysis to study the “wider ‘semiosphere’ (the ‘world of meaning’) [...] to get some sense of how these [sitcom] texts might fit into the wider context” (“A Beginner’s Guide” 149). What Hall and McKee advocate, therefore, is an examination of television texts and their cultural surroundings.

How Does Decolonized Viewing Work?

Critical ideological interrogations are required from viewers for comprehension. “If we don't frame the issues,” Wilma Mankiller reminds Indigenes, “someone else will frame the issues for us” (qtd. in “Tribal Leader”). A decolonizing process for reading sitcoms, therefore, occurs through a critical analysis of the dominant narrative about “Indians” in sitcoms. The ways in which we begin to decolonize our viewing is to interrogate, and then to respond to our interrogations of, textual elements in sitcoms like dialogues, images, storylines, characters, misinformation, and unspoken messages concerning Indigenous Peoples. Decolonized viewers
should work towards analyzing those elements, along with the sitcom episodes’ semiospheres, to
determine their interrelationships and to see the larger ramifications of media colonialism.

To answer the how of decolonized viewing, viewers could do well to ask, What causes
certain themes (e.g., “last of the tribe”), occasions (e.g., Thanksgiving), and settings (e.g.,
“Indian” casinos) to be used? How do Native and non-Native characters interact? If no Natives
are present, then how do non-Natives discuss “Indians”? How are Indigenous characters depicted
in speech, dress, and behavior? What roles do they play? What are the implications of the
representations? If we look, more specifically, at the common theme of non-Native characters
playing “Indian,” a response to how decolonized viewing works is formulated initially through
posing questions to such episodes. Why do the characters play “Indian”? Have the reasons
evolved over time? If “yes,” then what has contributed to the changes? What happens during the
enactments of redface? What are the implications of the process? Does “playing Indian” in
sitcoms intersect with real-world examples of playing “Indian” (e.g., “Indian” clubs)? What does
the recurring act of “playing Indian” in sitcoms suggest about the formation of American
identities?

Through decolonized viewing, one should not look only for thorough “Indian”
representations but should also listen for the seemingly casual one-liners. One cannot write one-
liners off as just brief, non-damaging comments. These fleeting remarks, especially those based
on stereotypes, gel into a larger collective discourse of media colonialism. If not interrogated and
resisted, they contribute to the normalization of viewers’ ways of thinking in correlation to the
construction and maintenance of the status quo. “Interrogating stereotypes,” Stuart Hall argues,
“destroys their naturalness and normality” (Representation and the Media). Accepting or not
speaking up in response to stereotypes allows their naturalness and normality to continue without disruption.

In its premier episode on CBS on March 13, 2006, *The New Adventures of Old Christine* wastes little time in providing a misinformed one-liner about very serious issues pertaining to Native identities. In the second scene, Christine explains to her son how he was accepted into his new private school. If anyone at school asks, she says, he should lie and say that he is “1/16th Native American.” Christine’s statement suggests that claiming “Native American” blood or ancestry is acceptable for educational gain and that ethnic fraud is a joke, not an important issue. Many individuals in academia today, students and instructors included, falsely claim Indigenous ancestry and blood in paperwork and applications to receive economic and educational advancements.27

After hearing Christine’s misinformed mentioning of Indigenous “benefits” and the promotion of ethnic fraud, audiences can erroneously assume that being just “1/16th Native American” will generally provide excellent opportunities in a very competitive world. Sovereign Indigenous nations do not follow an all-encompassing rule for membership criteria. Almost every single nation determines its respective factors for enrollment.28 The writers of *The New Adventures of Old Christine* rely on a pan-Indigenous generalization to communicate what could be dominantly interpreted as just a joke. But for individuals who have personally been affected by tribal enrollment issues, it can be a damaging “joke.”

Applying Decolonized Viewing to *The Flintstones*

For an extended example of how one engages in colonized viewing and decolonized viewing of a sitcom, I turn to *The Flintstones* (1960-1966), the first animated sitcom broadcasted in primetime.29 In “Droop-Along Flintstone” (1961), Fred and Wilma Flintstone and their next-
door neighbors Barney and Betty Rubble visit Fred’s cousin Tumbleweed’s ranch in the southwestern U.S. while Tumbleweed is away on business. When Fred and Barney venture away from the ranch and stumble upon a ghost town, they are unaware that a film crew is there to shoot a Western with cowboy and “Indian” actors (the latter of which were found, the director says, at an “all-night movie theater”). Fred and Barney mistakenly believe that they are seeing real cowboys and “Indians.” After emerging from a brawl with the cowboys, Fred and Barney are chased by arrow-wielding “Indians.”

Inside the ranch, Betty hears what “sounds like some kids playing cowboys and Indians” and is curious if “it could be real Indians.” “Not a chance,” Wilma responds. “There hasn’t been a real Indian around here for years.” However, when Wilma sees the “Indians” chasing their husbands, she announces, “We have to try and help them. After all, we signed up for better or worse.” “And this,” Betty adds, “is about as worse as it could get.” While looking for their husbands, the two fear that Fred could be scalped.

WILMA. Poor Fred. He was starting to worry about his hair falling out. Imagine how he feels now.

BETTY. Yeah, knowing that those Indians could make him instant bald.

Later, finding Fred and Barney tied to stakes and guarded by dancing “Indians,” Wilma and Betty attack. In a moment of playing “Indian,” Betty chases one “Indian” with a tomahawk while shouting and clapping hand-to-mouth. Another “Indian” tells Wilma that “we were only kidding” right before she knocks him down with a rock. The Flintstones and Rubbles never learn that the “Indians” are actors. All the while, the director and his cameraman have been filming the events from a distance for their Western.
When I first watched “Droop-Along Flintstone” years ago, I accepted its content and dominant messages without question. I enacted colonized viewing by accepting as legitimate what has become ingrained in American imaginations: scenes of the savior cowboys against the savage “Indians.” “Cowboys and Indians,” Yellow Bird declares, “are this nation’s most passionate, embedded form of hate talk” (42). The episode depicts “Indians” who scream incoherently, try to scalp innocent people, dance around tied-up captives, and cowardly run away when two angry women attack. Viewers are presented with what appears to be mostly a colonial and “natural” progression of events. The representations of “Indians” in the episode are built on what Hall calls “inferential racism,” or “racist premises” that constitute “a set of unquestioned assumptions” (“Encoding/Decoding” 13).

What has transpired for me since my early interaction with this episode is a transformative shift in how I view it. My passive colonized watching then has been replaced with active decolonized viewing now. While the episode’s content has not changed, except for slight editing due to time constraints and commercials, viewers can change in how they approach and interpret it by becoming critically aware of the episode’s implications of anti-“Indianness.”

The Flintstones translates the less comical and more violent Western genre into an animated sitcom. In “Droop-Along Flintstone,” viewers are encouraged to identify with the main White characters Fred and Barney. The writers give no reason for anyone, Indigenous or non-Indigenous, to want to identify with the “Indians,” who are depicted first as inauthentic and tribeless when the director of the film says, “Got some Indians. I got them at a movie theater.” The Western genre of television and film from the 1930s-early 1970s led the onslaught of depicting us (cowboys) versus them (“Indians”), and pushed viewers, non-Native and Native, to identify almost exclusively with the heroic White cowboys. Yellow Bird relates a personal
account of identifying with on-screen cowboys: “As young boys we watched the loser Indians in many westerns and, like many of our other young colonized Indian brothers who grew up on other reservations communities, we cheered for the cowboys whenever they kicked our people’s butts” (40). Joellen Shively reveals that identification to be a common tendency by Native viewers in her 1991 sociological study. Yellow Bird also saw the identification with cowboys off-screen: “[M]ost of the men in my small reservation community made an everyday affair of wearing some vestige of cowboy apparel” (40).

For Paul Chaat Smith (Comanche), movies have “told the entire planet how we live, look, scream, and kill” (“Land”). Television sitcoms like The Flintstones have contributed to all of those ideas as well. The Natives in The Flintstones are irrationally violent as they scream, shoot a steady stream of arrows, and attack Fred and Barney without reason (other than that the director told them to). In their exchange of dialogue on supporting their husbands “for better or worse,” Betty and Wilma demote the “Indians” to ultra-savages. To see “Indians” chase wannabe cowboys Fred and Barney is, Betty says, “about as worse as it could get.” The writers of “Droop-Along Flintstone” allow time, too, for Betty’s allusion to “Indians” as scalpers: “those Indians could make him instant bald.” Betty’s comments rely on audiences already regarding “Indians” as savage killers. However, some historical accounts say that the French introduced scalping to certain “Indian” tribes and that Andrew Jackson and other White Americans collected bounty for scalping the bloody skins of Indigenous Peoples, from where the racist moniker “redskins” may originate.

The common theme of “Indians” as a vanished race also enters “Droop-Along Flintstone.” Wilma is in disbelief that real “Indians” are outside of the ranch. Later, when cousin Tumbleweed returns to the ranch, he hears from the Flintstones and Rubbles what he calls “all
that crazy talk about wild Indians.” He adds, “There ain’t been an Indian around here for fifty years.” Yet the ranch is located in the southwestern U.S., where the largest population of Indigenous Peoples resides. Although *The Flintstones* is set in a pre-historic (or Pleistocene) time, it is of the 1960s with rock-like references (e.g., “Hollyrock” for “Hollywood”) and rock-constructed objects (e.g., cars). Moreover, the starring characters are obviously White. Indigenous Peoples have been on the land now known dominantly as the U.S. for thousands of years, yet televised content like that in *The Flintstones* places static “Indians” in the past. As the Flintstones and Rubbles leave the ranch behind at the conclusion of the episode, they do not leave behind the stereotypes of “Indians” as wild savages and murderous scalpers. Whereas a colonized viewer could leave the myths in tow, the important work of combating media colonialism is left up to decolonized viewers.

**What are the Advantages of Decolonized Viewing?**

“Negative ‘Indian’ stereotypes,” Sierra Adare (Cherokee) insists, “do physical, mental, emotional, and financial harm to First Nations individuals” (2). For Indigenes, decolonized viewing can be involved in the healing process to alleviate the damage caused by degrading televiusal representations. To break free from a colonized viewing mindset, Indigenes must do what thinkers like Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi, Vine Deloria, Jr. (Standing Rock Sioux), and Ngugi Wa Thiong have told readers to do for decades: decolonize their minds. Decolonization, “a process of discovering the truth in a world created out of lies” (280), starts, as Taiaiake Alfred says, with the self, “the primary and absolute manifestation of injustice” (164). As Winona Wheeler (Cree) stresses, “Decolonization requires auto-criticism, self-reflection, and a rejection of victimage” (212). In agreement with Alfred and Wheeler, decolonized viewing facilitates a way for Indigenous audiences to approach television in a healthy, self-empowering way.
Unlike approaches to television that dismiss sitcoms as escapist, fantasy, and mindless drivel, decolonized viewing provides a means for audiences to recognize and to critically (re-)evaluate, (re-)read, and (re-)interpret the representations of redface in sitcoms. Contributing to a reframing of sitcoms for critical interpretations, decolonized viewing opens up space for necessary resistance and interrogation. Furthermore, it involves holding the image-makers accountable for their (mis)perceptions and (mis)representations of Native Peoples.

Through the pedagogical process of decolonized viewing, viewers can learn a way to intelligently discuss representations of redface. As a teaching tool to be utilized by educators, students, writers, parents, and anyone else who is concerned about the welfare of those who watch television, decolonized viewing moves audiences closer to developing and articulating an informed counterdiscourse of response to the colonizing rhetoric on television today. One goal to be accomplished through the work of decolonized viewing is to reinvent televised colonialist language into a decolonizing media discourse for interpreting American television’s and Hollywood’s on-screen subjugation of and off-screen damage to Indigenous Peoples. Because the media, as Rennard Strickland (Osage) states, “shapes both the general cultural view of the Indian as well as Indian self-image,” Native Peoples especially should be armed with this knowledge to resist and fight against misinformed dominant interpretations that tell the world who they are (17).

I should reiterate that I am calling for informed viewings and interpretations and a process of healing from the insulting representations. I am not calling for censorship of previous scenes or episodes in sitcoms, including those with stereotypical representations of Indigenes. “Censoring a stereotype,” Michael Pisani explains, “[…] does not make it disappear” (332). These texts, despite their potential to offend, are a part of Americana and popular culture, but
their inclusion in these categories does not excuse any of their racist depictions and stereotypical portrayals. “[P]utting a frame around [a stereotype],” Pisani adds, “consciously acknowledging its borders, and addressing its history at least helps us to understand why such stereotypes exist in the first place, and perhaps even to recognize, when we next encounter them, their effects on us and on society as a whole” (332). By applying this decolonizing approach to stereotypical representations, viewers become more knowledgeable in how to handle contemporary and future representations. Furthermore, decolonized viewing may give hope, a key element of decolonization, to audiences for seeing respectable, humanizing programming on television in the future.

Each area of colonization, including the media’s roles in that process, must be acknowledged and addressed if Indigenous Peoples are to continue to work towards a fuller picture of what has been done to Indigenes and what Indigenes need to do in response. By speaking back in decolonizing ways to sitcoms and other forms of media colonialism, Indigenous Peoples and non-Native allies can work specifically towards decolonizing the American situation comedy’s “Indian” and, more importantly, decolonizing their minds.
CHAPTER II.
“I WANNA BE AN INDIAN!”\textsuperscript{33}: SITUATING THE SITCOM’S “INDIAN” IN HISTORICAL REDFACE REENACTMENTS

“From the colonial period to the present, the Indian has skulked in and out of the most important stories various Americans have told about themselves.” Philip Deloria, 5, 1998.

This chapter analyzes the act of playing “Indian” in fictional sitcom episodes that contain metaphorical or explicit reenactments of non-fictional American historical events, namely the Battle of Little Big Horn, the first Thanksgiving, the Boston Tea Party, and the settlement of small-town America. While the “Indian” almost always is invisible in sitcoms, she or he does appear suddenly at opportune moments in storylines relating to American history. Where Custer, Pilgrims, colonialists, and settlers are discussed in sitcoms, “Indians” are generally nearby, awaiting the director’s cue to attack, to befriend, to be noble, or to be passively marginalized.

In the typical cases of Indigenous invisibility, as represented in the episodes under analysis here, the Natives are imagined and replaced by recurring non-Native characters that play “Indian.” By taking on “Indian” personae, non-Indigenous characters speak about, for, and like “Indians” in misleading ways. Thus, these characters become the ones that play the “Indian” who, as Philip Deloria observes, “has skulked in and out of the most important stories” (Playing 5). Moreover, they traverse borders of “Indianness” to enact and subsequently to abandon redface. As versions of several of these narratives, the redface reenactments of American history in sitcoms exemplify what Vine Deloria calls “comfortable fictions” (“Comfortable”). They inform viewers far less about Indigenous Peoples and their roles in American historical events than about how non-Natives perceive, make sense of, and co-exist with “Indians” without inflicting violence upon them.
CUSTERIZATION

Playing “Indian” in these reenactments is related to David Seals’ 1991 term Custerism and Renato Rosaldo’s 1989 concept imperialist nostalgia. Seals, author of the 1990 novel Powwow Highway, coined “Custerism” to refer to the cinematic stereotyping of “Indians” as the “celluloid residuals of Manifest Destiny” (“New Custerism”).34 More broadly speaking, Custerism includes Hollywood representations of and the process of constructing representations of “Indians.” Rosaldo’s use of the term “imperialist nostalgia” facilitates a way to understand how these representations are viewed nostalgically by contemporary non-Native television and cinematic audiences. According to Rosaldo, imperialist nostalgia occurs when predominantly White populations yearn or feel guilt for the non-White cultures they have helped to destroy or transform. In a historical White-“Indian” framework, White nostalgia is a critical component in desiring to imagine and to play “Indian.”

In conjunction with Custerism and imperialist nostalgia, I employ the term Custerization to indicate a history-based performative process in which one desires to be “Indian” temporarily. Redface reenactors’ nostalgic yearning is partly remedied through playing “Indian” and through reenacting American history that involves Whites and “Indians.” Re-creation play presents a process of its players’ attempts to escape from real-life guilt by misleadingly “experiencing” former (imagined) times between White settlers and Indigenous Peoples. As a concept that incorporates arguably the most “Indian”-associated, readily recognized name of a White historical figure (General George Armstrong Custer), Custerization is the playing and enacting of what is enveloped within Custerism: representations of “Indianness.”

Situated within the performative colonial process of Custerization, “Indians” become known in specific episodes of The Brady Bunch, The Suite Life of Zack and Cody, and The Andy
Griffith Show only through past events recreated, retold, and reenacted fictionally by non-Natives. For “Indian” characters to exist in these sitcom storylines, Whites must be present and dominant. There is Custer and his “Indians,” Pilgrims and their “Indians,” and White settlers and their “Indian” friend. The following discussion attempts to situate and to comprehend the motives driving these pseudo-“Indian” fictional reenactments.

LITTLE BIG HORN AS METAPHOR

In The Brady Bunch “The Slumber Caper” (1970), Marcia Brady, the oldest daughter, prepares to have a slumber party. The Brady family of Mike and Carol and their children Greg, Marcia, Peter, Jan, Bobby, and Cindy and housekeeper Alice does not try to reenact the June 1876 Battle of Little Big Horn in Montana, in which Custer and his men of the Seventh U.S. Cavalry were killed by an alliance of Indigenous nations. Rather, they make explicit references to Custer and “Indians” and metaphorically reenact the battle in their home.

Marcia’s parents plan to go out for the evening and leave Alice in charge of the “fort,” as Mr. Brady says, if she is willing. “Oh, I don’t mind holding down the fort,” Alice replies. “Just bear in mind those were the last words of General Custer.” Sensing that trouble will occur in a houseful of children, Alice aligns herself with the defeated General Custer and the Cavalry. To play Custer encourages her to be strong and courageous yet aware that defeat and destruction may be imminent. Mr. Brady recognizes Alice’s new pseudo-identity and prepares to jokingly “tell General Custer to take her boots and saber out of mothballs.” Alice reassures him that she can oversee the slumber party. “Remember, you have left the cavalry in charge.”

Alice’s self-alignment with Custer implies that she, a White female, associates herself with a White male. Rather than try to make parallel references to Crazy Horse, who fought the Seventh Cavalry, Alice relies on standard racist rhetoric from White heroes who “protected”
American homelands from “Indian” attacks. For the scriptwriters of “The Slumber Caper” to associate Alice with Custer may sound like innocent fun; but to speak of Custer, one must include “Indians.” As Roberta Pearson observes, Custer’s “chief claim to fame is killing and being killed by Native Americans” (87). Custer’s acts of “killing” are far lesser known than his death at Little Big Horn. In the Washita Massacre, for a major example, Custer and his men murdered hundreds of Cheyenne women, men, and children on November 27, 1868.

In *The Brady Bunch*, the “Indians” are compared to children in a process of marginalization. Because the Brady boys eagerly plan to sabotage the party, they are positioned in the episode as the “Indians.” Differing from the explicit “Indian” play in the other episodes analyzed in this chapter, the Brady boys play “Indian” on a metaphorical level. Reminiscent of nineteenth-century White American mindsets that feared “Indian” attacks at any given moment, *Brady Bunch* writers equate three boys and their juvenile behavior with “Indians” who fought for their homelands and survival.

The girls camp in sleeping bags in the living room, which serves as a symbolic locale of a central area of the Little Big Horn battlefield. When the girls listen to a ghost story in their camp, Bobby howls like a wolf from the kitchen, suggestive of an “Indian” hiding before an attack. Later, a lit-up toy skull in the refrigerator frightens Alice. Then she and the girls see a fake spider in a sleeping bag. Possibly associating the multiple “Indian” tribes at Little Big Horn with the three antics by the three Brady boys, Alice remarks in cliché fashion, “It looks like there’s more than one tribe on the warpath.”

The boys’ sabotage concludes once the girls start itching profusely because of the itching powder that the boys planted in the sleeping bags. Upon Alice’s command, the young ladies sprint upstairs, hence fleeing the battlefield, to wash it off. While Custer was in charge of the
Seventh Cavalry, Alice extends her duties to oversee not only the girls (read: innocent White Americans) but also the boys (read: wild “Indians”). As Custer and the cavalry rolled into one, Alice is to protect the girls from the boys’ savage attacks. But she, like Custer at Little Big Horn, fails.

In the epilogue on the following day, Mr. Brady notices another prank. Alice hands a box of cookies to Mr. Brady, who finds a fake spider inside, perhaps the same one from the sleeping bag. “The party’s over,” Alice comments, “but the melody lingers on.” Similarly, the Battle of Little Big Horn ended long ago, but its impact surfaces today. As evident in rerun versions of “The Slumber Caper,” Custer’s (and hence, America’s) defeat by Indigenes in June 1876 linger on in American imaginations.

NON-INDIGENOUS HOSTS AND INDIGENOUS VISITORS

In *The Brady Bunch*, as in other sitcoms, the memories of “Indian”-Euro-American historical relations are those belonging to non-Indigenous perspectives. *Brady Bunch* “Un-Underground Movie,” which premiered one week after “The Slumber Caper,” is no exception. For his history class project, Greg, the oldest Brady kid, directs and films a reenactment in the Brady backyard of Pilgrims’ early days at Plymouth Rock and first Thanksgiving with Indigenes. With his parents, siblings, and housekeeper, Greg assembles a large cast for his dual-titled film “Our Pilgrim Fathers,” or “Through Hardship to Freedom.” However, he soon experiences difficulties with his aspiring actors and actresses when he tries to cast his entire family in certain Pilgrim roles.

While the females quarrel over who should be the leading lady, Peter and Bobby demand to play “Indians,” not Pilgrims. When Greg informs his brothers that they will be two Pilgrims—John Alden and Miles Standish—Bobby exclaims, “I wanna be an Indian!” Bobby’s
words are ambiguous. He and Peter want to play the “Indian” parts in theatrical terms, yet they also want to participate in the long-standing fantasy play of redface. In fact, Bobby and Peter are already in costume. Their dress of imitation buckskin and feathers lends transparency to being easily recognized as “Indians.” As Philip Deloria notes, to don “Indian” clothing is “always a crucial element in Indian play” (*Playing* 175). In the same scene, Peter and Bobby run around a fence prop, clap hand-to-mouth, and yell in stereotypical “Indian” fashion as Hollywood “Indian” music plays in the background. Peter then shoots an imaginary bow at Bobby, who moans and falls to the ground. Here, “Indian” signifies nonsensical chasing that culminates in death. Soon, they resume running around and howling like one-dimensional wild savages.

What is curiously obvious is that Greg has no initial plans to cast “Indian” parts in a reenactment of the first few months of Pilgrims being in America. In line, though, with many other Plymouth Rock storylines in sitcoms, Greg later casts Peter and Bobby as “Indians.” As Greg sets the scene, he asks his “Indians” if they know their parts.

PETER. We attack the fort.

BOBBY. Yeah, attack the fort.

GREG. No, you’re friendly Indians. You come in peace.

Peter and Bobby insist that they should attack before becoming friends with the Pilgrims. When their mother Carol says that Greg does not want them to be violent, Bobby, with a confused look, asks, “Then what do you need Indians need for?” In conjunction with their earlier scene of playing “Indian,” Peter and Bobby associate “Indians” with violence.

Mr. Brady, as he often does throughout the *Brady Bunch* in these moments of conflict, steps in as the authority figure to educate and to dispel, to an extent, Peter and Bobby’s misconceptions.
MR. BRADY. The Indians were friendly at first. They didn’t start fighting until their land was taken away.

BOBBY (bewildered). You mean the Pilgrims took away all of the Indians’ land?

MR. BRADY. That’s right. Uh, well, at first, they didn’t take much of it.

PETER (eagerly). Then how about not much of an attack?

GREG. There’s no attack!

This nod to multicultural education raises enlightening points yet leaves much alone and unclear. Mr. Brady’s words of wisdom point towards a pro-“Indian” stance without taking an active anti-colonization view. While Mr. Brady initially portrays the “Indians” as “friendly,” he also generalizes about all “Indians” as if they are a homogenous group. Next, he justifies why “Indians” began to attack. Yet he also defends Pilgrims who “didn’t take much of” the land, which suggests that if the Pilgrims occupied only small portions of the land, then it is acceptable. Not surprisingly, Mr. Brady’s shaky and stumbling explanation leads to Peter’s deduction to perform “not much of an attack.”

Once Greg’s filming resumes, the two non-violent “Indians” walk up to the Pilgrims. “Me Samoset!” shouts Peter. “Me Squanto!” adds Bobby. Dressed as a male Pilgrim, Alice, upon Greg’s direction, fears them initially and then says, “They’re friendly Indians.” The other women temporarily join the “Indian” play as they greet the “Indians” with “How.” Carol as a female Pilgrim speaks to the “Indians” in a tone typically reserved for patting babies and petting puppies. “Oh, friendly Indians. Aren’t they nice Indians?” Even with her sons as the “Indians,” she does not speak to them as children, as Alice did in her associating the Brady boys with “Indians” in “The Slumber Caper.”
Towards the end of “Un-Underground Movie,” Greg screens the finished film for his family. As narrator, Greg talks in the film of Pilgrims stepping onto Plymouth Rock. After humorously showing harsh conditions and dying Pilgrims during the first winter, Greg announces that spring and “Indians” arrived (suggesting that “Indians” blossom in the spring after a long bear-like hibernation?). The “friendly Indians” speak some English and are invited by the Pilgrims to eat. Although it is spring, one can assume that Greg is referencing the first Thanksgiving. The only contribution the “Indians” make in the film is to eat some of the Pilgrims’ bountiful food. No mention is made of Squanto’s assistance in the Pilgrims’ survival, nor do the “Indians” bring any food to the gathering.

The two “Indians” are depicted as visitors on their own land, and Pilgrims are hosts despite their recent arrival. Similar scenes with “Indians” and Pilgrims have played out in other sitcoms. In *Happy Days* “The First Thanksgiving” (1978), Pilgrims welcome “Indians” to their (the Pilgrims’) gathering on Indigenous land. In *The Beverly Hillbillies* “Turkey Day” (1963), high-society Mrs. Drysdale hires two “Indians” (i.e., non-Native actors in redface) to pose for an authentic Thanksgiving picture at her mansion. In *Home Improvement* “My Dinner with Wilson” (1994), Indigenous foods stand in for Indigenous Peoples as the White next-door neighbor Wilson hosts a Thanksgiving dinner replete with Algonquian foods and “Indian” corn.

After the feast in “Un-Underground Movie,” Captain Jones, portrayed by Mike Brady, arrives to Plymouth Rock to take the Pilgrims back to England. Despite Jones’ reminders of horrific storms and violent “Indians” (he pretends, like Bobby earlier, to be hit by an arrow and stumbles), the Pilgrims, according to the narrator Greg, are now determined not to leave but to build a new country. (In the year before this *Brady Bunch* episode, Vine Deloria joked that some Indigenes “believe it would have been better if Plymouth Rock had landed on the Pilgrims than
the Pilgrims on Plymouth Rock” (*Custer* 177)). The last shot in “Our Pilgrim Fathers” is of Pilgrims dancing happily under sunny skies. No “Indians” are present, which can be interpreted as a stark foreshadowing of Euro-Americans’ attempts to obliterate Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous cultures. Apparently, the unpleasantness and violence that accompanied the subsequent colonization by Euro-Americans did not make the final cut in Greg’s movie.

**BOSTON TEA PARTY’S REVOLUTIONARY “INDIANS”**

In the epilogue of “Un-Underground Movie,” Greg plans his next film in accordance with what his history class will study next, that is, the American Revolution. He envisions his home’s front porch as the setting for the Boston Harbor where the Boston Tea Party occurred. Although Greg did not film the Boston Tea Party in a future episode of the *Brady Bunch*, this event becomes central in Disney’s *The Suite Life of Zack and Cody* “Boston Tea Party” (2006).

Set in Boston at a hotel, *The Suite Life* targets young Disney viewers as it follows the adventures of twin teenage White brothers Zack, the carefree troublemaker, and Cody, the studious dreamer. In “Boston Tea Party,” Boston city hall plans to transform Liberty Park, one of the boys’ hangouts, into a paved lot. Cody writes a lengthy letter of protest in which some of the key words, he announces, are “boldfaced” for emphasis. Zack, growing tired and, as he calls it, “boredfaced,” inattentively listens to his brother and falls fast asleep. The episode then goes into a dream sequence of flashing back to what I label a *redfaced* reenactment of the Boston Tea Party.

Set in 1773, the year of the Tea Party and three years before the official founding of the United States of America, the dream depicts the non-Native cast engaging in talk of revolting against England’s high taxes on imported tea and of forming their own country. That same year, a group of American colonists in Boston dressed as Mohawk “Indians” to disguise themselves
while throwing English tea overboard. Like the real colonists in Boston, the characters’ plan is to
dress as “Indians” and dump the latest shipment of English tea into the Boston Harbor. In the
next scene, several characters are seated on Liberty Park’s lawn and constructing their “Indian”
headdresses. “During our raid on the tea ship,” one character explains, “these Indian headdresses
will disguise us so the British won’t know who we are.”

For colonists to have played “Indian” at the real Boston Tea Party and in *The Suite Life*’s
reenactment functions as far more than mere disguise. To be pseudo-“Indians” enabled colonists
to take on characteristics they linked with “Indianness.” For one, the colonists associated
“Indians” with courage. To be dressed as “Indians,” Cody adds, “will show [the British] we can
fight!” *The Suite Life* plays on the Euro-American rationale of believing that all “Indians” are
warriors who will go to any length to protect themselves and their homelands.

To associate “Indians” with violence occurs again in the next scene. Dressed in their
exotic “Indian” regalia of feathers and beaded necklaces and belts with multicolored paint on
their faces, the non-Native characters enter the hotel and celebrate their off-screen dumping of
the tea. Another character, who did not play “Indian,” sees them and yells, “Indians!” After the
pseudo-“Indians” duck in fear, she screams, “Indian attack!” One of the “Indian” players proudly
responds, “We’re not Indians; we’re revolutionaries!” As a signifier of revolutionary and
uninhibited freedom, “Indian” denotes who is not British. Attracted to what they perceive as
Indigenous characteristics of exoticness, freedom, courage, and violence, the “Indian” players in
*The Suite Life*, like the historical American colonists, looked to become different from the
character.” It functions, he adds, as “a catalytic moment, the first drumbeat in the long cadence
of rebellion through which Americans redefined themselves as something other than British
colonists” (Playing 2). The Tea Party portrays a pictorial semblance for colonists to assume an authentic American identity.

To play, not be, “Indian” enabled the White revolutionaries to move away from being British and towards original Americanness in the form of “Indians,” America’s original inhabitants. Thus, White revolutionaries in Boston engaged in playing “Indian” to serve their purposes without claiming permanent “Indian” identities. In the process, they perpetuated the notion of “noble savagery,” which Deloria denotes as “a term that both juxtaposes and conflates an urge to idealize and desire Indians and a need to despise and dispossess them” (Playing 4).

The Suite Life characters ethnomasquerade as “Indians” one moment, fear an “Indian” attack the next, and then proudly proclaim to be non-“Indian” revolutionaries.

Awaking from his dream, Zack is inspired to save the park, a symbol of his joy in America. This time, he does not resort to “Indian” disguise. Instead, he checks the park’s historical significance of a huge tree in the park and learns of its ties to the Revolutionary War. While waiting for a permit from a local historical preservation society, Zack and other characters stage a protest on the same lawn where the “Indian” headdresses were constructed. The encouragement and revelation from Zack’s dream of “Indian” players reaches fruition as a permit is issued and the park is saved from the awaiting demolition crew.

“Boston Tea Party” never mentions that most of its cast, like Boston colonists in 1773, dressed as “Mohawks.” Instead, it refers to generic, tribeless “Indians.” In the epilogue, the female character who yelled “Indians!” in Zack’s dream enters the hotel lobby with her hair styled into what she calls a “Fauxhawk,” or a fake Mohawk hairdo. Now, she, too, joins the “Indian” play, but in a more subtle manner. Nevertheless, I strongly suspect that the scriptwriters were aware of the ambiguity here as they temporarily transformed numerous characters into faux
Mohawk “Indians.” Still, *The Suite Life of Zack and Cody* was unwittingly offensive with its representations of redface.

**(UN)SETTLING SMALL-TOWN AMERICA**

The 1773 Boston Tea Party was a site for colonists to distance themselves from British identities and to forge an American self. The settlement of small-town America during the next two centuries continued the process of constructing America at the expense of Indigenous Peoples and their ways of life. As increasing numbers of White settlers encroached and took possession of the lands, Native Peoples were forced further away to smaller, remote spaces.

In two episodes of *The Andy Griffith Show*, the settlement of the fictional Mayberry, North Carolina, representative of small-town America, receives attention. Mayberry symbolizes a place of peace and tranquility. In fact, visitors are greeted with the sign “Welcome to Mayberry, the Friendly Town.” When criminals occasionally disrupt the serene setting, audiences can expect Sheriff Andy Taylor and Deputy Barney Fife to restore the peaceful order. In “Crime-free Mayberry” (1961), for example, they arrest crooks that pose as FBI agents honoring Mayberry for, ironically, having the lowest crime rate in the country. Many critics of *The Andy Griffith Show* consider Mayberry to be a near-utopian site of innocence where everyone coexists happily. According to Richard Kelly, “[Mayberry] represents a kind of lost paradise founded on the best hopes of people” (qtd. in Ted Reuter). Mayberry, Don Rodney Vaughn observes, “[offers] an avenue of escape from life’s vicissitudes by depicting the simple life with small, solvable problems” (398).

That avenue often finds form on Main Street, where Mayberrians gather to talk, shop, relax, and eat. Floyd and Goober sit in front of the barbershop. Aunt Bee and Clara window shop in front of Weaver’s Department Store. Jud and Chester play checkers on the porch of the
Mayberry Hotel. Andy and Barney relax on a bench outside of the courthouse, or they enjoy the Businessman’s Special at the Bluebird Diner. Discussion of the settlement of Mayberry in *The Andy Griffith Show* follows the same fictional path of peaceful relations.

*The Andy Griffith Show* “The Beauty Contest” (1961) briefly reenacts the settlement of Mayberry in a play, one of the scheduled events for Mayberry Founders Day. Local barber Floyd Lawson plays the part of founder Jacques Mayberry. Other Mayberrians portray Jacques’ unnamed Euro-American companions. As Mayberry, Floyd speaks of a “savage wilderness” that they have traversed. He then proclaims to his fellow travelers on stage, “This is our land.” At first, he mistakenly calls it “Jacques” before saying, “Mayberry.” With this instantaneous declaration of possession, settlement has begun on land that is new and strange to the White settlers but likely deep-rooted and familiar to any local Indigenous inhabitants. Upon the instruction of the play’s director, Mayberry and his followers then rejoice.

In “The Beauty Contest,” Jacques Mayberry declares himself the owner and namesake of land without any explicit acknowledgement or presence of “Indians.” Whether anyone else already occupied or occupies the land is, one can surmise, a trivial detail in the colonizing discourse in this episode. It makes for a comfortable colonial fiction, one that distances viewers from hearing about the thousands of Cherokees in North Carolina who had been forced by the U. S. government to go to Indian Territory, or present-day Oklahoma, in the 1830s and 1840s.\(^{37}\)

Evidently, the spoken pleasantries in “The Beauty Contest” outweigh the unspoken unpleasantness of colonization.

Three years later, in *The Andy Griffith Show* “The Pageant” (1964), Mayberrians prepare for a pageant to celebrate the town’s centennial. They re-envision the founding of Mayberry, this time with the inclusion of one local “Indian.” At rehearsal, Andy plays European settler James
Merriweather in a coonskin hat. A local, unnamed Mayberrian portrays his wife Mary, whose only concern in establishing a settlement is “Indians.”

MARY. But will the Indians let us live in peace?

JAMES. Here comes the Great Chief. Let us see.

MARY. Oh, James, I fear him. He looks so warlike in his paint and feathers.

JAMES. Now, Mary, we must not show him fear. We must have strength if we are to conquer the wilderness.

James’ use of “conquer” is ambiguous. As Jacques Mayberry, Floyd talked of a “savage wilderness,” which may imply a wilderness of “Indian” savages, and then claimed the land. Similarly, on one hand, James speaks of “the wilderness” as perhaps a place to occupy and dominate. Or does James associate “conquer” with the synonyms “overthrow” and “vanquish”? I contend that it is all of those terms. Since the “wilderness” is where the Indigenous Peoples live, then to conquer the land must also mean to conquer the Indigenous inhabitants. His words foreshadow ensuing conflicts between White settlers and Native Peoples, but the rest of “The Pageant” speaks mostly of peaceful relations.

James now addresses the “Indian,” both of whom sit “Indian”-style on stage in front of a cardboard teepee. “Greetings to you, Great Chief.” Barney Fife, the bumbling and often egotistical Mayberry deputy, reads for the role of the headdress-wearing Chief Noogatuck. Engaged in playing “Indian,” Barney nervously stumbles and rushes through his lines. First, he greets James with a quick “How,” the bogus pan-“Indian” term for hello. After James talks of wanting “to live side by side with you, our brothers,” Noogatuck, in a high-pitched voice, responds, “For many moons, Noogatuck has swapped the peace pipe with you, my friend. But
now many paleface come and they bring guns. Noogatuck’s valley grows smaller.” Noogatuck’s use of what Barbra Meek labels “Hollywood Injun English” (HIE) is typical speech for “Indian” characters in American sitcoms.40 With a vocabulary comprising “many moons” and “paleface,” Noogatuck speaks directly to the language expectations of who Robert Berkhofer calls the “White man’s Indian.”

Merriweather tries to convince Noogatuck of his intentions.

JAMES. My followers come only in friendship. They bring gifts. They help you plant corn. Our women give calico to your squaws [sic]. Is all this not true, Noogatuck?

NOOGATUCK: Everything that Laughing Face says is true, but treaties say he will not use the land beyond the running stream where the big oak reaches to the sky. Look! Even now you’ve built your lodges. Pale face is not a man of his word.

Barney asks the director John Masters to change this last line because “it just isn’t comfortable. I mean, it’s just not Noogatuck.” John concurs that the line is “not Indianish enough.” Dwayne, the playwright, revises it to “pale face speaks with a fork-ed tongue.” “Oh, marvelous!” exclaims John. Barney speaks the new line and smugly flashes the okay sign in approval. A question here is for whom the first line is not authentically “Indian” and the second line is comfortably “Indianish enough.” The answer extends beyond the White actor, White director, and White playwright to The Andy Griffith Show’s White producers’ beliefs about what recognizably signifies “Indian” to the audiences. Meek’s words in her study of HIE in films, television, and greeting cards are applicable to “The Pageant”: the “representations of Native American speech are based on [White] authors’ imagined realities, reflective of ideological assumptions, and not on everyday interaction [between Natives and non-Natives]” (Meek 120).
The rehearsal resumes with James and Noogatuck concluding their dialogue.

JAMES. Noogatuck, you have my pledge. We will move back across the running water where the big oak reaches to the sky and we will live in peace.

NOOGATUCK. We will live in peace. And this will be called Happy Valley.

Earlier, according to Noogatuck, James had lied before to the “Great Chief.” Here, James promptly convinces Noogatuck that peace will reign through a spoken treaty-like pledge.

To validate this agreement of peace, Clara Edwards, Aunt Bee’s best friend, enters the stage as Lady Mayberry, the leading (White) female role. She appears to represent a regal power over both the White settlers and Indigenes. In a soliloquy, Lady Mayberry closes the pageant thus: “I herewith deed these lands jointly to James Merriweather and Chief Noogatuck, knowing that they will rule wisely and that they will share the bounty of this green and happy valley which shall hereinafter be called Mayberry.” Jacques Mayberry from “The Beauty Contest,” who is never mentioned in “The Pageant,” bestowed his surname to the area, too. In both episodes, the colonizer’s name of Mayberry reigns and thus serves as an audible reminder of colonization. (Noogatuck’s English, not Indigenous, title of “Happy Valley” lasted for only a few minutes.)

Unlike Jacques, Lady Mayberry explicitly mentions and recognizes her Indigenous neighbors. She speaks of what Gloria Anzaldúa would call borderlands, “where people of different races occupy the same territory.” Lady Mayberry, though, offers the ultimate colonial fiction by situating the “Indians” and the settlers together in a peaceful interdependent borderland. As Rayna Green has argued, redface reenactors “reconstruct the Indian presence in an acceptable version” for themselves (48).

Countless Native and American historians tell a much different story of Indigenous-White relations in North Carolina in the nineteenth century. Lady Mayberry’s fiction is, indeed,
comfortable for scriptwriters who write of peaceful relations in an area that was home to real-life “Indian” removal, or what Lynda Dixon (Cherokee) calls “federally enforced death [marches]” (144). Kelly’s earlier view of Mayberry as a “lost paradise” that, if coupled with Vaughn’s perspective, is an “escape from life’s vicissitudes” are neocolonial fictions. Written from White vantage points of privilege, Kelly and Vaughn do not consider who was displaced or killed in their Mayberry. Even The Andy Griffith Show reveals that peace did not endure. How else can one explain Barney’s comment in “Aunt Bee’s Medicine Man” (1963) that he “ain’t never known an ‘Indian’”? Perhaps more telling is the episode “The Battle of Mayberry” (1966) in which Tom Strongbow appears as Mayberry’s lone “Indian,” a Cherokee. Is he a descendant of Noogatuck, Mayberry’s only previously mentioned “Indian”?

Regardless, Noogatuck’s inclusion in “The Pageant” justifies settlement for Merriweather and other Euro-Americans. If one “Indian” approves, then contemporary generations of Whites can reflect nostalgically on the settlement without feelings of guilt for earlier attempts by Whites to remove and to exterminate Indigenes. “[A] mood of nostalgia,” Rosaldo states, “makes racial domination appear innocent and pure” (107). As evident in the epilogue, Barney’s desire to play “Indian” is among the most nostalgic. Barney is outraged when he spots another White male with his headdress. “I wanna know,” he tells John, “what he’s doing wearing my headdress.” The director has seemingly cast someone else to be Noogatuck because, I assume, Barney did not appear and sound stoic and deep-pitched like imagined “Indians” do. Barney yells to the new “Indian” player, “That’s my headdress!” He then pleads with John to give him another chance. “Now, I know I can do this part. I mean, I feel Noogatuck. Noogatuck is me!” Barney exits the scene by chasing after the man with the headdress, and the episode concludes by suggesting a continuation of one “Indian” player after another. Whoever goes on to play Noogatuck is not
disclosed, but viewers can rest assured that Noogatuck will be known in Mayberry only through fictitious redface reenactments.

CONCLUSION

An interweaving of the sitcom reenactments in this chapter forms an American metanarrative bound through Custerization. Sweeping through major moments in American history, the metaphorical Little Big Horn in the *Brady Bunch*, Pilgrim-“Indian” relations in the *Brady Bunch*, the Boston Tea Party in *The Suite Life*, and the settlement of Mayberry in *The Andy Griffith Show* are representative of imperialist nostalgia and comfortable colonial fictions. In accordance with Rosaldo’s argument, these sitcom episodes’ “relatively benign [nostalgic] character […] facilitates imperialist nostalgia’s capacity to transform the responsible colonial agent into an innocent bystander” (108). *The Andy Griffith Show*, for example, portrays James Merriweather and Lady Mayberry as innocent settlers who jointly claim the lands with the Indigenes, and the sitcom never explains why contemporary Mayberry has an incredibly low Native population.

Such episodes freeze-frame redfaced “Indians,” who stand in for real Indigenes, in former times without acknowledgment of contemporary Indigenes. With storylines dependent on American history, these episodes contribute to long-standing discourses that position Indigenes, including fictional ones like Noogatuck, only in the past. “Indian characters,” as Meek observes, “have a voice only when they are either from the past, remembering the past, or situated in the past” (120). Although some of the episodes in the next two chapters will acknowledge or include contemporary Indigenes, the majority of the representations of redface continue to form through the process of Custerization from colonial imaginings, perceptions, and stereotypes of “Indians.” As Navajo filmmaker Arlene Bowman explains, “[T]he average American cannot accept Native
Americans’ present realities and always look at Indians in the past; I am not putting the past
down but we are for real and living today” (10).

After “Indian” players appear momentarily, they discard the redface and return to their
present selves in a contemporary sitcom landscape without Indigenes. This return to Whiteness is
the case in *Brady Bunch* “Un-underground Movie,” where all of the actors and actresses watch
Greg’s movie about Pilgrims and “Indians.” In *The Suite Life* “Boston Tea Party,” Zack saves the
park after awaking from his dream with “Indian” players. In *The Andy Griffith Show* “The
Pageant,” Barney begs for his “Indian” part and runs after the new Noogatuck. The staged
redface fantasies in Greg’s school movie project, Zack’s dream, and Mayberry’s town pageant
speak to the popular, long accepted understandings of White-“Indian” relations. If these
contemporary interpretations of historical events say more about contemporary non-Native
understandings of history than about the events, then historical reenactments in American
sitcoms reveal more of scriptwriters’ understandings of history and assumptions about what
predominantly White audiences think of Indigenous and Euro-American interactions in
American history.
CHAPTER III.

TRICKSTERS IN REDFACE: PLAYING “INDIAN” FOR FAME AND FORTUNE

 “[N]on-Indians who reinvent American Indian traditions for their own use are committing cultural imperialism.” Carter Jones Meyer and Diana Royer, xiv, 2001.

This chapter analyzes sitcom episodes in which non-Native sitcom characters deceitfully play “Indian” to obtain ill-gotten fame or fortune. The main episodes under analysis are I Love Lucy “Indian Show” (1953), The Beverly Hillbillies “The Clampetts in Washington” (1970), “Jed Buys the Capitol” (1970), and “The Indians are Coming” (1967), and Family Guy “The Son Also Draws” (1999). As tricksters in redface, the non-Native characters play “Indian” either to star in a nightclub “Indian” act, to con a White oil millionaire out of his money, to acquire rich Native business clients through a false showing of racial solidarity, or to become a member of a wealthy casino-owning tribe and to share in the profits.

Collectively, the function of these masqueraders is to associate “Indianness” with treachery and greed. Playing “Indian” for fame and fortune implies that non-Natives think they can profit through conforming to and performing the expectations of what constitutes the White man’s “Indian.” Such profit is similar to what Carter Jones Meyer and Diana Royer call “commercialization,” or “the exploitation or appropriation of native cultures by non-Indians either for monetary profit or for some other form of personal and/or cultural gain” (xi). By reconstructing and enacting signifiers for “Indian,” non-Native characters exhibit an outward pro-“Indian” stance through what sitcom writers may claim is “entertainment.” Yet the representations of redface in these episodes, as the following analyses will explain, implement an underlying anti-“Indian” attitude.
“PASS THAT PEACE PIPE, BURY THAT TOMAHAWK”

Set in New York City, *I Love Lucy* (1951-1957) followed the (mis)adventures of housewife Lucy and her husband and nightclub performer/owner Ricky Ricardo and their neighbors and landlords Fred and Ethel Mertz. Each episode typically focused on one of Lucy’s madcap ideas, including the recurring theme of Lucy’s do-anything attempts to break into show business. When Ricky develops ideas for an evening of nightclub performances about “Indians” in “The Indian Show” (1953), Lucy is determined again to be in the show, even if it means playing “Indian.” To understand how Ricky, Lucy, Fred, and Ethel decide to play “Indian,” I turn first to Ricky’s basis for constructing what being “Indian” means.

The first two scenes in the episode open with a few notes of stereotypically Hollywood “Indian” music. Ricky sits on the living room sofa with his eyes bulging as he reads a copy of *Blood-curdling Indian Tales*. After Fred enters during the second scene, Ricky breaks away from his entrancement. “[A]ll those Indians you used to have in this country,” he says to Fred, “the stories about them will really make your blood [curdle].” When Fred asks why he is reading about Natives, Ricky explains, “Lucy wants me to study up American history so I’ll be a good father for the boy,” referring to his infant son Little Ricky. Ricky’s approach to American history is flawed on several accounts. For one, he focuses on the history, or the past (“Indians you used to have”), without acknowledging any contemporary Indigenes, including the Haudenosaunee, or Iroquois Confederacy, in New York. While his attention is admittedly on *history*, Ricky still employs the common trope of Indigenes as a vanished race.

Second, what constitutes “American history” for Ricky? In the 1950s, non-Native readers still relied largely on White male historians’ biased historical works based on what White male historical figures recorded previously about Natives. During the production of *I Love Lucy,*
Ricky would have had slim choices for valid historical texts that include the perspectives of Native Peoples. Serving as a perpetuator of the master narrative, *Blood-curdling Indian Tales* appeared to tell White settlers’ interpretations of real and imagined interactions between Whites and “Indians.”

For Ricky, his source for history serves as a valid historical account of Native-White relations. The book is related to the countless and often sensationalized selections in the genre of Indian Captivity Narratives (ICNs). Dating back to Mary Rowlandson’s *A True History of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (1682), ICNs are non-Native captives’ accounts of their time among Indigenes. The writers, many of whom are female, typically constructed a picture of “Indians” as either heathens in need of Christianity, murderers of innocent white settlers, or sub-human obstacles of Westward expansion and the dominance of Euro-American worldviews (thus, justifying the extermination of Indigenes from “America”). With a common emphasis on veracity, ICN titles include *A Genuine and Correct Account of the Captivity, Sufferings and Deliverance of Mrs. Jemima Howe* (1792), *A True Narrative of the Sufferings of Mary Kinnan* (1795), and *An Authentic Narrative of the Seminole War; and of the Miraculous Escape of Mrs. Mary Godfrey, and Her Four Female Children* (1836). Although Ricky’s *Blood-curdling Indian Tales* includes the word “tales,” a synonym for “fabrication” and “fiction,” Ricky (and Lucy and Ethel, too, later in the episode) accepts the book’s content as truth.

Ricky’s reading serves as a catalyst for sparking what he calls his “wonderful idea” to produce an “Indian show” at his local club. The episode now shifts from thinking the idea to performing it. With the reading of just one book, Ricky is, in the brevity of sitcom storylines, sufficiently informed to move from imagining “Indians” to playing “Indian.” The redface first
appears after Ricky’s announcement to Fred about the “Indian” show. In the Ricardo living room, Fred auditions impromptu for Ricky. Wrapped in a tablecloth with the wires of a broom poking out behind his head to signify feathers, Fred says, “Me heap good Injun.” He then proceeds to “do-um a soft moccasin dance” while chanting “hiya-ya-ya.” Trying to suppress his laughter, Ricky explains to Fred that the Indigenes he hires for the show “gotta be real Indians.” According to Ricky, Fred does not look “like the Indian type.” Ricky’s observation erroneously indicates that only one “type” of “Indian” exists. Seemingly unaware of the several hundred sovereign Indigenous nations, Ricky lumps all “Indians” into one pan-“Indian” category.

After rejecting Fred for the time being (Fred does play “Indian” again in the nightclub act), Ricky arranges for two “Indians” to drop by his apartment to audition. When Ricky has to leave home suddenly, his real “Indians” show up and unintentionally frighten Lucy and Ethel in the next scene. Like Ricky earlier, Lucy now reads *Blood-curdling Indian Tales* amid the same Hollywood “Indian” music. Pulling her hair in fright at what she reads, presumably a tale of scalping, Lucy enacts for Ethel one of the tales’ scared White women being attacked by “Indians.” Reading dramatically from the book about what she calls “exciting times,” Lucy speaks the settler’s rhetoric.

Then the silhouettes of the Indians appeared on the horizon. The pioneer men pushed the women and children back into the wagons. [To Ethel] Imagine being alone out on the prairie, thousands of miles away from any help. Imagine that. [Resumes reading] The Indians crept closer and closer. Fire-tipped arrows pierced the canvas of the first wagon. Women fainted. Children screamed. The Indians were almost upon them. They could see their fiendish faces hideously painted, grotesque in the light of the leaping flames. There was a lull as the last groans of
the dying men faded. Suddenly, to the ears of the cowering women and children, out of the stillness of the night, broke the sound of an Indian war cry.

At that moment, the doorbell rings, causing Lucy and Ethel to shriek in terror.

Soon realizing the sound they heard was not a “war cry,” they regain composure. When Lucy opens the door to see Ricky’s two “Indians” in costume with toy tomahawks in hand, her fright returns. Lucy’s act of imagining one non-Native version of “being alone out on the prairie” dramatically heightens her horror. “Two wild Indians out there!” she screams. Continuing to translate the book’s fabrications into the far-fetched present moment, she slams the door closed, fears that “they’ll scalp us,” and frantically runs around. Once Ethel opens the door and sees the “Indians,” too, she hides with Lucy.

Like the “Indians” who “crept closer and closer” in Blood-Curdling Indian Tales, Ricky’s two “Indians” slowly enter the apartment. Their on-screen redface signifiers of paint, buckskin, and weapons are intended to pass them as “Indians” for viewers. After knocking the “Indians” unconscious with flower vases in screwball comedic fashion, Lucy and Ethel learn from Fred that they are actors for Ricky’s show.44 (If they were not actors, then would the fear of these “Indians” still be there?) “We just got carried away,” Lucy explains. Although Lucy and Ethel are the violent ones who scream and attack, their actions do not cause non-Native audiences to associate such actions with all Whites. The intention by I Love Lucy to entertain overshadows the anti-“Indian” implications of Lucy and Ethel’s fear of and attack on “Indians.” If, though, the “Indians” had attacked the White female characters, then they would have reinforced, as Blood-Curdling Indian Tales does with its violent imagery of “[f]ire-tipped arrows,” the trope of murderous savages.
When the “Indians” come to, Lucy attempts to assuage tension by temporarily playing “Indian” through her speech.

LUCY. Mr. Indian, me heap sorry me smackum on coco.

INDIAN. Huh?

LUCY. Oh, you speak English?

INDIAN (with a strong New Yorker accent). Soytantly, I speak English.

Lucy’s HIE facilitates an opportunity for Lucy to see the “Indians” less as one of them (“Indian” savages) and more as one of us (White, English-speaking dominant society). To remedy further her savage, unruly behavior, Lucy recognizes the two Indigenes as “real friendly Indians,” a stark contrast to the kind of “Indians” depicted in the book.45

Realizing the show has an “Indian” theme, Lucy continues her shifts from hating “Indians” to playing “Indian” in hopes of obtaining the spotlight at Ricky’s nightclub. “Hey,” Lucy announces, “I played Hiawatha in a school pageant once.” She refers to the fictional “Indian” from Henry Wordsworth Longfellow’s 1855 epic poem “The Song of Hiawatha,” not the real Iroquois leader. This poem rang familiar with many White American viewers in the 1950s who had read of and memorized lines about the famous Hiawatha in their early schooldays. Lucy first attempts to recite her lines there in the Ricardo living room. Later, during rehearsals at Ricky’s club, Lucy continues her portrayal of Hiawatha after she hears that her husband is looking for an additional act.

By the shores of Gitche Gumee,

By the shining big seawater,

Stood the wigwam of Nokomis,

Daughter of the Moon, Nokomis.
Bright before it beat the water,
Beat the clear and sunny water,
Beat the shining Big-Sea-Water.

As usual, Ricky rejects Lucy’s effort to be in the show. And as usual, Lucy refuses to give up.

She attempts to capture nightclub fame through deceit during the show’s premiere the following afternoon. Unknown to her husband, Lucy has replaced the original performer Juanita, who was to sing a duet with Ricky of the 1914 “By the Waters of Minnetonka: An Indian Love Song.” In “Indian” playing costume, Ricky introduces it as “our version of one of the most beautiful [non-Native-authored] Indian numbers ever written.” The music begins and Ricky sings the part of the male “Indian” Sun Deer. Expecting next to hear Juanita’s impressive singing voice as he did at the rehearsal, Ricky instead hears Lucy bellow off-key, screeching noise for the female “Indian” Moon Deer. The spotlight hits the red-headed Lucy, who is in redface disguise of buckskin, a long, dark wig, and a single feather attached to a headband. Like the recently retired “Chief Illiniwek” mascot of the University of Illinois, Lucy stands stoically with one arm folded on top of the other. The rendition continues, but Ricky, dressed in his “all-Indian” clothing, clearly recognizes Lucy by appearance and voice. After failing to stop her from singing, Ricky asks, “Who’s taking care of the baby?” In line with “Indian” play, Lucy spins around to reveal Little Ricky in a papoose on her back.

Ricky’s reading of *Blood-curdling Indian Tales* lead him to imagine “Indians.” Now, he wears what is intended to be, for an uninformed audience, “all-Indian” clothing, which signals a shift from Ricky’s *thinking* “Indian” to *playing* “Indian.” Or as Philip Deloria explains about playing “Indian” in general, “The donning of Indian clothes moved ideas from brains to bodies, from the realm of abstraction to the physical world of concrete experience” (*Playing* 184). Upon
Ricky’s nightclub leader guidance, Fred and Ethel join Ricky, too, in redface in their rendition of “Pass that Peace Pipe.” Nominated for an Academy Award in 1947 in the movie *Good News*, “Pass that Peace Pipe” advises listeners, as the *I Love Lucy* trio sings, to follow wise advice by an “Indian” medicine man.

RICKY. A medicine man I met.

FRED. Said ‘don’t get yourself in a sweat’

RICKY AND FRED. When things go wrong, just shrug and say.

ETHEL. ‘It musta been somethin’ I e’t!’

ALL TOGETHER. If your temper’s getting a top hand,

all you gotta do is just stop and

pass that peace pipe and bury that tomahawk

like the Choctaws, Chickasaws, Chattahoochees, Chippewas do

RICKY. If you’re feeling mad as a wet hen,

mad as you can possibly get, then

FRED. Pass that peace pipe, bury that tomahawk

ETHEL. Like those Choctaws, Cherokees, and Chippewas do.

The advice is offered through non-Native imaginings of what different Indigenous nations do in tense moments. Ricky and the Mertzes sing and dance in costume and wave their tomahawks. The men casually wear headdresses, which often are reserved for ceremonies and worn by certain leaders within particular Indigenous nations. Ethel wears what are likely supposed to be two eagle feathers on her headband. The audience can quickly recognize the signs of clothes and toys as “Indian,” but headdresses and eagle feathers are revered by many Indigenes as
ceremonial items, not toys for the stage. The ignorant live studio audience gives an ovation, signaling enthusiastic approval of the redface performance.

**CHIEF LOTSA LOOT AND PRINCESS SITTING HAWK**

Popular receptions for redface continues in *The Beverly Hillbillies* “The Clampetts in Washington” (1970) and “Jed Buys the Capitol” (1970). These consecutive episodes involve very similar storylines. Oil millionaire Jed Clampett and his kin Granny, Elly May, and Jethro are in Washington D.C. to donate $1 million to President Nixon to fight smog. When Shifty Shafer aka Honest John, a friend to the Clampetts, hears this news, he and his wife Flo scheme to intercept the money from the Clampetts. A skeptical Flo repeatedly asks how they will pull off their ploy. Honest John mockingly says, “How. How. How. You sound like an Indian.” The repetitive usage of the most popular word in HIE sets into motion a plan for redface trickery as Honest John announces to his wife, “You’re gonna be a Indian.” With her face covered in reddish brown paint and dressed in faux buffalo hide, a headband with three colorful plastic feathers, and beaded jewelry, Flo transforms into who Honest John identifies as the 150-year-old “Princess Sitting Hawk, last of the Columbia Indians.” The name and title are obvious plays on Sitting Bull (“Sitting Hawk’s cousin,” Honest John says) and a play on the vanishing trope popularized in literature through James Fennimore Cooper’s 1826 novel *Last of the Mohicans*.

Honest John meets with Jed and Granny and says that the President needs Jed’s help. Sitting Hawk, Honest John continues, owns the White House and will not share it any longer. Jed, ready to do what he can financially for his country, plans to purchase the White House from Sitting Hawk and give it to the President. They gather in front of Sitting Hawk’s bogus teepee near the White House lawn. As part of his scheme, Honest John appoints himself as translator for Sitting Hawk’s bogus “Indian” rhetoric. The ensuing dialogue and vocabulary of “Indian” talk
and English translation string together recognizable “Indian”-sounding words into absurd sentences. Both Honest John and Flo engage in playing “Indian” through speaking fictional District of Columbia “Indian” talk.

HONEST JOHN. Chattanooga.

SITTING HAWK. Choo-choo.

HONEST JOHN (gestures towards Jed). Paleface Cayuga.

JED. What’d you say?

HONEST JOHN. I told her you were very friendly.

JED. Good.

SITTING HAWK. Paleface Sequoia.

HONEST JOHN. She says you’re tall. She likes that.

The Clampetts readily accept Sitting Hawk’s talk as legitimately “Indian.”

In fact, Jed soon learns to speak in District of Columbia “Indian.” After Sitting Hawk refers to Jed as a cross between Lincoln and Roosevelt (“Paleface Tippecanoe Shoshone, too”), Jed replies, “That’s right Cayuga of her.” Learning that Jed is a farmer, Sitting Hawk says, “Tallahassee,” the capital of Florida, or what Honest John translates as “pleased.” Granny, wanting Sitting Hawk to know she is a doctor, participates in the linguistic “Indian” play, too.

HONEST JOHN. Paleface squaw [sic] Zuni.

SITTING HAWK. Ahh! Zuni.

HONEST JOHN. She’s very impressed.

GRANNY. I didn’t get no Tallahassee out of her.

HONEST JOHN (under his breath). Tallahassee.

SITTING HAWK. Tallahassee.
GRANNY. That’s better.

With each exchange in this ridiculous “Indian” talk, Sitting Hawk and Honest John grow closer to swindling Jed out of a large sum of money.

Sitting Hawk then speaks “Indian” gibberish of a made-up chant from inside the teepee. Honest John says that she is communicating with the spirits. Granny, whose personal jug of moonshine makes frequent appearances in *The Beverly Hillbillies*, thinks of alcoholic spirits.

GRANNY. She oughta lay off. Sounds like she had enough.

HONEST JOHN. No, no. She’s contacting the spirits of her ancestors who have gone to the happy hunting ground, asking their advice.

In this brief exchange, Flo’s “Indian” play conjures up two stereotypes: associating “Indians” with drunkenness (from “firewater,” as Granny says later) and romanticized spirituality.

Eventually, Sitting Hawk emerges from the teepee with an animal fur that is intended to represent the “Waukegan,” or the deed to the White House. She has decided to sell it to Jed for “uno Allegheny,” or one million. Honest John tells Jed to make the check out to the name bestowed upon Sitting Hawk by General Custer: Courageous Adversary Sitting Hawk. Because of the title’s length, Jed uses the initials C-A-S-H, much to the delight of Honest John, who takes the check and explains that he will convert it to beads for Sitting Hawk.

Later that day, in the next episode “Jed Buys the Capitol,” Flo/Sitting Hawk begins to remove the paint in her and Honest John’s hotel room in an effort to distance herself from playing “Indian. But Honest John, the newly self-proclaimed “Chief Lotsa Loot,” wants another million for the U. S. Capitol and the Washington Monument. After she tries but fails to reason with Honest John that they have enough money from the Clampetts, he tells her, “Now get the paint back on. You’re Sitting Hawk, and they’re sitting ducks.” Flo relents and transforms once
again into Sitting Hawk. Her return to redface is marked by very similar dialogue with Jed and
Granny as is the case when Sitting Hawk and Honest John sell the Capitol to Jed for another one
million dollars. More absurd District of Columbia “Indian” talk of Tallahassee, Cayuga, and
Allegheny ensues.

As what happens, though, with his swindling efforts in “The Clampetts in New York”
(1969) and “Honesty is the Best Policy” (1970), Honest John cannot bring himself to cash the
check in “Jed Buys the Capitol.” When the Clampetts see Honest John and Flo/Sitting Hawk
together in a hotel room, Honest John confesses that they are a married couple. In response,
Granny refers to him as “a living saint” for “taking in a poor, old Indian woman.” “When you’re
the only man a 150-year-old Indian will trust,” Jed adds, “you are something special.” Jethro and
Elly May chime in with similar praise. After having kind words heaped upon him, Honest John
feels tremendous guilt for trying to cheat the trusting and sincere Clampetts. So, he shows
compassion, rips up the check, and leaves the Chief Lotsa Loot persona behind. Sitting Hawk,
who still was ready in redface to keep the money, is speechless.

BANK ACCOUNT “INDIANS” AND AN UNACCOUNTABLE BANKER

Another non-Native character who plays “Indian” for profit is Milburn Drysdale, the
White male president of the Commerce Bank of Beverly Hills. In The Beverly Hillbillies “The
Indians are Coming,” he hears from his secretary Jane Hathaway about a Crowfeet “Indian”
reservation that borders the oil-rich land in Tennessee owned by Jed Clampett, his largest
depositor. Before Miss Hathaway can finish what she is saying, Mr. Drysdale begins to speak
in HIE as he erroneously thinks the “Indians,” whom he assumes are all men, have struck oil.
“Send a message to my red brothers. Tell them Milburn Drysdale, their friend, speak with
straight tongue. Tell them send all black wampum to my bank. We put 'em in solid steel teepee, keep money safe for noble red brother.”

After learning that the “Indians” Chief Running Wolf and his son Little Fox are traveling to Beverly Hills to resolve a land boundary dispute with Jed, Mr. Drysdale immediately fears that these “Indians,” like the pseudo-“Indians” Chief Lotsa Loot and Sitting Hawk, will try to cheat Mr. Clampett out of his money and land. “Why those dirty thieving savages!” he yells. “[C]all up the cavalry. This uprising must be put down.” Miss Hathaway, who, incidentally, refers to Mr. Drysdale as “Chief” in a non-“Indian,” boss-like context throughout the series, tries to explain that Jed and the “Indians” will meet and settle the matter fairly; but Mr. Drysdale, in monotone HIE, violently demands that she bring the “Indians” to his bank “for powwow. Or you and me have powwow. I ‘pow’ and you ‘ow’!” Drysdale’s “Indian” play has begun through dialogue that shifts within a binary of love-hate extremes, like Lucy’s shifts in pro-“Indian” and anti-“Indian” outlooks in “The Indian Show,” in associating “noble red brothers” with wealth and associating “thieving savages” with violence.

While Miss Hathaway goes to the airport to pick up the “Indians,” Drysdale transforms into Chief True Tongue, his alter-“Indian” personae for one episode. As the antithesis of “forked tongue,” the moniker True Tongue is akin to the name Honest John. Both call attention to truth, but the characters behind the names involve themselves in playing “Indian” through trickery. Mr. Drysdale tries to welcome and to outsmart Chief Running Wolf and Little Fox by turning his executive office into an “Indian” playland, replete with gifts for the Indigenes. They soon arrive to see Mr. Drysdale/Chief True Tongue sitting “Indian” style and hitting a drum in full headdress, buckskin, and heavily coated red makeup.
CHIEF TRUE TONGUE. How.

CHIEF RUNNING WOLF (surprised). How.

LITTLE FOX (surprised). How.

CHIEF TRUE TONGUE. Red brothers wear White man’s clothes. Bad medicine. Want White man’s oil land. Very bad medicine. Oil smellem up Indian campground. Poison spring. Make Great Spirit very angry. Listen to counsel of True Tongue. Go home where the buffalo roam and deer and antelope play, where seldom is heard, a discouraging word, and the skies are not cloudy all day.

Chief Running Wolf and Little Fox watch in amazement at the redfaced spectacle before them.

In hopes of discouraging the Crowfeet “Indians” from taking Mr. Clampett’s land and money, Chief True Tongue offers gifts to them. He hands Little Fox a watch and calls it a “tick-tick.” He shows them how to start a fire with a “magic firestick,” or a match. Continuing to treat the Native characters like primitive, simpleminded fools, Chief True Tongue says that the match “beat’um flint, huh?” His other trinket for the “Indians” is a harmonica that will allow them, True Tongue romanticizes, “to make music sweeter than west wind in treetop.” Mr. Drysdale’s assumptions that Native Peoples in the 1960s are unfamiliar with watches, matches, and harmonicas can be read as indicative of the mainstream public’s ignorance of contemporary Indigenes. Yet the Native responses to Mr. Drysdale’s foolishness reveal additional ignorance of Indigenes, this time by the scriptwriters.

Chief Running Wolf and Little Fox play along, like subservient “Indians” do, with Mr. Drysdale’s pseudo-“Indian” antics. After Miss Hathaway announces to Mr. Drysdale that “Chief Running Wolf was a Rhodes scholar at Oxford, and Little Fox has his Ph. D. from Harvard,” the bank president is stunned. While viewers may find the representations of the Native characters to
be positive and uplifting, the implied message is that Mr. Drysdale cannot fool these “Indians” because of their schooling. If they were uneducated, then would Drysdale’s “Indian” play work? “It was a great performance, Mr. Drysdale,” Chief Running Wolf announces. “My people could take Indian lessons from you.” If “Indian lessons” instruct one how to act “Indian,” then the Native characters might use such lessons, too. In “The Indians are Coming,” they are far too busy playing assimilated “Indian” to notice how un-Indigenous they appear to be. Without trying to resort to an essentialist stance, I know of no traditional, culturally-rooted Indigenes who act like Chief Running Wolf and Little Fox. *The Beverly Hillbillies* has replaced the savages in buckskin with highly educated and assimilated “Indians” who show no signs of being familiar with real Indigenous Peoples. Chief Running Wolf and Little Fox speak very proper English, which is not to say that no real Native Peoples talk that way. Yet why can *The Beverly Hillbillies* not show a fully human, regular Indigenous character whose ethnicity is culturally rooted and influenced but is not constantly highlighted and belittled?

Miss Hathaway also informs Mr. Drysdale that Running Wolf owns several banks. Reverting to seeing the Natives again as thieving savages, Mr. Drysdale presumes that the wealthy “Indians” are after Jed’s money. Throughout *The Beverly Hillbillies*, Mr. Drysdale becomes highly irrational whenever he thinks the money is in jeopardy of leaving his bank. “You come near the Clampett place,” he tells the Natives, “and you’ll be shot down like dogs.” He takes Miss Hathaway’s car keys and drives to the Clampett mansion to see Jed before the “Indians” meet with him. Unknown to Mr. Drysdale, Jed meets with Chief Running Wolf at a hotel, where they reach a satisfactory, off-camera resolution.

Ironically, Mr. Drysdale is the one shot at when he shows up to the Clampett estate in his “Indian” costume. By not having removed the redface, he becomes a target for Granny, the
matriarch of the family, who believes the “Indians” plan to kill the Clampetts. She recounts horror stories that her grandmother told her of murderous, scalping savages. In her racist mindset, Granny believes all “Indians” must be the same; her logic is to kill or to be killed. When Granny sees someone (Mr. Drysdale) in an “Indian” headdress approaching the mansion in Miss Hathaway’s convertible, she shoots. Feathers from the headdress go flying. Not wanting to disappoint Granny, whose share of the Clampett fortune is in the millions in Mr. Drysdale’s bank, and her expectations of seeing “Indians” ready to attack, Mr. Drysdale explains to Granny that he is in disguise so that he can learn the “Indians’” scheme. He then hires local actors from a movie studio (that Jed Clampett owns) to stage an attack at the Clampett mansion.⁴⁸ Thus, Mr. Drysdale confirms Granny’s suspicions of “Indian” terror on the warpath. Overall, when in redface, Mr. Drysdale/Chief True Tongue tries to swindle the Crowfeet “Indians,” shows aggression towards the Crowfeet, and lies to Granny about the Crowfeet, all of which reveals an anti-“Indian” consciousness.

CHIEF GRAND CHEROKEE

An animated White male takes his turn at redface in Family Guy “The Son Also Draws.” The Griffin family—Peter, wife Lois, daughter Meg, son Chris, and cynical baby Stuey, travel to New York to speak with the Youth Scout head office about reinstating Chris into a Boy Scout-like group after being ousted by the local scoutmaster. Chris is more interested in drawing than the scout group, but he is scared to tell his father. When Peter needs to relieve himself on the way to New York, he exits off the main road into the parking lot of “Geronimo’s Palace, Native American Casino.” In amazement, Meg says, “Wow! An Indian casino!” Decorated with faux teepees, “Indian” mannequins, and flashing lights, the portrayal of the casino has familiar signifiers and stereotypes of “Indianness.” A couple of nametags on the casino workers read
“Change for a Buck” and “Deals with his Wrist,” a stereotypical play on English translations of Indigenous names.

While Peter rushes to the restroom, or what he calls the “stink lodge,” Lois plays video poker on a machine called “Gold Teepee” and eventually wagers and loses the family car. She defends her gambling to Peter by saying, “I feel so foolish. It just seemed like such a good cause. Everyone in the tribe gets a share of the casino profits.” In response, Peter decides to pretend to be “Indian.” He meets with Lenny, an Indigenous character with a dark ponytail, red headband, and bolo tie, and other “Indians” who operate the casino.

PETER. I’m a member of your tribe. And that entitles me to a share of your wampum, Kemosabe.

LENNY. Oh, wait a second, not so fast. Tell me of your history of your, uh, your past.

PETER. Oh, I come from a long line of, uh, uh, you people. My great grandfather was Jeep Grand Cherokee. Uh, I mean, Chief Grand Cherokee. He was a rainmaker.

The scene flashes back to a Peter look-a-like in “Indian” regalia, chanting, “Hey-ya hey-ya hey-ya hey-ya hey-ya hey, I’m so happy doing a new tribe dance.” The scene returns to the present as Peter checks to see if his bluff will work. “So, are you gonna give me back my car or what?” Lois is very skeptical that Peter’s tactic to retrieve the car will work. “No one is gonna believe you’re an Indian,” she privately tells him.

After meeting with whom he calls “the council of the elders,” Lenny informs Peter, “To prove you are truly a member of our tribe, you must go on a vision quest.” Asked by Lenny if he knows what that is, a clueless Peter retorts, “Why, of course, I do. I’m an Indian. But uh, why
don’t you explain it to my wife. She’s a little slow in the head.” Obliging Peter’s request, Lenny says that “a vision quest is a sacred, spiritual journey.” He continues,

Your husband must go out in the wilderness without food or water. [...] or shoes. He must remain there until he can communicate with nature. He must hear the wisdom of the rocks and trees. And then a guiding spirit must appear to him and reveal a great personal truth. And it’s gotta be a real vision. We’re Indians. We’re gonna know if he’s lying.

In comparison to non-Native Ricky Ricardo’s earlier insistence on using “real indians” in his “Indian” show, the Indigenous character Lenny is now the one speaking of authentic “Indianness.” Whereas Ricky directed the two “Indians” in his show, the “Indian” directs Peter in what to do, telling him to “begin his journey now.”

Chris sees a chance to talk to Peter alone about not wanting to be in the scouts.

CHRIS. Hey, Dad, can I come?

PETER. Hey, how about it, Lenny?

LENNY. Hey, what-the-hey. The more the merrier. Now get the hell out of here, you nut. Go have yourself a spiritual vision.

So, Chris now plays “Indian, too, but for father-son bonding, not for the family car and potentially additional profits that Peter seeks.

It appears that Lenny and the Native characters are now in control, but The Family Guy depicts them as culturally clueless. Like Ricky and Chief Running Wolf, Lenny does not know what he is talking about when discussing “Indian” topics. Lenny, whose knowledge of Indigenes is confined to stereotypes and misconceptions, plays a version of the White Man’s “Indian” in accordance with Peter’s expectations of what being “Indian” means. Six hours later, Lois
discovers Lenny and the Council’s ruse after she asks how long vision quests generally take to complete. “Huh?” Lenny replies. “Oh, you know, it varies; you know, it depends on the person’s age and height and sign.” Realizing that Lenny has no clue, Lois presses Lenny to explain why he lied. A frightened Lenny says, “Because, uh, we really like your car?”

Meanwhile, in the forest near the casino, Peter is starving. Possibly hallucinating from hunger, Peter converses with a tree.

TREE. Hot enough for ya?

PETER. Huh? What?

TREE. I say, ‘Hot enough for ya?’

PETER. Uh, yeah, I guess. Oh, my God, I’m communicating with nature.

After fulfilling this part of Lenny’s made-up vision quest instructions, Peter sees the Fonz from the popular American sitcom *Happy Days* (1974-1984). In a cloud-like formation above Peter, the Fonz says, “I’m your spiritual guide, see? And I wanna lay a little personal truth on ya.” After the Fonz tells Peter to listen to his son Chris, the father and son talk. “I don’t wanna be a Scout, Dad,” Chris announces. “I just don’t have fun there. I guess you’re pretty disappointed in me.” After learning next that Chris likes to draw, Peter is upset at first. Then remembering the Fonz’s advice, Peter says, “I probably don’t say this often enough, but, uh, I’m really proud of ya, Chris.” Thus, the “Indian” play has become the avenue through which a father and son have a heartfelt discussion about the son’s interests. Crediting the Fonz, Peter says, “[M]e and Chris have never been closer.” The “thanks,” however, belongs more deservedly to Peter’s playing “Indian.”
A White father and his son bond via a vision quest, too, in King of the Hill. In the episode “Vision Quest” (2003), Dale Gribble, an overly paranoid bug exterminator who supports every conspiracy theory imaginable, hallucinates, like Peter, after a long day of hiking without food and water. Dale, however, does not see the Fonz. Instead, Dale exclaims, “I see the buffalo! I see the Indian! I … am … the Indian.” The vision quest was supposed to be for Joseph Gribble, whose biological father is Native character John Redcorn. (Unlike the rest of the population in Arlen, Texas, where the show is set, Dale and Joseph do not know this truth.) Hank Hill, the starring White character on King of the Hill, greets Dale with skepticism akin to Lois’ disbelief in Peter’s plan to claim “Indianness.”

HANK. Okay, time-out, Sitting Jackass. Have you looked in the mirror lately?

You are the God-dang Whitest person I’ve ever seen.

DALE. I am the Albino Buffalo. Deal with it.

Eventually, Dale returns to normal, at least what is “normal” for him, and Joseph has a vision that is interpreted by Redcorn, whose involvement in Joseph’s vision quest brings him closer to his son.

Returning from his own vision quest in the forest to the casino in Family Guy, Peter is greeted by his wife.

LOIS. Are you okay?

PETER. Fantastic, Lois. I saw my guiding spirit.

LENNY. Whoa! Wait a second. You had a vision?

PETER. Oh, it was amazing. I spoke to the trees and I saw the Fonz.

Later, Lenny whines, “Aw, I want a spiritual vision, too! Man, I guess we’ve lost touch with our noble roots. I mean, sure, this casino’s brought our tribe money and prosperity; but what is the
price of our soul?” Another “Indian” answers, “Six million dollars a week.” Lenny confirms, “That sounds about right.” He gives the Griffins their “crappy car,” and he and other Indigenes go to the buffet. Presented as cultureless “Indians,” like Chief Running Wolf and Little Fox, who serve as objects of racist ridicule in “The Son Also Draws,” these casino “Indians” play into public myths and stereotypes about contemporary Natives who operate large casinos. Family Guy is part of what Renee Ann Cramer observed in 2006 as a “trend in television comedy of late […] to set skits in Indian casinos or make jokes about Indian gaming, with the goal of showing how un-Indian the proprietors of these establishments are” (330). Peter, Cramer adds, “successfully completed the vision quest and […] proved that even he was more indigenous than the so-called Indians running the casino” (331).

The episode concludes with Baby Stuey referring to the Indigenes as “[s]tupid, greedy savages.” “Stuey,” Lois retorts, “that’s a terrible thing to say. This one particular tribe has lost their way, but most Native Americans are proud, hard-working people who are true to their spiritual heritage. They are certainly not savages.” A rainbow appears above her as music reminiscent of NBC’s Public Service Announcements “The More You Know” plays. Family Guy appears to throw in Lois’s afterthought in anticipation of possible harsh criticism from viewers, especially Indigenous viewers. Regardless, this fifteen-second monologue does not eradicate or justify the stereotypical, totalizing, misinformed representations of “Indians” over the previous fifteen minutes of footage in “The Son Also Draws.”

CONCLUSION

Close readings of the episodes in this chapter reveal that all of the White characters who play “Indian” stand to benefit or seek personal gain through the process. Regarding real-life examples of playing “Indian” and ethnic fraud, Rayna Green writes, “[Non-Natives] may play
Indian for any putative benefit that may accrue as a result of their claim” (47). As evident in this chapter’s discussion, Green’s words can be applied to sitcom characters as well. In “The Indian Show,” for example, Lucy, Ricky, Ethel, and Fred entertain through “Indian” play and receive approval from the studio audience for their redface performances.

Except for Lucy briefly grabbing the spotlight, the other non-Native characters who play “Indian” for fame and fortune mostly do not achieve their intended outcomes. Honest John and Sitting Hawk do not cash Jed’s check, Mr. Drysdale does not acquire the bank accounts of the “Indians,” and Peter, despite retrieving the car, is not enrolled in the tribe. Despite the outcomes in the storylines, “Indian” play happens by relating Indigenous Peoples with ill-gotten fame and fortune. Through Sitting Hawk and the responses to her by the Clampetts, The Beverly Hillbillies exploits Indigenes without showing any respect and consideration for them. In “The Indians are Coming,” Mr. Drysdale tries to manipulate two Native characters by bogusly becoming one of them. Family Guy exploits a situation involving rich “Indians” and their “Indian” casino and reduces Indigenous identities to pettiness. The “humor,” then, in redface is performed at the expense of real-life Indigenous Peoples, and the expense continues to find form in sitcoms in the anti-“Indian” commercialization of Native cultures.
CHAPTER IV.
WHAT’S YOUR “INDIAN” NAME?:
NEWLY FOUND “INDIANS” AND TOMAHAWK CLUBS

“The colonizer's falsified stories have become universal truths to mainstream society, and have reduced Aboriginal culture to a caricature. This distorted reality is one of the most powerful shackles subjugating Aboriginal people.” Howard Adams, 1, 1995.

This chapter analyzes representations of redface as enacted through tribal adoption in The Brady Bunch “The Brady Braves” (1971), claiming Native heritage in Saved by the Bell “Running Zack” (1990), and participation in “Indian” clubs in My Wife and Kids “Michael’s Tribe” (2002). Each episode presents newly found “Indians” who share or receive knowledge about Native Peoples in the process of playing “Indian.” My analyses pay close attention to these mostly failed efforts to educate particular characters and television audiences about Indigenes. In “The Brady Braves” and “Running Zack,” guest-starring characters intended to be “Indian” chiefs help to transform non-Native characters into “Indians.” The two chiefs in The Brady Bunch (Chief Eagle Cloud) and Saved by the Bell (Chief Henry) serve in the American literary tradition of guiding White characters to Native pathways of life. Their appearance and assistance help to authenticate and justify the White characters’ transformations into one-episode “Indians.” Unlike in The Brady Bunch and Saved by the Bell, no Native characters are needed to play “Indian” in My Wife and Kids “Michael’s Tribe.” Indigenous characters Chief Eagle Cloud and Chief Henry are replaced with My Wife and Kids’ Chief Bald Eagle, portrayed by African American main character Michael Kyle. In “Michael’s Tribe,” a “tribe” of White and African American girls and their Chief Bald Eagle play “Indian” in the Indian Princesses group.
THAT’S THE WAY WE BECAME THE BRADY BRAVES

In *The Brady Bunch* “The Brady Braves” (1971), the Bradys, including Carol and Mike and their six children and housekeeper Alice, become the first sitcom family to be “adopted” into a Native “tribe.” Their transformation from the Brady family into the “Brady Braves,” as Bobby announces at the conclusion of the episode, is a centuries-old form of redface in which Whites play “Indian” by means of an adoption ceremony. War paint and feathers, common physical representations of redface, are not required. Instead, “The Brady Braves” plays on White fascination with and exoticization of White ideas of “Indianness.”

*The Brady Bunch* originally aired during a time that saw increasing numbers of people self-identifying as “American Indian.” The federal census reported a considerable upsurge from 523,591 in 1960 to 792,730 in 1970 to 1,418,195 in 1980 (Vine Deloria “Popularity” 230). Native Peoples also were making U.S. headlines in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The American Indian Movement began in Minneapolis in July 1968. In the San Francisco Bay, Indigenous Peoples occupied Alcatraz Island from 1969-1970 to reclaim the property under an 1868 treaty. Elsewhere in Indian Country, other Indigenous Peoples were fighting fervently for their lands. As Vine Deloria observed, “Public opinion was significantly tilted in favor of Indians at the beginning of the seventies. Alcatraz and succeeding activist events may have galvanized the Indian image and made it seem romantic, perhaps even mysteriously exciting, to claim to be an Indian” (“Popularity” 232). That romanticism and mystery largely account for the Bradys’ transformation from the Brady Family into the Brady Braves.

Escaping from their regular suburban America confines, the Bradys open their third season with a three-episode adventure (“Ghost Town, U.S.A.” (1971), “Grand Canyon or Bust” (1971), and “The Brady Braves”) to the Grand Canyon. When Mr. Brady says in the first
episode that the family will learn about the Havasupai, Hopi, Hualapai, and Navajo, Peter, the middle son, asks the origins of “such strange names.” Mr. Brady neglects to mention that “Navajo” may be a name given by the Tewa Pueblo to mean “thieves” or “takers of fields.” Furthermore, he does not mention that Navajos refer to themselves as Diné, which translates roughly to “The People.” Yet such commentary would be inconsistent with this romantic, seemingly pro-“Indian” talk of the sitcom’s “Indian.”

Triteness comes into play next as Peter interprets (or “Indianizes”) his younger brother Bobby’s name to mean “Little man with great big running mouth.” Later in season three, Bobby’s dissatisfaction with his height is the focus in The Brady Bunch “Big Little Man” (1972) an obvious play on the fictional film Little Big Man (1970) in which Dustin Hoffman’s White character is adopted by Cheyennes. For further Brady Bunch banality, Cindy, the youngest daughter, says, “I want to meet the Indians and see the cabooses.” Elder Marcia corrects her: “That’s papooses. A caboose is the back end of a train.” Cindy replies, “Oh, I thought it was the back end of an Indian.” The sisters (and the laugh-track audience) laugh, but at whose expense is the laughter? Peter’s and Cindy’s “jokes,” though likely not meant to offend, contain plays on words by White characters that demean Indigenes and Indigenous ways of life. In response to his father’s educational Indigenous name lesson, Peter makes up an “Indian” name without knowing that Indigenous names are generally lifelong, respectful identifiers, not playful, absurd tags. In response to her sister’s educational correction on papooses, Cindy equates a caboose with an Indigene’s backside.

A more conservative reading may see such jokes not as disrespectful but only as an educational-entertainment tool for viewers. For example, in “Grand Canyon or Bust,” Mrs.
Brady adds to her family’s foundation for playing and speaking “Indian” by telling middle daughter Jan that “the Indian word for Grand Canyon means mountains lying down.” The “Indian word” is the Paiute term “Kaibab” (“A Grand Canyon”). Yet she never states that Indigenous nation nor Indigenous term. Later, at the Bradys’ camp, Mr. Brady is guilty, too, of conveniently grouping all Native languages into one language:

MR. BRADY. Well, what do you think of Ya’at’teh Flats?

ALICE. Ya-tuh-who?

MR. BRADY. Indian word, means “Hello” or “Welcome.”

ALICE. Oh, that’s good to know. It’ll come in handy if I happen to bump into Tonto.

Mr. Brady, like his wife earlier, does not specify the “Indian” language, which in this case is that of the Diné. And unless Tonto, whose tribal affiliation was Potawatomi in the radio series but was never revealed during The Lone Ranger television series, understands this Diné word, then to say, “Ya’at’teh” will not serve Alice well. This point, though, is trivial for The Brady Bunch because the sitcom’s “Indian” must be easily recognizable to predominantly non-Native audiences. Therefore, Alice’s reference to Tonto may be made because “Tonto” is instantly equated with “Indian.” (It also could be a clever joke because she later says, “Yaateeh” when she sees Chief Eagle Cloud, who is portrayed by actor Jay Silverheels, the original Tonto on television.)

While at the Grand Canyon in “Grand Canyon or Bust,” the Bradys attend an exhibition of supposedly Hopi dancers doing what Mr. Brady says is a “rain dance.” Cindy asks if they are “real Indians.” Her young mind is apparently bewildered in its attempt to distinguish between historical and contemporary “Indians” and between Hollywood and real-life “Indians.” Later,
when Bobby and Cindy wander from their campsite and become lost, they encounter Jimmy Pakaya, a young Native near Bobby’s age. “Gee! An Indian boy!” Cindy exclaims. In a metaphorical reversal of the saying “circling the wagons,” Jimmy runs; they chase. Eventually, Jimmy serves as the White characters’ guide, like many of his Hollywood “Indian” ancestors have done, back to camp. At one point, Cindy becomes concerned again with ethnic authenticity as she asks him, “Are you a real Indian?” Jimmy briefly affirms that he is.

The Bradys soon learn that Jimmy has runaway from home because he thinks his grandfather does not understand him. Jimmy explains that he is “tired of being an Indian” and wishes to “be an astronaut” instead. How does a profession replace an ethnic identity? A few years later, the disco group Village People similarly situated one ethnic identity alongside several professions. The group consisted of one “Indian” and the other band members dressed as a policeman, construction worker, military officer, biker, and cowboy. When Robert, a White policeman in Everybody Loves Raymond “Dancing with Debra” (1999), dances the Hustle in his uniform, his brother Ray references the Village People and conflates ethnicity and profession, too. He tells Robert to find “an Indian and a construction worker, and he’s got an act.” In The Brady Bunch, the dominant White male Mr. Brady reveals, though, that one’s ethnicity and profession can co-exist. “Jimmy,” he says in his fatherly manner, “You can be both of those things. You can be proud of your heritage and be what you want to be.”

Jimmy and his “Indianness” become the avenue through which the Bradys come to play “Indian.” After Mr. Brady reunites Jimmy with his grandfather Chief Eagle Cloud, the “Chief” wishes to honor the Bradys for their assistance. Eagle Cloud says to them, “I ask you to journey to our village tonight. In a ceremony, I will ask you to become members of my family and tribe.”
He assures them that they will have a “groovy time.” The Brady kids are amazed and plead with patriarch Mr. Brady to accept the invitation, which he does.

The episode fast forwards to that evening. To set the stage, Native flute music plays and a few “Indians” sit in the distance. Chief Eagle Cloud stands and declares, “All these people [the Bradys] sitting around this fire shall belong to my tribe from now until forever.” He then walks past each of the “Indian”-style-seated Bradys and gives them “Indian” names. Mr. Brady receives the name “Big Eagle of Large Nest.” Mrs. Brady becomes “Yellow Flowers with Many Petals.” Greg is “Stalking Wolf” and Marcia is “Willow Dancing in Wind.” Eagle Cloud tries “Middle Buffalo” and “Sleeping Lizard” for Peter, but Peter rejects both names. “I’ll get back to you,” Eagle Cloud says. Jan, on the other hand, smiles at her name “Dove of the Morning Light.” Bobby becomes “Little Bear Who Loses Way,” and Cindy is “Wandering Blossom,” both names befitting the two Brady kids who left their camp. Last is unmarried Alice, who receives the name “Squaw [sic] in Waiting.” Afterwards, Eagle Cloud instructs the Bradys to dance around the fire, which they do recklessly with flailing movements of erratic hops, skips, and spins. The nine newly found “Indians” take center stage while Eagle Cloud and the other “Indians” watch. The scene then cuts to a quick shot of the Bradys and the “Indians” holding hands in a round dance, symbolizing togetherness for the Natives and their non-Native adoptees.

As the Bradys exit the park the next day, Cindy asks the park attendant, “Remember us? We’re the Brady Family.” Bobby interjects, “You mean we were. Now, we’re the Brady Braves!” In the nearly seventy-five remaining episodes of The Brady Bunch, the Bradys never refer again to their “Indianness,” “tribe,” or “Indian” names. For the “Brady Braves,” as for others who have played “Indian, “Indian play was a temporary fantasy, and the player inevitably returned to [her or his] everyday world” (Philip Deloria Playing 184). The Brady family entered
the Grand Canyon area, saw and heard what they wanted (“Indian” dancing and singing), helped
to reunite an “Indian” boy and his grandfather, received “Indian” names for their work, and left
their romanticized Indigenous brethren for home in Southern California.

THE (MIS)EDUCATION OF RUNNING ZACK

The Bradys are not the only White sitcom characters to receive “Indian” names. Nearly
twenty years later, on November 24, 1990, a Native character pops up in Southern California in
Saved by the Bell “Running Zack” to transform a White character into an “Indian.” Unlike in
“The Brady Braves,” the Whites do not have to travel far this time to see the Native. In this
“Indian-named” episode, Zack Morris, Bayside High School’s great White hope, is set to
compete in the 100-yard dash in a track meet against archrival school Valley if he passes a
family tree school project. Yet he knows very little about his family heritage. When asked who
his ancestors are, Zack replies, “Adam and Eve.” As the most popular teenager at Bayside, Zack
is known for his blond hair, clear skin, clever schemes, quick comebacks, and relationship with
the popular cheerleader Kelly Kapowski, not for completing his schoolwork and earning good
grades. The remainder of the episode focuses on Zack’s journey into his past and transformation
into a contemporary “Indian.” He will undergo a racial makeover with a “before” picture of
being ignorant of his Native People and an “after” picture of having learned and being stoically
proud of his Indigenous heritage. At the same time, the education or, perhaps more fittingly, the
miseducation of Zack appears to be an attempt by Saved by the Bell to educate and to bolster pro-
“Indian” support from television audiences. As representative of the early 1990s Hollywood
relationship between White America and Indigenous Peoples in the U. S., Saved by the Bell
“Running Zack” is part of a long list of films and television programs demonstrating America’s
renewed fascination with its original inhabitants.
Leading that list is Kevin Costner’s seven-time Oscar winner *Dances with Wolves*. Premiering on November 21, 1990, just three days before Zack makes his redface debut, *Dances with Wolves* presents the fictional story of Lieutenant John Dunbar, portrayed by Costner, who leaves his Civil War outfit and joins the Sioux during the 1860s. During the movie, which ultimately grossed $424 million worldwide in theatres, Dunbar metamorphosed into *Dances with Wolves* and exemplified the late twentieth-century version of a White male playing “Indian.” Both *Dances with Wolves* and *Saved by the Bell* include Native characters who help the Whites to play “Indian.” Yet both texts situate the White males as the heroes who, through Indigenes’ assistance, eventually become more “Indian” (than the Indigenous characters) and are presented as the only surviving “Indian” until they abandon, as “Indian” players almost always do, their representations of redface. Again, Philip Deloria’s argument is confirmed. “Indian play was a temporary fantasy, and the player inevitably returned to [her or his] everyday world” (*Playing* 184).

Early on in “Running Zack,” Zack and his friend Screech locate a photograph of an “Indian” in the Morris home while “digging,” as Zack says later, “through old family papers and pictures.”

SCREECH. It looks likes my Aunt Hannah except she has thicker sideburns.

ZACK. You know, I remember my Mom telling me stories about a distant Indian relative.

SCREECH. Oh, my Mom tells me stories about four-eyed monsters hiding in my closet. She should see a doctor, Zack. They’re not there.
Screech implies that fictional four-eyed monsters and “Indians” are in the same category of fantasy. This seemingly lighthearted joke told by Bayside’s favorite “dork,” as he was often called, carries real-world significance rooted in centuries of dehumanizing Indigenes. As sports team mascots of lions, tigers, bears, and “Indians” have revealed, Native Peoples are often situated in categories with non-humans. In addition, narratives of monsters hiding in closets routinely denote violent, frightening creatures. Similar stories, like those in Lucy and Ricky’s Blood-curdling Indian Tales, consist of “Indians” hiding in shadows before they attack White settlers.

Dismissing Screech’s analogy and looking again at the picture, Zack speculates, “I bet this Indian could be my ancestor.” In rapid sitcom fashion, Zack connects a single photo (his visual “proof”) to his mother’s “stories” (aural “proof”) to claim “Indianness.” Zack’s fascination with one supposed “Indian” relative overshadows any potential searches he could have conducted for countless White relatives. In fact, Zack’s Whiteness is never brought up. The Anglo heritage is ignored, perhaps for its lack of exoticness, to allow space for Zack to transform into an “Indian.”

With picture in hand, Zack further prepares for his presentation by relying on a Hollywood Injun English (HIE) stereotype (similar to one employed between Honest John and Flo in The Beverly Hillbillies).

ZACK. And hey, you can help me be an Indian.

SCREECH. How?

ZACK. That’s a good start.

At school the following day, Zack is dressed in his usual preppy attire. Once it is his turn to present in class, Zack looks to his friend and asks, “Ready Screech?” In monotone HIE, Screech
replies, “Ready Kemosabe.” As Kemosabe, which is what Tonto called the Lone Ranger, Zack is positioned as the dominant White male who, like the Lone Ranger, knows “Indians.” Screech, in his regular clothing of T-shirt and jeans, portrays his typical comic fool schitck. Symbolizing Tonto, a subservient “Indian” to his Kemosabe, Screech plays an “Indian” whose actions are fittingly dictated by Zack/Kemosabe. He stands stoically with arms folded and a nearly crossed-eye, ridiculous-looking expression while Zack uses multicolored markers to paint his “Indian’s” face.

Standing before the class, Zack does most of the talking and Screech acts out the words.

ZACK. I learned that I’m part American Indian. I come from a long line of fierce warriors and great hunters.

SCREECH (looking around). Need meat.

ZACK. They roamed the wide open plains in search of their daily food.

SCREECH. Me hungry.

After practically grunting like a stereotypical cave man, Screech grabs a tomahawk and cuts an apple in two on the teacher’s desk. Their teacher finally interrupts the racial playing.

MISS WENTWORTH. Whoa, Tonto. Me got a question. What’s the name of your tribe?

ZACK. Uh, umm, the, the Cherokee.

MISS WENTWORTH. And where were they located?

ZACK. They lived in the valley. Oh, but way far out. Past the freeway. Burbank, I think.

The school bell rings. After class, Miss Wentworth, knowing that Zack lied, says, “What you did was disrespectful to the class and your ancestors.” Decolonized viewers might briefly applaud
Miss Wentworth’s use of the key term “disrespectful,” but several of her other words point towards racial hypocrisy.

Observations in line with decolonized viewing can be deduced here. Rather than truly educating students, the authority figure, Miss Wentworth, perpetuates stereotypes by speaking immaturely and unnecessarily in Tonto-like broken English. “Whoa, Tonto,” she interjects. “Me got a question.” Later she criticizes Zack and his “Indian” sidekick for doing what she did herself: mocking Indigenes through HIE speech. Second, Miss Wentworth focuses solely on “Indians” of the past: “And where were they located?” and “What you did was disrespectful to [...] your ancestors” (emphases added). Her question and observation are valid, but she situates Zack’s “Indian” portion of his family tree as only in the past. She ignores the over 1,937,391 individuals who self-identified as “American Indian” in the 1990 U.S. census (“American Indian Population”). Since Zack says, “Cherokee,” the second largest Indigenous nation in the U.S. in 1990 and the largest Indigenous nation today, then why does she not also ask, “Where are your people located?” Why does she not mention that Zack’s presentation could be disrespectful to his Cherokee relatives today?

Zack’s choice of “tribe” is also representative of the growing numbers of people who self-identify as Cherokee. In the 1969 *Custer Died for your Sins*, Vine Deloria speaks on this Cherokee phenomenon.

During my three years as Executive Director of the National Congress of American Indians it was a rare day when some white didn't visit my office and proudly proclaim that he or she was of Indian descent. Cherokee was the most popular tribe of their choice and many people placed the Cherokees anywhere from Maine to Washington State. (3)
The Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma is located in Tahlequah. The Eastern Band of Cherokees is located in Cherokee, North Carolina. When Zack says he is Cherokee, does he mean the federally-recognized Cherokees in Oklahoma or North Carolina or one of the numerous non-federally-recognized bands of Cherokees in the Southeastern U. S.? Like many, but not all, other individuals who self-identify and are not culturally informed or tribally enrolled, Zack is likely unaware of the diverse Cherokee populations. Zack, though, does depart from the majority of Cherokee-identifying Whites who claim to have a distant “Cherokee princess,” a royalty-influenced European construction, in their family tree. As Vine Deloria explains, satirically in part, stories of these princesses abound across the U. S.

Whites claiming Indian blood generally tend to reinforce mythical beliefs about Indians. All but one person I met who claimed Indian blood claimed it on their grandmother’s side. I once did a projection backward and discovered that evidently most tribes were entirely female for the first three hundred years of white occupation. (Custer 3)

Perhaps because Zack has no clue about the “Indian” in the picture, he can identify with the mysterious male “Indian.”

After Zack’s first class presentation, the episode appears to attempt to educate not only Zack but viewers, too, about Native history and identity. Instead of a White male figure like Mr. Brady as the expert on Indigenes, a “real Indian” enters the story. Miss Wentworth sends Zack to her friend Chief Henry, who will “help [Zack] get [his] research together.” As part of his journey to prepare for another attempt at his in-class presentation and also to learn about the supposed “Indian” relative in the picture (and, thus, to learn about himself), Zack visits Chief Henry at his small beachfront apartment, not at an outdoor, “Indian”-at-one-with-nature site like
Chief Eagle Cloud at Ya’at’teh Flats. With long gray hair and dressed in a light blue T-shirt, a brown vest, and blue jeans, Chief Henry’s attire is a welcome respite from the usual television show binary of buckskin or three-piece suits. Chief Henry initially identifies Zack as “the kid who thinks he’s part-Indian” and as being with a “Malibu surfing tribe” because of his blond hair. Chief Henry, an urban Indigene, dispels some of Zack’s misconceptions about “Indians” with a keen sense of humor.

ZACK. You’re supposed to be an Indian. Why are you wearing a Dodger [baseball] hat?

CHIEF HENRY. Because the Raider [football] helmet is too hot!

Zack then notices a headband and associates it with authentic “Indianness.”

ZACK. Did you learn to weave headbands on the reservation?

CHIEF HENRY. No. UCLA, a great arts and crafts department there.

Like Chief Running Wolf and Little Fox, Chief Henry is educated. Unlike the Crowfeet “Indians,” though, Chief Henry appears to be more rooted in a pan-“Indian” culture.

In a hurry because he has to train for the track meet, Zack wants just “enough information for a three-minute speech.” Some Indigenes might say he is like a White anthropologist who needs to complete his ethnographic study of the “Other,” get his research findings published, and then never do anything beneficial for the people being studied. So, Chief Henry loans to Zack a tall stack of history books to read. Overwhelmed at first, Zack takes the books to his school’s local hangout, scans through one of the texts, and stumbles upon a familiar-looking picture. To his friends, Zack announces, “Hey, guys. Look at this. My ancestor’s picture is in this old history book.” In an exchange akin to the triteness of Cindy’s confusion between “papoose” and “caboose,” Screech and Zack discuss what the history book says.
SCREECH. It says here he was a famous chef!

ZACK. That’s chief, you idiot.

Once he reads that his ancestor was a chief, a leader among his people, Zack is now interested enough in his own “Indianness” to return to Chief Henry. Like non-Native stories of great-great-great “Indian” grandmothers as “princesses,” the male relatives tend to be “chiefs.” Otherwise, the ancestors might be disappointingly seen by non-Native mythmakers as regular “Indians” with no special or notable distinction. Not surprisingly, all of the episodes under analysis in this chapter include “chiefs.”

Zack returns for a second visit with Chief Henry, who now replaces Zack’s moniker of a Malibu surfing “Indian” with “Running Zack.” Unlike in The Brady Bunch, this naming process is unceremonious. As Chief Henry explains, “That’s your new name. You run. You’re Zack. It works.” Zack, however, is more interested in the picture.

ZACK. Why didn’t you tell me my ancestor was a famous chief?

CHIEF HENRY. You weren’t ready to listen.

ZACK. I know, but I’m ready now.

Chief Henry proceeds to tell Zack about the Native in the picture and adds that what he says cannot be found in any textbook.

CHIEF HENRY. Your great-great-great grandfather was a warrior in the Nez Perce tribe under the mighty Chief Joseph. He was a brave man.

ZACK. What was his name?

CHIEF HENRY. Whispering Wind. Like the wind, his presence was strongly felt but seldom heard.
Chief Henry adds that Whispering Wind and other Nez Perce “ran to preserve their way of life” but that battles with the “White man” made preservation difficult. Zack questions why everyone could not get along to which Chief Henry responds with analogies and more questions: “Well, why can’t the lion get along with the zebra? Why can’t the Arabs get along with the Israelis? And why can’t I get along with my ex-wife?” Chief Henry closes with an amusing joke yet provides no historical or political contexts for explaining White-Indigenous relations. Continuing to provide Zack with what he will use in his class presentation, Chief Henry gives Zack a personally-made headband, a “symbol,” he says, “of [Zack’s] tribe.” Zack then requests more information, and Chief Henry agrees to tell him more stories, including one about “how Whispering Wind helped save your people.”

Decolonized viewers might inquire about this Native character’s knowledge and consider what he says and does not say. What do viewers know about Chief Henry? Who are his people? Where are his relatives? Also, how would he know that Zack’s relative in the picture is, as he says, his “great-great-great grandfather”? Why would he not question Zack, a stranger the day before, about the picture’s origins and legitimacy? Is he doing what Vine Deloria did with Whites who claimed distant “Indian” relatives? “I would confirm,” Deloria says, “their wildest stories about their Indian ancestry and would add a few tales of my own hoping that they would be able to accept themselves someday and leave us [Indigenes] alone” (Custer 3). What is more likely is that audiences familiar with sitcom structures, such as succinctness and fast plot leaps, are intended to readily accept the story’s details and not question the gaps. Still, with the existence of ethnic fraud and the troubling history of media representations of Native Peoples, decolonized viewers must routinely interrogate these non-Native-owned products’ representations of Indigenous Peoples.
At school the next day, Zack shows up in a Plains headdress (which would be reserved for tribal leaders, not newly found “Indians”) and other “Indian” regalia. One can assume that Chief Henry must have provided Zack with the clothing off-camera. Zack then begins his presentation.

My name is Running Zack. I am a direct descendant of the Nez Perce tribe who once lived peacefully in Oregon’s Walla Walla Valley. My people were forced off their land so settlers could mine for gold. After fighting to keep their homes, the tribe, led by great Chief Joseph, tried retreating to safety in the mountains. But the Army pursued them. Rather than watch his people die, Chief Joseph surrendered. He said, ‘I am tired of fighting. Our chiefs are killed. Our children are freezing. My people have no food. My heart is sad. From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more forever.’

Unlike in the first presentation, Zack is more informed and serious in this “Indian” play. He identifies himself as Chief Henry has taught him, provides some historical context about the Nez Perce and White settlers, and quotes Chief Joseph, the most well-known Nez Perce, from an 1877 speech. Whether, though, it is a grunting Screech in redface savagery or a valiant “Running Zack” in redface nobility, the stereotypes and colonizer’s conventions are still operating. Zack’s second presentation is overtly romanticized as it portrays the Nez Perce, who are still very much alive today, as a past and defeated people. Moreover, Zack claims to be a “descendant” without mentioning any contemporary relations. “Before this project,” Zack adds, “I knew nothing about my heritage. I didn’t care. Now I know, and I’m proud.” But how “proud” is he? Like the Bradys after they leave the Grand Canyon, Zack never refers again to his “Indianness.” Even though he eventually wanted to know more from Chief Henry, his fascination with playing “Indian” is
comparable in its brevity to his three-minute speech. Regardless, Zack’s teacher Miss Wentworth generously applauds her student’s work, or “play,” and tells the school principal that Zack did “[v]ery well. He even dressed the part.” The term “part” evokes images of a staged character in theatre wearing a costume. Ironically, it fits well with the notion of playing “Indian.” If Zack had not “dressed the part,” then the believability of his performance would not have been as effective for the blonde-haired, never-acted-“Indian”-before Zack.

In the next scene, Zack learns that Chief Henry has died suddenly. Whereas the Bradys leave the Indigenes and the Grand Canyon, Chief Henry leaves Zack and everyone else in California; but in both sitcoms, the Indigenous characters disappear. Before *Saved by the Bell* “Running Zack” concludes, however, Chief Henry returns to visit Zack in Zack’s dream (or “vision”?) and to encourage the runner to do his best in the track meet. When Zack asks, “Why’d you have to die?” Chief Henry, dressed in a Heavenly white suit, does not explain that White American writers have been erasing Indigenes from stories for hundreds of years. He does not mention the use of the common vanishing “Indian” theme in American cultural texts or the “last of a tribe” motif, exemplified by James Fennimore Cooper in *Last of the Mohicans*. Looking upward, Chief Henry just says, “They don’t give you much choice up there.” Then, as an extension of the tone in the excerpt of Chief Joseph’s speech, Chief Henry vanishes. Having completed his work of educating and transforming Zack into Running Zack, he leaves the Nez Perce descendant, who now becomes the only “Indian” for *Saved by the Bell* viewers to see.57

TOMAHAWK CLUBS

Like *The Brady Bunch* and *Saved by the Bell*, *King of the Hill* “Order of the Straight Arrow” (1997) turns to a Native for assistance in playing “Indian.” Young White character Bobby Hill and his friends in the scout troop Order of the Straight Arrow prepare for a camping
Trying to figure out what the boys can do on their journey, Hank Hill (Bobby’s father), Dale Gribble, and other White males seek knowledge from recurring Native character John Redcorn about his people’s rituals. Redcorn mentions a ceremonial object in seriousness, but Dale sees it as an opportunity for playing “Indian.”

JOHN REDCORN. The spirit bag is very sacred. You should not make light.

DALE. I like how you say everything’s sacred. Let’s use that!

Dale and his friends, who were members of the Straight Arrow when they were children, take the boys on a trip and use a ritual Redcorn spoke about involving the sacred Wematanye. Thus, Redcorn helps to provide material for Hank and the others to use in their “Indian” play. Later, addressing the boys around a campfire, Hank, a propane salesman and proud Texan, meshes what he heard from Redcorn with his own words:

We of the Order of the Straight Arrow call upon the spirit Wematanye, protector of the sacred ground that brings us cool water to drink and energy-efficient clean-burning propane gas for all our sacred heating and cooking needs. Wematanye says, ‘Respect the Earth!’ She’s ours, by God; our taxes pay for Her. Also, it says here you gotta love all Her creatures. Let’s see ... oh, here we go: Though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, you’re gonna recommend us to the spirit in the sky, with liberty and justice for all. Wematanye is with you and with Texas. Amen.

Merging a made-up story about Wematanye and lines from the Book of Revelation, the Norman Greenbaum 1969 song “Spirit in the Sky,” and the U. S. Pledge of Allegiance into a prayer, Hank is constructed by *King of the Hill* as a character who can be laughed at for engaging in
nonsensical “Indian” play. The sitcom points out the absurdity of “Indian” play and the ignorance of pseudo-“Indians” that informs the process.

To see an Indigenous character like John Redcorn involved in the redface, though not by his own choice, is rare. Elsewhere in sitcoms with “Indian” clubs, Natives are again like a vanished race of people. When Richie Cunningham in Happy Days “The Other Richie Cunningham” (1975) refuses to date his father’s business associate’s daughter, his father Howard attempts to persuade him otherwise through guilt. “Who was it,” Howard asks, “who went with you to those Indian [scout] meetings, worse those silly feathers, and went hey-ey-ya, hey-ey-ya?”

In the epilogue of The Andy Griffith Show “The Clubmen” (1961), Andy and Barney are invited by Opie to join his newly-created Tomahawk Club. Hollywood “Indian” music plays as Opie enters the Mayberry courthouse in a plastic war bonnet of imitation feathers and holds a toy tomahawk. Opie, in a serious, stoic tone, says to his father, “Did you ask him [about joining]?” Barney replies, “It’d be a pleasure, Op.” To initiate them into his Tomahawk Club, Opie hands similar bonnets and tomahawks to Andy and Barney and instructs them on what to do.

OPIE. Raise your tomahawk in your right hand. Face the rising sun.

Repeat after me: As a Tomahawk I solemnly swear to be fair and square at all times.

ANDY AND BARNEY: As a Tomahawk, I solemnly swear to be fair and square at all times.

With all three of them looking towards the camera, Opie, Andy, and Barney engage in a childish version of playing “Indian.” Another club is seen in Yes, Dear “Dances with Couch” (2002). White main character Greg Warner is “Chief Little Bear” in the West Los Angeles Tribe of
Indian Scouts. He takes his nephew Dominic to a meeting where they greet other father-son “Indian” players, such as Great Star-Bright Star and Talking Rock-Running Rabbit.

CHIEF BALD EAGLE

Similarly, in My Wife and Kids “Michael’s Tribe,” Michael Kyle serves as the adult “Indian” figure while his youngest daughter Kady is like Opie with his interest in “Indians.” At first, Michael hesitates to play “Indian” not because of its potential disrespect to Indigenes but because he is more interested in a sports game on television. When he hears that his daughter’s “Indian” Princesses group will be camping at the house of a family he does not know, Michael demands that the camping be at his house. As he tells his wife Jay/Janet, “I’ll be the chief. I’ll watch the game and then I’ll go out there and play ‘Indian.’” Jay explains that he will not have time to see the game because he will be with the girls “the whole day and night” and thus, too busy “[teaching] them the culture and the history of Native Americans, the arts, crafts, dancing, all of that.” Obviously, one “day and night” would not suffice in teaching effectively about the millions of heterogeneous Indigenous Peoples and hundreds of Indigenous nations, yet effectiveness in education is not a characteristic of learning about the sitcom’s “Indian.” Not wanting to back down after volunteering, Michael replies, “Fine, I can do that.” As the rest of the episode unfolds, he shows that he is clueless about as well as racist towards Indigenous Peoples. The only clue he has is being well-versed in Hollywood “Injun” stereotypes, which suffices for the sitcom’s “Indian.”

Calling himself “Chief Bald Eagle,” Michael sits lazily near his radio in the backyard and listens to the game. At one point, one of the Princesses brings him a beer. In return, Bald Eagle gives her the “Indian” name Little Fetch-Me-Beer. When Jay reminds Michael that he must teach
the girls about Indigenous Peoples, he interrupts her by speaking in a Hollywood “Injun,” broken English monotone.

MICHAEL. Silence! Maiden no tell Chief how to act, what to do.

JAY. Michael, if you ever want to get into this maiden’s wigwam again, you’ll do as I say.

MICHAEL. Whoa. Poked-out hiney.

JAY. Hey!

MICHAEL. I see where you have hidden sacred drum. Can’t wait to bang drum slowly.

Jay’s threat of withholding sexual relations leads to Michael expressing his desire to “bang drum slowly,” an obvious reference to sexual intercourse. Michael’s comparison between a Native drum and his wife’s backside is one of the most vulgar jokes in “Indian” play throughout the history of redface in American sitcoms. It represents a large shift in what has become acceptable to say in sitcoms. In comparison, Cindy’s confusion in 1971 between a papoose and an “Indian’s” rear end in *The Brady Bunch* sounds almost innocent. Unfortunately, to use a revered Native object like the drum for a sitcom’s sexual metaphors and innuendos is reflective of contemporary sitcom material.

Michael’s main resistance to seeing the game is a White, red-headed “Indian” Princess named Rachel. Known to Michael as “Little Pain-in-Butt,” Rachel repeatedly has reservations about Michael and his un-educational tactics.

RACHEL. This is ridiculous. All we’re doing is waiting on you hand and foot.

MICHAEL. Yes, yes, because you are a maiden, and a maiden must tend to the needs of the chief.
RACHEL. You gotta be kidding. You’re overly simplifying things. The Native Americans had a very advanced culture.

Speaking of oversimplification, Rachel generalizes by speaking of a singular, monolithic “culture” from the past. The hundreds of cultures from historical and contemporary times are ignored. “Despite the cultural differences among tribes,” academic and activist Devon Mihesuah (Choctaw) explains, “many non-Indians believe that all Indians are alike” (*American Indians* 20).

Rachel then explains that Indigenes “were the first to openly accept gay people.” Is she referring to all Indigenous Peoples of all Indigenous nations? What time period does she have in mind? To apply almost any concept or belief as representative of all Native Peoples is, to say the least, a major fallacy. Michael has no understanding either. His response to Rachel’s comment on accepting homosexuality is a made-up reference to “the tale of Little Drop the Tomahawk,” which is an “Indian”-specific version of jokes about men dropping bars of soap in locker room showers.

A side storyline in “Michael’s Tribe” involves Michael’s teenage daughter Claire and her plan to sneak out of the house with Tony, one of her friends. Learning of the plan from his son Junior, Michael asks, “How?” To which Junior replies, “Are you asking me a question or are you speaking ‘Indian’?” After Junior explains how Claire’s friend will arrive at midnight and use a ladder to climb up to Claire’s room, Michael turns to storytelling to recruit the Indian Princesses to help him catch Claire and her friend.

MICHAEL. Many, many moons ago, there was Princess Claire-awatha. She was the daughter of the greatest chief ever. One day a brave from another village came to steal away Princess Claire-awatha and this made the chief very, very angry.
RACHEL. Wait a minute. Claire-awatha? Is this just a thinly veiled reference to your actual life?

Michael tells the Princesses of Claire’s plan and asks them to help make sure Claire stays “here in the village” (i.e., at home). Next, the Princesses prepare for what Bald Eagle labels as “war” while dancing senselessly and chanting “hi-ya uh-ya-ha hi-ya uh-ya-ha” with their chief. Chief Bald Eagle also leads the Princesses in a rendition of “the sacred song of our Indian People.” In unison, they sing “three little, two little, one little Indian” from the well-known Septimus Winner nineteenth-century minstrel song (and later nursery rhyme) “Ten Little Indians.” “Indian” players in My Wife and Kids unabashedly sing a tune about the counting of “Indian” deaths. As Kanatiyosh (Onondaga/Mohawk) states, “Asking children to sing ‘Ten Little Indians’ is pure racism. The song is an Indian annihilation song that the Pioneers sang to their children to soothe [sic] their fears. If you remember the song, they count up and then they count backwards until there is only one Indian boy left.”

The time, Bald Eagle tells his warriors, arrives “to prepare our faces for war with paint.” The girls, who now wear a headband with a single feather, shout in excitement as they line up to physicalize redface. Donning a red, white, and blue headdress, Michael tells them, “Step forward, close your eyes, and look to the moon” before he slaps their faces with a paintbrush. Next, he teaches them the war dance and soon begins to do the robot dance. When one of the Princesses recognizes the familiar dance, Bald Eagle declares, “Oh, you are wise. That’s because we must be brave like robots.” Not surprisingly in this episode of dehumanization, “Indians” are objectified into robots as everyone performs the robot dance.

Having prepared for war, the Chief and his Princesses attack. When Tony arrives to the house, he begins to climb a ladder to Claire’s upstairs room. The Princesses hide in the bushes
and, upon Bald Eagle’s command, hit the young man with toy arrows. Bald Eagle instructs them to take Tony away. Viewers then see Claire’s friend tied to a chair in the living room while the Princesses yell and run circles around him. Rachel, the supposedly educated one, asks Bald Eagle, “Do we get to set him on fire now?” She sounds well-versed in Hollywood footage that depicts “Indians” dancing around captive White men who are tied to wooden stakes. In *The Flintstones* “Droop-Along Flintstone” (1961), for example, White characters Fred and Barney are tied to stakes by “Indians.” Whereas their wives Wilma and Betty rescue them, Bald Eagle in *My Wife and Kids* declares, “We should let [Tony] go back to his village so that he may tell others what happens when they try to mess with our women.” To recognize and applaud his efforts for the Indian Princesses gathering, Kady says, “Daddy, I had a good time tonight. You’re the best chief ever.” In a self-aggrandizing confirmation of his ability to be a pseudo-“Indian,” Bald Eagle replies, “You got that right.” If the use of “best” can mean the best in playing “Indian” in one of the most anti-Indigenous, disrespectful, and misinforming American sitcom episodes in television history, then Kady may be onto something.

**CONCLUSION**

Education is a critical area in *The Brady Bunch* “Brady Braves,” *Saved by the Bell* “Running Zack,” and *My Wife and Kids* “Michael’s Tribe.” By playing “Indian” through adoption in *The Brady Bunch*, heritage in *Saved by the Bell*, or “Indian” clubs in *My Wife and Kids*, the three “Indian” chief-filled episodes in this chapter try to enlighten audiences about Native Peoples. Mr. Brady in *The Brady Bunch*, Miss Wentworth (Zack’s teacher) and Chief Henry in *Saved by the Bell*, and Rachel (a White Indian Princess) in *My Wife and Kids* show some familiarity with and teach other characters about “Indians.” Mr. Brady, for example, shares factual information on particular Indigenous nations with his children. Miss Wentworth has an
“Indian” source, Chief Henry, who shares insider knowledge with Zack about Whispering Wind. Furthermore, Chief Henry uses humor to counter Zack’s stereotypical ideas of “Indians.” Rachel, though, takes a straightforward approach to teach Chief Bald Eagle about Indigenous Peoples.

Yet the (mis)educational approaches of the (mis)leading “Indian” players in these sitcoms rely on old stereotypes and colonial conventions via made-up “Indian” names, faulty generalizations, and racist humor to demean the visible and invisible Indigenes. Mr. Brady, with his knowledge of Natives, is presented as a White “expert” on “Indians.” Once he receives his “Indian” name, he seemingly becomes equally Native to, if not more than, Chief Eagle Cloud, who is indebted and subservient to Mr. Brady. Then, as White “experts” often do, Mr. Brady/Big Eagle of Large Nest takes his flock and leaves the Indigenes behind. Miss Wentworth speaks of Native Peoples in the past yet sends Zack to a contemporary living “Indian,” Chief Henry, who becomes the expert on Indigenes. Then Saved by the Bell kills off his character and he vanishes, leaving Zack to be the “Indian.” In My Wife and Kids, Rachel takes a pro-“Native American” stance but oversimplifies about Native Peoples in the process. Chief Bald Eagle learns a few generalized, pan-“Indian” points from Rachel, yet he typically is busy making racist “jokes” and engaging in offensive redfaced behavior. Eventually, Rachel joins Bald Eagle in the redface revelry, which further justifies questioning her misinformed claims. In all, the representations of redface analyzed in this chapter carry a few notes of progress in educating predominantly non-Native audiences on Native Peoples, yet the representations, by their very existence as well as their miseducational approaches, also indicate that much work is still necessary for programming to move from presenting the sitcom’s “Indian” to presenting more respectful, fully human Indigenous representations.
CONCLUSION

GOING BEYOND THE SITCOM’S “INDIAN”

“We are smart enough to know books and cameras are real, television sets are real, but what they conjure up about Native people isn’t very real.” Darrell Kipp (Blackfeet), 30, 2001.

THE LIMITED LOGIC OF THE SITCOM’S “INDIAN”

From their appearance in the 1951 *I Love Lucy* “The Adagio” to the 2006 *The Suite Life of Zack and Cody* “Boston Tea Party,” representations of redface in American sitcoms have largely defined the sitcom’s “Indian.” Over the past six decades, non-Native sitcom characters have played “Indian” through dress, speech, and mannerisms that instantaneously signify “Indian” for audiences. When one couples *I Love Lucy* “Indian Show,” which provides possibly the earliest moment of playing “Indian” in American sitcoms, with more recent representations of redface in the 2002 *Yes, Dear* “Dances with Couch” or 2006 “Boston Tea Party,” little has noticeably changed in over fifty years of non-Natives’ marginalizing, fantasizing, and performing as “Indians” in sitcoms.

Initially, one may see playing “Indian” in an occasional sitcom episode as an isolated instance of racial masquerading. Of the many sitcoms with well over 100 episodes, generally 1-2 episodes, if any, may include representations of redface. However, does one episode with redface amid the considerably larger number of non-redface episodes excuse or dismiss playing “Indian” from critically analysis? Furthermore, can one separate a single episode from the rest of the similarly-structured and -reasoned episodes in the series? More broadly speaking, all sitcom episodes are bound together through the category of television genre (sitcom) and, larger still, all television programming. Representations of redface in sitcoms are also related to those that appear in other forms of media and elsewhere in American culture. Thus, when similar
representations in sitcoms are seen in other contested arenas of redface (e.g., “Indian” sports mascots), each instance of redface in sitcoms and elsewhere is not so isolated.

This dissertation has analyzed sporadic episodes with representations of redface from several series and adjoined them to other sitcom episodes’ representations. The result is a redface collective that emphasizes the repeated presence of misleading “Indian” players and the recurring absence of real Indigenous characters. The visible pseudo-“Indians” represent, or stand in for, the mostly invisible Indigenes. The “Indian” players in the sitcoms in this dissertation include *I Love Lucy*’s Lucy, Ricky, Ethel, and Fred, *The Andy Griffith Show*’s Barney “Chief Noogatuck” Fife, *The Beverly Hillbillies*’ Flo “Princess Sitting Hawk” Shaffer and Milburn “Chief True Tongue” Drysdale, *The Brady Bunch*’s entire Brady family, *Saved by the Bell*’s Screech Powers and Zack “Running Zack” Morris, *Family Guy*’s Peter “Chief Grand Cherokee” Griffin and Chris Griffin, *My Wife and Kids*’ Michael “Chief Bald Eagle” Kyle and his three “Indian Princesses,” and *The Suite Life of Zack and Cody*’s main stars. Many other characters play “Indian” in a substantial number of additional sitcoms.

In the examples studied here, only eight characters intended to be Indigenous have speaking parts and are credited in the sitcoms, yet all of them appear momentarily and in subservient and often cultureless roles. Ricky’s two “Indians” in *I Love Lucy* “The Indian Show” have the smallest parts in the nightclub act. They just stand stoically at the stage entrance while the non-Native stars perform in redface. Chief Running Wolf and Little Fox in *The Beverly Hillbillies* “The Indians are Coming” have no cultural roots either. Chief Eagle Cloud and his grandson Jimmy Pakaya in *The Brady Bunch* “Brady Braves” are held up as exotic ethnic fixtures for the Bradys to marvel at and to mimic as they become the Brady Braves. Chief Henry, yet another chief, appears in *Saved by the Bell* “Running Zack” to turn an interested White guy
into a headdress-wearing, Chief Joseph-quoting Nez Perce descendant. *Family Guy* “The Son Also Draws” drops the chief moniker but reverts back to Native stereotypes comparable to those in “The Indians are Coming.” Like Chief Running Wolf and Little Fox, *Family Guy*’s Lenny and the other casino-operating “Indians” know more about capitalism and wealth than about their people and Indigenous ways of life.

It is not to say that Indigenes cannot be rich and Indigenous. However, *The Beverly Hillbillies* and *Family Guy*, like almost all other sitcoms, do not allow such space. To see fully human Indigenes would not fit with American societal expectations of “Indians.” The Indigenous characters in “The Indians are Coming” and “The Son Also Draws” must be, in accordance with understood codes on the sitcom’s “Indian,” seen within a binary as stereotypically savage “Indians” or assimilated, seemingly non-Indigenous “Indians.” Otherwise, sitcom producers fear a drop in ratings due to audiences not recognizing or being familiar with who and what they see on the screen. Mr. Drysdale situates Chief Running Wolf and Little Fox as assimilated “Indians” who “wear White man’s clothes,” which is, he adds, “bad medicine.” Mr. Drysdale’s reasoning projects historical “Injun” stereotypes onto contemporary “Indians” who never wore or no longer wear buckskin. Perhaps Mr. Drysdale would do well to heed Mr. Brady’s advice to Jimmy, who wants to be an astronaut instead of an “Indian,” in “Brady Braves.” “You can be both of those things,” Mr. Brady says. “You can be proud of your heritage and be what you want to be.” Few sitcoms follow Mr. Brady’s logic. Instead, their Indigenous characters and the “Indian” players who impersonate Indigenes reveal little to no pride in Indigenousness.

In all, the sitcom’s “Indian,” whether as a non-Native character playing “Indian” or as the rare character intended to be Indigenous, is limited in scope. Sitcoms perpetuate the borders on “Indianness” that have been in motion and have changed insignificantly over hundreds of years
through the construction of the White man’s “Indian. The predominantly White male scriptwriters and producers, like previous generations of White male authors and historians behind the making of the White man’s “Indian,” set forth a restricted logic of how “Indians” in television should appear. Following Stuart Hall’s encoding/decoding line of thought, the logic of the sitcom’s “Indian” is encoded by the creators in the network ranks, and viewers are left to decode limited representations. Sitcoms that enforce small spaces for representations of redface facilitate non-Native characters’ prompt passings as “Indians” and rapid returns to Whiteness.

In turn, this limited logic of the sitcom’s “Indian” transmits a narrow view of real Indigenes to non-Indigenous audiences. Even if viewers recognize “Indian” players as non-Native characters and are aware of the stereotypes and misinformation, the representations of redface are inspired by non-Native imaginings and ill-conceived perceptions of real Indigenous Peoples. As a result, viewers are not presented with fully human Indigenous representations. Redface, by its very definition, cannot provide such representations. Moreover, nearly all non-Native sitcom scriptwriters have yet to provide humanized representations of Native characters.

Sitcom Boundaries of “Indianness”

To illustrate the boundaries of “Indianness” in sitcoms, I turn to several comparable representations of redface. First, as mentioned earlier, many “Indian” players portray or speak of Natives as cultureless dupes. In *Family Guy*, for example, the White Peter Griffin embarks upon a vision quest and is pictured as more “Indian” than the Native character Lenny, who moans, “Aw, I want a spiritual vision, too!” like a four-year-old boy who wants his friend’s toy. Ironically, the cultureless Native characters in *Family Guy* still instruct and guide the non-Native characters’ actions. In *The Beverly Hillbillies*, the cultureless Chief Running Wolf justifies Mr. Drysdale/Chief True Tongue’s redface masquerading by earnestly saying, “It was a great
performance, Mr. Drysdale. My people could take Indian lessons from you.” As I ask in chapter three, “[W]hy can *The Beverly Hillbillies* not show a fully human, regular Indigenous character whose ethnicity is culturally rooted and influenced but is not constantly highlighted and belittled?”

Romanticized redface, another limited form of racial masquerading, appears in *The Beverly Hillbillies* and *Saved by the Bell*. Mr. Drysdale/Chief True Tongue tells Chief Running Wolf and Little Fox that his gift of a harmonica will enable them “to make music sweeter than west wind in treetop.” Chief Henry is more serious in his play on *wind*. After he informs Zack that his ancestor is Whispering Wind, Chief Henry explains the name: “Like the wind, his presence was strongly felt but seldom heard.” In addition to associating Indigenes with nature, these two episodes also situate contemporary “Indians” in pre-historic times. Screech in redface grunts, “Need meat” and “Me hungry” like a cave man in search of food. After showing Chief Running Wolf and Little Fox a “magic firestick,” or match, Chief True Tongue boasts, “Beat’um flint, huh?”

This broken English, like that found in sentences beginning with “me,” is frequently spoken in monotone. In *My Wife and Kids*, Michael/Chief Bald Eagle choppily says to his wife, “Maiden no tell Chief how to act, what to do.” In *The Beverly Hillbillies*, Mr. Drysdale/Chief True Tongue tells his secretary to bring Chief Running Wolf and Little Fox to his bank “for powwow. Or you and me have powwow. I ‘pow’ and you ‘ow’!” To let Zack know that he is ready to assist in Zack’s first class presentation in *Saved by the Bell*, Screech says in Hollywood Injun English monotone, “Ready, Kemosabe.”

Another area in speech concerns White characters’ misinformed and confusing usage of “Indian”-sounding words. Screech thinks Zack’s Nez Perce ancestor was a “chef,” but Zack
corrects him by saying, “chief.” Marcia clarifies between caboose and papoose for Cindy, who thought a papoose was the “back end of an Indian.” In the same episode, Peter hears his father mention specific Indigenous nations and then asks about the origins of “such strange names.” In Happy Days “Three on a Porch” (1975), Ralph Malph claims that his mother taught him how to “count to five in American Indian,” such as saying that “mock mock” is one and “kwennem” is two. When his friend Richie asks which tribe speaks those words, Ralph replies, “I don’t know. My mother always gets things confused.” In My Wife and Kids, Michael/Chief Bald Eagle looks at his wife’s backside and says, “I see where you have hidden sacred drum. Can’t wait to bang drum slowly.” If the writers for My Wife and Kids knew that the drum is, indeed, sacred for many Indigenes, then perhaps they would not have made such a crude and disrespectful “joke.” Yet Chief Bald Eagle’s phrase “sacred drum” is spoken in a mocking, uninformed manner.

Often accompanying this rhetoric are common physical signifiers for “Indian” attire. Male “Indian” players Ricky Ricardo, Barney Fife/Chief Noogatuck, Andy and Opie (in “The Clubmen”), Mr. Drysdale/Chief True Tongue, Zack Morris/Running Zack, Michael Kyle/Chief Bald Eagle, Homer Simpson (in The Simpsons 2003 “Bart of War”), and several characters in The Suite Life of Zack and Cody “Boston Tea Party” are among those donning headdresses. Lucy Ricardo, Flo Shaffer/Princess Sitting Hawk, and the “Indian” Princesses in My Wife and Kids sport less elaborate faux feathers. Other characters use what is readily available, such as Fred Mertz’s whisk broom (I Love Lucy “The Indian Show”) and Ralph Ferley’s two fingers (Three’s Company “The Snow Job” (1979) positioned behind their heads, to indicate feathers.

As for weapons, tomahawks lead the short list of choices. In “The Clubmen,” Andy and Barney hold tomahawks as part of their initiation into Opie’s Tomahawk Club. While whooping an “Indian” cry, Betty Rubble carries one and then hurls it at another character intended to be an
“Indian” in *Flintstones* “Droop-Along Flintstone.” Searching for food, Screech uses his tomahawk to slice an apple in two. In “The Indian Show,” Ricky, Ethel, Fred, and Ricky’s two “Indians” hold tomahawks. The first three characters sing “Pass that Peace Pipe, Bury the Tomahawk” but continue to hold the weapons and, as the aforementioned sitcom characters do, associate “Indians” with violence.

**Redfaced Spaces**

The settings for “Indian” play reveal further connections between episodes in the logic of the sitcom’s “Indian.” These spaces serve as sites where American racial “play” takes place and where non-Natives associate Natives to be or to have been. *Imagining* “Indians” often begins at home or in home-like settings. In “Ghost Town U.S.A.,” the Bradys prepare at home for their trip to the “Indian”-inhabited Grand Canyon. In the Ricardo living room, Lucy hears of Ricky’s search for Apache dancers in “The Adagio” and Ricky’s plans for an “Indian”-themed nightclub act in “The Indian Show.” Zack in *Saved by the Bell* finds a picture of an “Indian” in an old trunk and Michael in *My Wife and Kids* learns of his daughter’s “Indian” Princesses group in their respective living rooms. In *The Suite Life of Zack and Cody*, Zack imagines “Indians” in the lobby of the hotel where his suite/home is. Honest John and Flo Shaffer in *The Beverly Hillbillies* concoct their scheme in their hotel room.

Then the physical “Indian” play predominantly takes place in one of four areas. First, playing “Indian” occasionally continues at home. *Yes, Dear* includes an early scene of playing “Indian” in one of the guest character’s basements. *My Wife and Kids* has one scene of redface in the living room where the Princesses’ captive is tied to a chair. Playing “Indian” also occurs indoors in home-away-from-home sites. Zack is at school (the main setting in *Saved by the Bell*),
where he plays “Indian” for his family tree presentations. In “The Indians are Coming,” Mr. Drysdale imagines and plays “Indian” at his bank.

A major location for “Indian” play is outside in nature. Like outdoor play among children, the redface players in *Yes, Dear* can be found at a campsite. Chief Bald Eagle and his Indian Princesses in *My Wife and Kids* are in the Kyle family backyard. In “The Brady Braves,” the Bradys attend a tribal ceremony in the Grand Canyon National Park. In “The Clampetts in Washington” and “Jed Buys the Capitol,” Sitting Hawk sits outside of her teepee near the White House lawn. In *The Suite Life of Zack and Cody*, several main characters sit “Indian”-style in a park to construct their headdresses. In “Un-Underground Movie,” the Bradys reenact Pilgrim-“Indian” encounters in their backyard.

The physical “Indian” play also transpires on indoor and outdoor “stages” for shows featuring “Indians.” The stars of *I Love Lucy* take center stage in Ricky’s nightclub in “Indian Show.” In *The Andy Griffith Show* “The Pageant,” Barney auditions for the role of Chief Noogatuck in the annual Mayberry pageant. In the Brady family backyard, Greg films a movie with Pilgrims and “Indians” in *The Brady Bunch* “Un-Underground Movie.” In *Munsters* “Big Heap Herman” (1966), Herman Munster finds remote “Indians” outdoors in the southwestern U.S. and is turned into their spiritual leader for “Indian” shows they perform for tourists.

The latest locale for representations of redface has moved from being predominantly at the family home, outdoors, or on a stage to transpiring at the generic “Indian” casino. Examples of sitcom episodes with the theme of playing “Indian” in “Indian” casinos include animated sitcoms *Family Guy* “The Son Also Draws” (1999), *The Simpsons* “Bart to the Future” (2000), *South Park* “Red Man’s Greed” (2003), and *King of the Hill* “Redcorn Gambles with his Future” (2005). In *The Simpsons* “Dude, Where’s my Ranch?” Homer tells local Natives that he will
retrieve their land from nearby beavers if the Indigenes agree to build a casino. Live-action sitcoms have portrayed gambling episodes, too. “The Pilot,” the very first episode of Yes, Dear, takes place in part at an “Indian” casino. Malcolm in the Middle “Casino” (2000) and “Cliques” (2002) play on “Indian” gaming themes, too. In the former, the starring White family visits a casino on an “Indian” reservation. In the latter, Francis, Malcolm’s oldest brother, turns his and his Alaskan Native wife Piama Tananahaakna’s home, which sits on part of an “Indian” reservation, into a casino for his tribal relatives to gamble at. As a category of the sitcom’s “Indian,” the casino “Indian” is the most common form of Indigenous representation in today’s sitcoms. In the 2000s, “Indians” have become synonymous with gaming facilities, and I expect future sitcom episodes to frequent them.

These four major settings for redface—at “home,” outside, on stage, and in a casino—are in accordance with narrow views of where Indigenes can appear. According to these sitcoms, Native Peoples do not show up at shopping malls, sports stadiums, concerts, or anywhere else that other ethnic groups may be. In the 2004 Indians in Unexpected Places, Philip Deloria addresses American society’s expectations of “Indians” by opening with a 1941 photograph of a Native woman in a beaded buckskin dress and braids who sits under a cone-head hair dryer and receives a manicure by a White female in a beauty shop.61 “Even in the wake of decades of stereotype busting,” Deloria observes, “a beaded buckskin dress and a pair of braids continue to evoke a broad set of cultural expectations about Indian people” (Unexpected 3). Deloria includes numerous examples of non-Natives’ un-expectations of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Indigenes “driving cars, playing football, traveling in Wild West shows, performing music, and acting and directing in the early years of the film industry” (Unexpected 7).
As Deloria rightly points out, these anomalies are formed through a Euro-American lens of Euro-American expectations. “To assert that a person or an event is anomalous cannot help but serve to create and to reinforce other expectations” (Unexpected 7). To identify the Indigenous woman in the beauty shop picture as “an unexpected anomaly, then, helps naturalize categories such as white, woman, modern, beauty, technology, and labor” (Unexpected 5). Sitcoms, too, generally follow normalized expectations. In “The Indians are Coming,” for example, the anomalies of Chief Running Wolf are his high levels of education (Oxford) and wealth (he owns banks). Perhaps because dominant American society does not associate “Indians” with intelligence, Miss Hathaway makes sure to highlight these anomalies for Mr. Drysdale/Chief True Tongue, whose expectations of “Indian” shift between primitive savages in buckskin and, after hearing of Chief Running Wolf’s riches, greedy savages in “White man’s clothes” (i.e., a suit and tie).

As I discussed in chapter two, the American curriculum of colonialism does not offer Indigenous perspectives on Indigenous Peoples. The limited logic of the sitcom’s “Indian” is due to the limited understanding by sitcoms and audiences about real Indigenes. If sitcom producers knew more, then evidence of that knowledge might appear on screen. If enough viewers knew more, then more critiques and protests of current dehumanizing representations could be voiced and a sitcom’s ratings could drop if changes did not occur. For now, though, the ignorance and misinformation of most American sitcoms and viewers continue. American audiences, in response, must become more aware and conscious of contemporary Indigenous Peoples.

Limited logic influences uninformed viewers who do not interact with real Indigenes. American sitcoms have an opportunity to go beyond their previous “Indian” representations. While sitcoms are more about entertaining than educating, they still can provide viewers with
humanized representations.\textsuperscript{62} Moreover, claims of entertainment do not excuse what has been aired thus far. To counter decolonized viewers’ objections to particular representations as part of being “politically correct” also is invalid. It is not about political correctness; it is about being respectfully human and humanly respectful. All texts are subject to scrutiny, and no writers can legitimately excuse their ignorance of Indigenes in these contemporary times by saying, “But we don’t know any real ‘Indians’” or “No ‘Indians’ will talk to us.”\textsuperscript{63} In particular, sitcom texts with very few Native representations, in which young Indigenes can take pride, will continue to be interrogated by the very people the representations depend on for content: Indigenes.

Today’s sitcom material reassembles and rehashes old stereotypes. Rooted in several centuries of racism, ignorance, and stereotypes, the logic of the sitcom’s “Indian” places restrictions on who and what “Indian” means. In fact, this “Indian” is typically situated into distant, imagined pasts that may never have been while the White characters can move back and forth between history and the contemporary. Generations of White writers, White characters, and White audiences change in speech and appearance, but the signifiers for “Indian,” according to sitcoms, generally stay the same. Sitcoms must break away from this narrow, static way of thinking and recognize that today’s real Indigenous Peoples, like people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds, have much more diversity, potential, and unpredictability than sitcoms have shown.

THE FUTURE OF REDFACE

As long as Americans continue to try to define \textit{America} and \textit{American}, they will continue to return to the original “Americans” known as Indigenous Peoples. As Philip Deloria explains in \textit{Playing Indian}, non-Indigenous Americans engage in redface to try to understand what \textit{America} is. “[P]laying Indian,” Deloria contends, “has been central to efforts to imagine and materialize
distinctive American identities” (129). Early in America’s history, an American identity served as a way for White colonists to shed and to replace a British identity. Playing “Indian” endures today as a way of stepping into an imagined past in America.

If the representations of redface in twenty-first-century sitcom episodes of *Yes, Dear, My Wife and Kids*, and *The Suite Life of Zack and Cody* are any indication, then sitcoms in the near future will include more redface. In fact, *The Suite Life of Zack and Cody* “Boston Tea Party,” this study’s most recent example of redface (2006), contains the most characters in redface—nearly two dozen—of all analyzed sitcom episodes. Tied with *The Brady Bunch* “Brady Braves” for the second highest total of nine “Indian” players is the 2002 *Yes, Dear* “Dances with Couch.” *The Simpsons* “Bart of War” (2003) includes Bart and several of his friends in redface in the “Indian” club Pre-Teen Braves.

Not only are the general numbers increasing, but characters of different races are joining the “fun,” too. In *The Suite Life of Zack and Cody* “Boston Tea Party,” Mexican immigrant Esteban plays “Indian.” In *Yes, Dear* “Dances with Couch,” male White Americans and Asian Americans play “Indian” in the West Los Angeles Tribe of Indian Scouts. In *My Wife and Kids* “Michael’s Tribe,” African American Michael Kyle plays as “Chief Bald Eagle” for two female African Americans and one White American who comprise the “Indian Princesses.” Although blackface and, to a lesser extent, brownface and yellowface are taboo in society today, redface is not for increasing numbers of non-Native minorities.

Sitcoms also use non-White characters to contribute to the limited logic of “Indians” through stereotyping. In *The Suite Life of Zack and Cody* “Boston Tea Party,” the two characters that scream and fear an “Indian” attack are London, an Asian American, and Moseby, an African American, each of whose ethnicity is never mentioned in an otherwise White-principled,
middle/upper-class sitcom. In *Happy Days* “Fonzie’s New Friend” (1975), Richie throws a Hawaiian party and invites his band’s new, one-episode drummer Sticks, an African American. Most of the other invited guests, all White, do not attend because of Sticks’ race. Ironically, in an episode that focuses on racial tensions between Whites and Blacks in the 1950s, the White and Black characters who do attend the party stereotype Pacific Islanders by playing Hawaiian. Sticks also supports the limitedness of the sitcom’s “Indian” by announcing, “I’m gonna play those drums until Indians show up.”

Although the U. S. has been, is, and will be inhabited by Indigenous Peoples, real Native Peoples are unnecessary for “Indian” players, who construct their personal “Indians” for personal gain in a sitcom version of what Coco Fusco calls “the commodification of ethnicity” (7). As popular sitcoms have proven time and again, networks (and everyone employed by them, including their sitcom casts and crews) profit through redface. And as long as playing “Indian” in sitcom scripts sells, “Indian” players will likely be readily constructed for televisual consumption.

INDIGENIZING TELEVISION: AN ALTER-NATIVE TO REDFACE

Non-Native-owned mainstream television, a key component of the media and powerful influencer in American society, has done very little to decolonize its representations of Indigenes and pseudo-“Indians.” One cannot expect, though, a televisual form of media colonialism to become a decolonizing agent. “As the colonizer’s discourse,” Diana George and Susan Sanders assert, “television has yet to find a way of giving true voice to those identified as Other” (450). In its current form, television *cannot* give true voice. Like other fictional genres, American sitcoms perpetuate normalized representations of Native Peoples within the larger-than-television master narrative.
Yet any representations of Natives in sitcoms or elsewhere in American television programming is very rare. As Children Now’s 2004 study of racial representations in primetime television reveals, Native actors comprised just 0.2% and 0.3% of the actors listed in the opening credits of major network shows in 2000 and 2001, respectively. In 1999 and 2004, the number stood at zero. In sitcoms, only King of the Hill includes a recurring Native character. Otherwise, Indigenes are practically invisible.

Since the early 1980s, Sonny Skyhawk and Mark Reed of the organization American Indians in Film & TV have attempted to bring Indigenous actors into prominent roles in Hollywood. In the American Indians in Film & TV 2006 report card on networks’ (lack of) employment of Indigenes in production or acting roles during the 2005-2006 season, Reed concludes that “American Indians remain invisible in primetime TV. There was a combined average employment of 8,000 guest starring roles, 400 recurring roles and 1,000 regular roles cast by the four networks [CBS, NBC, ABC, and Fox]. It is appalling that only one recurring and two guest starring roles were filled by an American Indian” (“Report Card”). In response to the lack of Native writers and directors, Reed and his staff gave each network a grade of “F.”

“Now is the time,” according to LaDonna Harris (Comanche), “for Native Americans to define for ourselves within the context of our own cultures, what kind of leaders we need for the 21st century.” “It is imperative,” N. Scott Momaday (Kiowa) says, “that the Indian defines himself, that he finds the strength to do so, that he refuses to let others define him” (76). As Wilma Mankiller (Cherokee) reminds Indigenes, “If we don’t frame the issues, someone else will frame the issues for us.” These three well-respected and well-known elders from three Indigenous nations provide Native Peoples with hope to produce and to see local and global changes in good ways.
The media is a major tool in bringing about these changes. Moreover, many Indigenous Peoples want to see Indigenes in the media. In her 1998 survey with 74 self-identifying Natives in a northwestern U.S. college, Debra Merskin recorded Indigenous insights on the relationship between media, representation, and control. “Although it is obvious that some producers are attempting to be more accurate,” an Arapaho woman in Merskin’s study said, “it can never be fully accomplished unless the producer, writers, et cetera, are Native Americans” (342). A Cheyenne man wants to see “more Indians behind those cameras and microphones, writing and producing stuff for the mass market about their own cultures, speaking for themselves/ourselves, with many voices” (342). “Native Americans today,” an Apache man adds, “need to take a proactive role in defining themselves. Only then will correct perceptions follow in the mass media” (342). His stance on controlling how one is represented and defined in the media is related to Harris’, Momaday’s, and Mankiller’s calls to Indigenes to take control of all Indigenous issues.

Personally, I want television to empower, not devalue, Indigenous Peoples. Today’s perpetuators of the master narrative in sitcoms, the Viacoms, Time Warners, and Disneys, should be challenged for their product. “Stereotypes,” as Sierra Adare contends in 2005, “do harm.” “It may be a new millennium,” she elaborates, “but it’s already filled with very old stereotypes about the Indigenous population [in the U.S.]” (6). Raymond Stedman’s question in 1982, twenty-five years ago, is still relevant today: “What about tens of millions of residents of the United States who leave the whole matter [of learning about Native Peoples] to the popular media?” (4). More specifically, what about the millions whose knowledge of Indigenous Peoples is almost entirely limited to Kevin Costner and his Dances with Wolves (1990) or to Disney and its Indian in the Cupboard (1995)? (What if Natives’ knowledge of White people were restricted
to made-up movies *Waltzes with Whites* or *White Man in the Pantry*?) What about the tens of millions of non-Native U.S. residents who *continue* to rely solely on the media to “know” Indigenes?

To diminish the representations of mis-leading “Indians,” steps are being taken towards making the nearly invisible openly visible on American television. In its annual report card, American Indians in Film & TV assigns grades for “Network Commitment to Diversity.” While CBS and NBC received a “C” in 2006, Fox and ABC earned a “B.” “Fox has created partnerships with Indian organizations,” Reed explains, “to increase their ability to include American Indians in their products.” In fact, the Oneida Nation awarded the Fox sitcom *Malcolm in the Middle* in 2002 “with a special award for positive portrayals of American Indians on television” (James May “Fox Opens”). Reed praises ABC as “a leader in their commitment to diversity. They have increased their outreach and training programs for American Indians” (“Report Card”). The most prominent program is The Walt Disney Studios six-week ABC Summer Television & Film Workshop for aspiring Native scriptwriters, hosted since 2004 by the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe.

Several Native sources educate Indigenes about these types of opportunities. Native American Public Telecommunications and Native Networks of the Smithsonian Institute are leading major resources for information on current developments and career opportunities in Indigenous media. Native American Television, or NATV, is, as its Web site explains, “the first Native American nonprofit Television-Radio-Web-Podcast multimedia news network and technology training organization” (“About Us”). Blogs, too, such as those at NativeVue.org, report the latest news on Indigenous Peoples in Indigenous and mainstream media.
Unfortunately, no Indigenous television network currently exists in the U. S. In contrast, the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network in Canada presents programming by and starring First Nations. Māori Television in New Zealand contributes to revitalizing the Māori language and culture. In the U. S., efforts are being made to bring Native programming and eventually a Native network to cable television. The Native Media and Television Network, in particular, says that its “primary purpose is to create film, television, Internet and multimedia programming and assets, and in the process training, employing and empowering Native Americans in all aspects of design and development, production, distribution, ownership and partnership within the entertainment industry” (“Homepage”). In 1995 and 2005, Joanelle Romero pitched the idea of an Indigenous network to television executives but was denied both times. So, in 2006, Romero launched the Red Nation Web Television Channel at www.rednation.com. Although Red Nation currently offers only a select number of downloadable documentaries and other videos on its site, Romero’s work is among the closest and most promising products to a 24/7 cable Native network on American television. The Internet, in fact, opens up more economically feasible opportunities for Indigenes. Still, to see an Indigenous network on cable television would be a major step in controlling representation. The Red Nation “channel carries so much hope,” Romero says, “because not only our generation and our elders are going to be able to say, ‘Look, there we are and we are a part of this now,’ our youth are going to be able to identify very strongly” (qtd. in Herrmann “Red Nation”).

Much of the contemporary work in television by Natives contributes to the welfare of the current and future generations of young Indigenes. In Children Now’s 1999 study on Native children’s perceptions of television, respondents expressed disappointment and feelings of exclusion with the lack of Indigenous exposure on television. As a thirteen-year-old Comanche
boy said, “I don’t see any Native Americans in the media.” Elaborating on the importance of the Red Nation channel for Indigenous youth, Romero says, “They’re going to have a voice with this television channel, and they’re going to be able to relate and have an image of themselves every single day” (qtd. in Herrmann “Red Nation”).

The release of Smoke Signals in 1998 marked a major moment in cinematic history for Indigenous Peoples. At the premiere in a theatre in Tempe, Arizona, Robert Warrior (Osage) observed that “what those young people in Tempe and thousands of filmgoers that summer saw was pretty much new to them: American Indian actors playing American Indian characters, saying words written by American Indian screenwriters, and following direction from an American Indian director” (qtd. in Singer vii). Personally, I look forward to the series premiere of the first Indigenous sitcom and to the reactions by young Indigenous viewers.

To see the shift from the sitcom’s “Indian” to the Indigenous sitcom will open more doors, including ones that may lead to the creation of additional Native sitcoms and then a Native television network to air the increased Indigenous programming. With this programming, viewers can expect to see marked increases in the visibility of Indigenous actors, directors, producers, and writers in American television, all of which is necessary in the process of Indigenizing television. To Indigenize television is to see the fruition of television programs funded, directed, produced, and written by Natives that star Native actors and include Native languages (with English subtitles) and Native advisors, Native consultants, and Native script reviewers.

Indigenous Peoples fulfilling positions of creative control, such as directors and producers, can bring changes to the televisual landscape. To see more Native actors portraying Native characters on screen can provide Indigenous viewers of all ages with representation.
Imagine real Indigenes controlling how Indigenous characters are depicted on television screens. Imagine Indigenes providing audiences with culturally-informed Indigenous representations, not non-Native imaginings of “Indians.” There is hope that the numbers of Indigenes behind-the-camera and on-screen will increase. “We are looking forward with optimism,” Reed concludes in the 2006 American Indians in Film & TV report. “The networks all acknowledge this exclusion and have expressed a desire to correct the invisibility of the American Indian” (“Report Card”). Time, then, will tell if the networks enact, not just express, their desire. Time, too, will tell whether an Indigenous network with Indigenous sitcoms and other Indigenous programming becomes a reality.
Notes

1 When I first identify the title of a situation comedy in this dissertation, I will place the sitcom’s original broadcast years in parentheses.

2 A European invention and misnomer rooted in colonialism and easily recognized in the U.S. as a racial identifier to refer to Indigenous Peoples, “Indians” will be placed in quotes when stated throughout this study. I also will generally refer to the non-Native sitcom characters who play “Indian” as “Indians.”

3 See pages 12-15 of this dissertation for a discussion of why I have chosen to analyze sitcoms.

4 Whether a Native actor or non-Native actor is cast as an “Indian” character, both are arguably playing “Indian” in more than one sense of the phrase. On one hand, she or he plays, or portrays, a character on screen. On another, she or he, under the power structures of a White-dominated Hollywood, engages in the process of playing “Indian.” For clarity, my primary focus in this study is on non-Native characters who play, or pretend to be, “Indian.”

5 See Mihesuah’s “Academic Gatekeepers,” 44, and Wilson’s “Reclaiming Our Humanity,” 85, in Indigenizing the Academy.

6 Kanien’kehaka is the name that Mohawks say to refer to themselves.

7 See Deloria’s Playing Indian and Benjamin Woods Labaree’s The Boston Tea Party.


9 For scholarship on “Indian” mascots and their non-Native fans and supporters, see C. Richard King and Charles Springwood’s Team Spirits. On New Age gatherings, see Philip Deloria’s “Counterculture Indians and the New Age,” 154-180, in Playing Indian. On whiteshaman poetry and literary performances, see Wendy Rose’s “The Great Pretenders:
Further Reflections on Whiteshamanism.” On Mardi Gras “Indians,” see George Lipsitz’s *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture*, 223-253. On cowboy and “Indian” play, see Michael Yellow Bird’s “Cowboys and Indians.”

10 See the groups’ official Web site www.redmen.org. For further historical discussion of The Improved Order of Red Men, see Deloria’s *Playing Indian*, 62-68.

11 White Americans’ “play” at becoming the Other in order to construct an authentic American identity is not limited to playing “Indian.” For scholarship on the shaping of American whiteness through the production and reception of blackface minstrelsy shows in the nineteenth century, see Alexander Saxton’s *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic: Class Politics and Mass Culture in Nineteenth-Century America*, Eric Lott’s *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*, and David Roediger’s *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*. Yellowface, too, as Robert Lee’s *Orientals: Asian Americans in Popular Culture* and Krystyn Moon’s *Yellowface: Creating the Chinese in American Popular Music and Performance, 1850s-1920s* have discussed, has been a popular form of racial masquerading by White Americans.

12 With rare exceptions, such as Cuban American Ricky Ricardo in *I Love Lucy* “The Indian Show” (1953) and African American Michael Kyle in *My Wife and Kids* (2001-2005) “Michael’s Tribe” (2002), the non-Natives who play “Indian” are predominantly White. For purposes of discussion in this “Introduction,” I will group all non-Native “Indian” players into one collective.

13 While real Native actors who occasionally have been cast as “Indians” in sitcoms are arguably also performing in White-constructed redface, they are not my primary focus. In addition, this dissertation will not examine the White actors cast in *F Troop* as the recurring
characters Hekawi “Indians.” I acknowledge these two areas in casting and “Indian” actors in redface as important for study, but I will concentrate in this dissertation on non-Native characters that generally did not play “Indian” in more than one or two episodes.

14 Whereas occasional news stories of contemporary instances of racialized blackface make national headlines, redface is predominantly overlooked by the mainstream media.

15 When Greg tells Bobby and Peter that they will play the parts of pilgrims in Greg’s movie, Bobby exclaims, “I wanna be an Indian!”

16 As defined in the “Introduction,” “representations of redface” are those specific images of and discourses about Indigenous Peoples as enacted and spoken by Native or non-Native characters who “play Indian.”

17 As defined in the “Introduction,” “playing Indian” as it relates to sitcoms is a process in which Native or non-Native characters imagine or physically perform on-camera as “Indians.”


20 For cultural studies scholarship of white privilege, see George Lipsitz’s *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics*.

22 In *Seinfeld* “The Library” (1991), Jerry refers to Columbus as “Eurotrash” after Elaine mentions a biography on the explorer.


24 According to Denis, whitestream is the idea that White experiences constitute the norm and the underlying structures of American society.

25 Although Tatum does not describe the young kids as bigoted, she astutely states, “[T]he stereotypes to which they have been exposed become the foundation for the adult prejudices so many of us have” (101).

26 Independence, Taiaiake Alfred explains, “is to respect, value, and honor differences,” and interdependence involves “the sharing of space” (92).

27 See Cornel Pewewardy’s “So You Think You Hired an ‘Indian’ Faculty Member?: The Ethnic Fraud Paradox in Higher Education.”

28 For an account of different enrollment criteria among different Indigenous nations, see Eva Marie Garroutte’s *Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America*.

29 In *Prime Time Animation*, Carol A. Stabile and Mark Harrison refer to *The Flintstones* and *The Simpsons* as examples of the “domestic sitcom,” “prime time animated sitcom,” and “cartoon sitcom” (9). Alison Alexander of The Museum of Broadcast Communications calls *The Flintstones* “the first […] animated situation comedy shown in prime-time television.”

30 It is worthwhile to note that “Droop-Along Flintstone” does not air in some parts of Canada because of its depictions of “Indians.”

31 See James Axtell and William C. Sturtevant’s “The Unkindest Cut, or Who Invented Scalping?”
On debates of the origin of the name “redskins,” see Suzan Shown Harjo’s “Dirty Word Games” and Guy Gugliotta’s “A Linguist’s Alternative History of ‘Redskin.’”

For clarification of the title, see page 33, note 15.

After my dissertation chair Lynda Dixon and I constructed the term “Custerization,” I then ran across Seals’ “Custerism” while researching Custer. Both terms connote similar ideas, but I prefer Custerization for its explicitly process-centered inclusion of playing “Indian” in historical reenactments and for its analogous sounds to the word “colonization.”

One year later, in October 1971, the Bradys get “Indianized” into the Brady Braves. Apparently, Bobby and Peter could not wait. The episode “Brady Braves” is analyzed in chapter four.

In “The Manicurist” (1962), Ellen Brown, who was portrayed by I Dream of Jeannie star Barbara Eden, visits Mayberry and mentions the sign.

For scholarship on Cherokee removal from North Carolina, see Theda Perdue and Michael Green’s The Cherokee Removal: A Brief History with Documents.

Actor Don Knotts, who portrayed Barney Fife, also played “Indian” in Shakiest Gun in the West (1968), in which he portrayed a bumbling anti-“Indian” dentist who, near the end of the film, cross-dressed as a Comanche woman to disguise himself from White and Comanche villains.

Like Lucy in I Love Lucy, Barney is depicted as a weak performer with high aspirations. For example, he thinks he has an incredible singing voice in The Andy Griffith Show “Barney and the Choir” (1962), “Rafe Hollister Sings” (1963), and “The Song Festers” (1964). Everyone around him thinks otherwise. In “Barney and the Choir,” Barney’s girlfriend Thelma
Lou exclaims, “He can’t sing!” In “The Pageant,” the director John Masters believes that Barney cannot act.

40 Meek defines “Hollywood Injun English” (HIE) as “a composite of grammatical ‘abnormalities’ that marks the way Indians speak and differentiates their speech from Standard American English” (95). In simpler terms, she also defines HIE “as a stereotypic non-Native fictional representation of American Indian speech” (123).

41 A more extensive version of Anzaldúa’s definition is as follows: “the Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy” (Preface of Borderlands).

42 I have not located a real book titled Blood-curdling Indian Tales.

43 Today, readers have books and articles by reputable Indigenous historians, such as James Riding In (Pawnee), Devon Mihesuah (Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma), and Waziyatawin Angela Wilson (Wahpetunwan Dakota), to peruse. Despite the advances over the past fifty years by Indigenous scholars and non-Native allies-scholars to present Native perspectives and more balanced views of historical and contemporary relations between Indigenes and non-Indigenes, most American sitcoms with representations of redface continue to rely on outdated, misinformed sources.

44 Once the “Indian” show begins later in the episode, the two “Indians” have insignificant roles. Both only stand stoically like cigar-store “Indians” near the club’s stage entrance. In fact, the wooden “Indian” in Seinfeld “The Cigar Store Indian” (1993) moved farther than Ricky’s “Indians” when Kramer transported it across New York City in a taxi. In I Love
Lucy, Ricky’s wish to include “Indians” presumably lends itself to authenticating and justifying the show’s theme and content.

45 Lucy’s gesture is very comparable to Alice’s and Carol’s comments about “friendly Indians” in The Brady Bunch “Un-Underground Movie.” See pages 66-67 in this dissertation.

46 According to the Lieurance Collection at Wichita State University, “‘By the Waters of Minnetonka’ was inspired by a Sioux Love Song recorded by Mr. [Thurlow] Lieurance in October, 1911, on the Crow Reservation in Montana. The tune was sung by Sitting Eagle, a Sioux” (“Thurlow Lieurance”).

47 I know of no reservations in Tennessee nor Crowfeet “Indians” anywhere. The nearest resemblance to Crowfeet is Crowfoot, or Isapo-Muxika, a nineteenth-century leader of the Blackfoot People in Canada.

48 In The Beverly Hillbillies “Turkey Day,” Granny attacks two “Indian” characters, who were hired from a movie studio by Mrs. Drysdale to pose for an “authentic” Thanksgiving photograph. After Granny shoots at and frightens away the Hollywood “Indians” in “The Indians are Coming,” the supreme Hollywood “Indian” fighter John Wayne appears in a cameo. “Where were ya,” Granny asks the Duke, “when I needed ya?”

49 In the DVD director’s commentary of “The Son Also Draws,” the creators of Family Guy converse about their surprise that they received very little criticism after the episode aired.

50 Ethnic fraud, as Angela Gonzaelz (Hopi) defines it, is “the deliberate falsification or changing of ethnic identities in an attempt to achieve personal advantage or gain.”

51 According to the 2000 U. S. Census, the number of people identifying as “American Indian and Alaska Native” is 4.3 million (Stella Ogunwole 1).
The Bradys search for adventure again during the first three episodes of season four in Hawaii. Like in “Brady Braves,” the Bradys befriend a Hawaiian native and his grandfather.

For *The Brady Bunch* in the early 1970s to identify specific tribes may be representative of some increased awareness of Native Peoples in U. S. educational curricula. Mr. Brady’s mentioning of the Hualapai and other Indigenous Peoples is a progressive departure from generic, tribeless “Indians” in 1950s *I Love Lucy* and made-up Columbia “Indians” in 1960s *Beverly Hillbillies*. Before *The Brady Bunch* “Brady Braves,” however, *The Andy Griffith Show* “Battle of Mayberry” in 1966 included Mayberry resident Tom Strongbow, whose tribal affiliation was stated as Cherokee. Disappointingly, recent sitcom episodes, such as *Yes, Dear* “Dances with Couch” and *Family Guy* “The Son Also Draws,” still speak of a homogenous, nameless supratribal of “Indians.”

Mr. Brady’s words remind me of Vine Deloria’s observation that many Native professionals put their work title before their tribal affiliation. An example of an Indigenous intellectual who places his tribal community first is Jeff Corntassel, who, following the lead of Cherokee anthropologist Robert Thomas, has written, “I am a Tsalagi first and a trained political scientist second” (161). Tsalagi is Cherokees’ own name for each other.

In 1990, *Dances with Wolves* premiered in Los Angeles on November 4 and opened to a limited release on November 9. It was released nationwide on November 21.

If *Saved by the Bell* had been on in the 1970s like *The Brady Bunch*, then Zack’s White female teacher may have served as the White Mr. Brady-like “Indian” expert. This observation is debatable, of course, considering the politics of gender and patriarchy. My point is that White characters have historically served as the “Indian” experts and thus, seemingly know Indigenes better than Indigenes know themselves.
Similarly, George Ten Fingers, a Native character in *Barney Miller* “The Indian” (1979), dies after helping Detective Wojo, the nickname of White recurring character Stan Wojciehowicz., to understand more about human life and his surroundings. Wojo initially arrested Ten Fingers for loitering in a park and for talking “crazily” about wanting to die but then took his newly found, stereotypically wise “Indian” elder back to the park, the land of Ten Fingers’ people, to die.

The Order of the Straight Arrow is also the name of a program in the Boy Scouts of America.

Earlier, when Michael is curious about indigenous ways of living, he asks, “How?” Rachel responds with her own inquiries, “Are you asking me a question? Or are you doing a cruel parody of a noble people?”

When he says, “very, very,” Michael sounds like he slips from a stereotypical American “Indian” accent into a stereotypical South Asian Indian American accent, as heard elsewhere in the clichéd Hollywood line, “American been very, very good to me.” Or for a similar example, when Jerry Seinfeld causes Babu, a Pakistani immigrant in New York, to be deported back to India in *Seinfeld* “The Visa” (1993), Babu says, “[Jerry] is a very bad man, very, very bad man.”

The title of the photograph is “Red Cloud Woman in Beauty Shop, Denver 1941.”

To see humanizing representations of Indigenes on television also carries caution. Native-constructed representations may present more ideas for non-Native-owned sitcoms to appropriate and abuse. Hence, new representations of redface could result, ones which non-Native-owned sitcoms can claim are more accurate if they cite the aforementioned Indigenous-constructed sources.
I credit Angela Cavendor Wilson’s “American Indian History or Non-Indian Perceptions of American Indian History” for this argument and counterargument.

Although Ricky Ricardo, a Cuban American, was among the first “Indian” players in sitcom history, his “Cubanness,” as it appeared in his stereotypical English speech (e.g., “‘splaining” instead of “explaining”) and Cuban anger, was primarily used by Desi Arnaz, the co-owner of DesiLu Studios where *I Love Lucy* was filmed and the actor who portrayed Ricky, to generate laughs at his own expense. In other words, Arnaz had much of the creative control over how he was portrayed as a Cuban American. Even with the inclusion of Ricky Ricardo, *I Love Lucy*, part of the ambiguously pre-color TV era, is clearly a sitcom of White characters and White guest characters.

I also believe all Native peoples would do well to consider Oren Lyons’ (Onondaga) words in response to a question about keeping tradition and ceremony in the lives of young Indigenes: “If you go into any house that I know these days, there are at least two or three televisions in there. There’s one in every room; that seems to be standard. That is probably the most invasive and consistent presence in our lives, and it’s totally commercial. So you are just bombarded by commerce, and you don’t know anything, you don’t know any better” (qtd. in Taiaiake Alfred 239).
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Situation Comedy Episodes Cited

_The Andy Griffith Show_


_Berny Miller_


_The Beverly Hillbillies_


*The Brady Bunch*


*Dennis the Menace*


*Everybody Loves Raymond*


*The Flintstones*


*F Troop*


*Green Acres*


*Happy Days*


Here’s Lucy


Home Improvement


I Love Lucy


King of the Hill


Malcolm in the Middle


“Cliques.” Malcolm in the Middle. Fox. 5 May 2002.

Mister Ed


My Wife and Kids


Munsters

The New Adventures of Old Christine


Petticoat Junction


Saved by the Bell


Seinfeld


The Simpsons


South Park


The Suite Life of Zack and Cody


Three’s Company


Yes, Dear

“Dances with Couch.” Yes, Dear. CBS. 8 Apr. 2002.