Nasty Noble Savages: The Politics of Hunter/Gatherer Representation

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NASTY NOBLE SAVAGES:
THE POLITICS OF HUNTER/GATHERER REPRESENTATION

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ABSTRACT

This project explores the relationship of hunter/gatherer representation to power relationships in academia, popular culture, and indigenous rights. Hunter/gatherer studies is a controversial subject in which even the most highly skilled experts struggle with basic questions such as who counts as a hunter/gatherer. Meanwhile, a wave of human nature discourse under the name of “evolutionary psychology” has become increasingly popular over the last fifteen years, basing itself on misunderstandings of hunter/gatherer cultures and human evolution. Evolutionary psychologists selectively choose ethnographic data that fits a human nature narrative he or she is comfortable with, reinforcing personal as well as cultural ideology under an illusory cloak of science. However, as opposed to this being a self-aware conspiracy, these researchers genuinely believe the accuracy of their interpretations due to the depth of their ideological assumptions. Indigenous people worldwide are relatively powerless to refute these claims, which insult their cultures and reinforce stereotypes ranging from noble, wise, and frail, to savage, wild, and irrationally violent. Even the political theory driving world politics, most notably realism, is based on these stereotypes taken as human nature. Only in the last few decades has an indigenous rights movements gained momentum, with indigenous peoples reclaiming land, autonomy, and self-representation. This movement has taken hold on many levels, from indigenous owned media outlets all the way to a Declaration of Indigenous Rights that is in the process of being accepted by the United Nations General Assembly. Australian indigenous peoples have dealt with racism since colonization and have created a strong multi-level indigenous rights movement in the last few decades, serving as a case study for the project. This movement is based largely on indigenous artists and media outlets, such as Goolarri Media Corporation where I conducted field research for a month in spring of 2006. Goolarri facilitated cultural understanding through indigenous self-representation as well as political activism in both overt and subtle forms. Indigenous media will be of increasing importance in the emerging indigenous rights movement, as will a critical reexamination in academia and governmental policy of the ways in which one’s own assumptions regarding human nature and origins influence what he or she sees and what (as well as who) gets ignored.
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Introduction

The goal of my project is to bring together a variety of issues, topics, and perspectives relating to the representation of historical as well as contemporary hunter/gatherer peoples. The academic study of hunter/gatherers, contemporary human nature discourse, and political theory are deeply rooted in assumptions about human nature and origins. By juxtaposing these intellectual traditions as well as investigating both their common and divergent philosophical roots, I will bring to the surface inherent ideological assumptions that often remain invisible.

In the project I discuss the ways in which these intellectual traditions are interconnected to the recent ascendancy of the indigenous rights movement, stressing the need for indigenous self-representation for political agency. I examine indigenous Australia as a case study, using the toolkit of perspectives I develop throughout the project in order to understand how their struggle for autonomy and human rights is interconnected to academic theoretical traditions, contemporary politics, and the global indigenous rights movement. Finally, I explore the effectiveness of indigenous media through fieldwork conducted at Goolarri Media Corporation, in Broome, Australia.
Chapter 1: Hunter/Gatherers: Past and Present

Only to the white man was nature a "wilderness" and only to him was the land "infested" with "wild" animals and "savage" people. To us it was tame.

- Luther Standing Bear, Chief of the Oglala Sioux

1.1 Introduction

The Miriam Webster dictionary defines a hunter/gatherer as “a member of a culture in which food is obtained by hunting, fishing, and foraging rather than by agriculture or animal husbandry” (Miriam Webster, 2007). However, this simple definition is rather one-dimensional. The rise of agriculture was not just a change in the way people procured food. It was a fundamental shift in world-view and lifestyle, the effects of which permeate so deeply into our cultural belief system that they are largely invisible. There is a history to the concept of the hunter/gatherer that goes back to the beginning of civilization itself. Whether portrayed as noble, savage, scary, or irrelevant, the ways that modern societies have represented hunter/gatherers tells one more about the describers than the described. In this chapter, I explore the ways that modern societies, and in particular, the United States, have understood the hunter/gatherer. I touch on many points of contention in the study of hunter/gatherers, in order to demonstrate the conceptual complexity that is involved, as well as the ease with which researcher bias filters what is seen and what remains invisible.
1.2 Defining Terms

Although the distinction between hunter/gatherers and agriculturalists is not perfect, and few societies are purely one or the other, in terms of considering simply the source of a society’s food, almost all fall to one general extreme or the other (Panter-Brick, 2001, p.3). Therefore, it is a useful practical term in the sense that it neatly divides two fundamentally different types of societies. Alan Barnard points out that the term hunter/gatherer itself focuses on the subsistence rather than other shared attributes (Barnard, 2004, p.2). This is due to the influence of ideas regarding social evolution and colonialism that characterized the political climate in the late eighteen hundreds, when the term became commonly used. The term today connotes not only elements of food collection, but also of world-view, social organization, and ties to land as well.

Hunter/gatherer is characterized by Lee and Daly as a “working term” that doesn’t perfectly describe all foraging peoples, as some rely almost virtually completely on hunting or gathering (Panter-Brick, 2001, p.2). Despite its limitations, hunter/gatherer has generally been chosen over other terms for its relative lack of the negative connotations compared to the terms foragers, natives, or aboriginals (Bettinger, 1991, p.73). I will use this term, as it is the most accepted one for describing “pre-agricultural” peoples. I wish to make it clear, however, that I will include within the term, cultural and philosophical dimensions that are often more significant than subsistence patterns.

Another distinction I make in this project is between hunter/gatherers and indigenous people. I will use the term hunter/gatherer to refer to people and societies living relatively unaffected by civilization. I will refer to people who identify with their native heritage while living everyday lives in close connection with the modern world, as
indigenous. I make this distinction while recognizing certain weaknesses and limitations that it carries. The extent to which hunter/gatherers are affected by the modern world is highly contested. I will explore this issue later in chapter four. I choose the term indigenous over others such as Native, Aboriginal, or First Nation, due to its relative lack of negative connotations, as well as its wide acceptance as a preferred term (Barnard, 2004, p. 3). Both the terms hunter/gatherer and indigenous should be seen as useful and not absolute descriptions.

1.3 Historical Contexts

Throughout history, representation of the hunter/gatherer has been closely tied to philosophy. The idea of the noble savage is commonly understood today as the romanticizing of hunter/gatherer peoples’ lives, popularized by the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau. While his use of the “noble savage” in his writings is the most well known and referenced, the term was actually coined by John Dryden, who thought that hunter/gatherers lived in a state of grace from which the rest of humanity had fallen (Adams, 1998, p. 37). Ellington argues that the amount of people that bought into the noble savage myth has been vastly overstated by a few politically savvy anthropologists seeking fame in the early twentieth century (Ellington, 2001, p. 68). The idea of noble savages was almost non-existent during the predominantly Christian middle ages in which non-Christians were condemned as sinners. It has only made a comeback since the Renaissance, especially in the description of Native Americans in Europe (Adams, 1998, p.80).
Currently, however, noble savage is the term most commonly used to characterize an idealization of hunter/gatherers. This basic notion goes back much further than Rousseau, from antiquity in the Greek myth of Scythians of Herodotus, all the way up to modern examples such as the movie, *Dances with Wolves*. It is generally thought of as an overly positive attitude towards native peoples because it reads indigenous cultures as sustainable, spiritual, and morally wise. However, it also describes them as easily tempted by the modern world and passively fragile in their nobility.

The flip side of the same historical coin of hunter/gatherer representation can be summed up through Thomas Hobbes’ infamous depiction of “primitive man’s” existence as “nasty, brutish, and short” (Hobbes, 2005). He was a leading proponent of the philosophical perspective of natural law that stressed the instinct of self-preservation as the primary source of motivation (Adams, 1998, p.148). This perspective may be seen as echoing today in “selfish gene theory,” in which genes, rather than individuals are all trying primarily to maximize their own genetic fitness (Adams, 1998, p.42).

Since those studying hunter/gatherers are overwhelmingly anthropologists, the history of that discipline’s philosophical shifts provides insight and context into how anthropological ideas and methods have evolved. The publishing of Darwin’s *Origin of the Species* in 1859 marked a popular shift for scientists in understanding human origins. For the first time, our human history was seen as being intricately tied to hunter/gatherer societies. However, social evolutionism of the time, which was a popular anthropological theory of the time that placed civilization qualitatively higher than hunting and gathering, told a story of man evolving “upward,” progressing from ape to caveman and finally to modern humans. This may be seen in the popular image of several profiles of apes that
are shown as progressively more upright until there is a hunter/gatherer “caveman”, usually with lots of hair and a club or spear. After him, stands the well-groomed nearly hairless modern human. This is part of a popular false belief that there is a progressive time shift from hunter/gatherers to “us” (Shepard, 1996, p.32). There are still people today living as hunter/gatherers that are as “contemporary” as anyone else.

Progressivism has also been an influential perspective in the history of anthropology. This perspective used to be more explicitly expressed with a hierarchical measurement of social evolution from the lowly savage to the sophisticated nation state. This is tied to colonialism, and it still takes form in subtle ways, such as the relationship of the “expert” ethnographer and the group of people that he or she is “studying”. The flip side of this perspective is known as primitivism. This is the view that treats pre-colonial societies as more “pure” than modern societies. It glorifies hunter/gatherers and condemns civilization. Taken to its extreme, it prizes nonhuman animals over people.

Franz Boaz divides primitivism into two main types; historical, which sees a downward progression, and cultural, which doesn’t claim this so much as champions simplicity as preferable to busyness and complexity (Adams, 1998, p.75).

In the last couple of decades, anthropology has become flooded with self-examination and self-doubt due to the influence of postmodernist theory. The colonial ties of anthropology have been analyzed, especially in relation to the power relationship of the ethnographer to the people being studied (Adams, 1998, p.129). This relationship is particularly critical in the study of hunter/gathers, where it is easy for misunderstanding and bias to distort findings.
1.4 Hunter/Gatherer Studies: A Brief Disciplinary History

A logical starting point for understanding contemporary hunter/gatherer representation in our culture is through the discipline of hunter/gatherer studies. Hunter/gatherer studies is the name given to the formal study of societies that are relatively unaffected by the civilized world (Barnard, 2004, p.23). While it is increasingly interdisciplinary, it is heavily weighted towards cultural anthropology, because it is the only discipline that deals with primary data on hunter/gatherers. However, also applicable as commentary and reflective critiques, are postcolonial and indigenous writers, which I will discuss later in the chapter. As a cohesive discipline, hunter/gatherer studies goes back only to 1966, when a seminal conference titled *Man the Hunter* was held in Chicago. This was the first time academics came together to present and debate papers specifically on hunter/gatherer societies (Barnard, 2004, p.4). Since this first national meeting, there have been five more Conferences on Hunting and Gathering Societies (CHAGS). The discipline has become increasingly open to non-anthropologists including economists, biologists, linguists, and archaeologists.

One of the biggest points of contention in the young discipline is over which characteristics in hunter/gatherer societies should be emphasized. One model, proposed by Lee and Daly, suggests the categories of subsistence, social organization, and worldview. Others have attempted to create holistic “packages” that incorporate many aspects of the societies (Lee and Daly, 1999, p. 34). However, there are no objective criteria for inclusion, and the way that different scholars have done this seems to reflect primarily their basic assumptions. Some characterize hunting and gathering as a “stage” of human development. This reveals a progressivist assumption to human social evolution. While
that perspective has fallen out of fashion, it still often appears implicitly. For example, in archaeologist Peter Bogucki’s *The Origins of Human Society*, at the end of his chapter on hunter/gatherer societies he writes that the ability of agriculture to create a “release from proximity in human social relations, human societies would have taken yet another step to distinguish themselves (humans) from being simply a very successful primate” (Bogucki, 1999, p. 77).

Marxist scholars focus on the means of production, labor, and the way exchanges occur. From this functional materialist framework, beliefs accord themselves with material realities. This mode of thought however is limiting, in that it creates a one-dimensional understanding (Ichikawa, 2004 p.112).

Economists tend to assume a functionalist perspective when studying hunter/gatherer societies, lacking a sufficient inclusion of the influence of culture. One of the most influential divisions using an economical framework is Binford’s model of two types of foraging to describe hunter/gatherer societies. It is based on the idea that food procuring will tend towards maximum efficiency. He divides hunter/gatherer societies up into immediate return and delayed return groups. However, his premise has been criticized for being oversimplified and not accounting for actual contradictory ethnographic data, as well as overlooking the non-utilitarian influences of culture that don’t directly increase individual genetic fitness (Barnard, 2004, p.6). No matter which perspective one takes when studying hunter/gatherer societies, one’s political positions and basic assumptions color what is seen as well as what is not seen.

Burch describes hunter/gatherer studies as having reached a crisis point in its history. One reason for this is that hunter/gatherer peoples are increasingly being
culturally dismantled and integrated with modern society (Burch, 1994, p.65). There is also widespread disagreement about how to interpret ethnography and create generalized theory from it. Some have even gone as far as to declare the ethnographic method imperialistic in nature. Edward Said argues that basis of European ethnography depended on the incapacity of the natives to negotiate or disrupt scientific discourse about them (Said, 1986, p.142). Also, hunter/gatherers have mostly been defined by what they lack, and not what they have. Burch points to the ambiguity of defining who gets to be called a hunter/gatherer as potentially lethal to the field (Burch, 1994, p.111). Hunter/gatherer studies must prove itself to be adaptable and responsive to these issues if it is to stay relevant as a discipline.

1.5 Creating a Conceptual Framework

A significant difficulty in hunter/gatherer studies is to simultaneously juggle three aspects of difference and sameness. One must keep in mind 1) the fundamental difference between hunter/gatherer societies and agricultural societies in food acquisition, general worldview, and social organization. 2) The huge amount of variation and adaptability among hunter/gatherer societies, and finally 3) the comparability among cultural sophistication, social evolution, and humanity between hunter/gatherer and agricultural societies. To refer to this balance of ideas in my project, I will refer to these concepts together as the triangle of disequity, which I have created in order to combine the three basic concepts of diversity, separation, and equality.
The Triangle of Disequity:

It is important to point out that juggling all the points of the triangle of disequity does not result in a value-free or objective understanding of hunter/gatherers. However, keeping the three points actively in mind balances the focus of three fundamentally important relationships in the discipline. The way that one characterizes the difference between hunter/gatherer and post-agricultural societies, as well as what one looks for in hunter/gatherer diversity, will still be influenced by one’s own cultural, personal, and political values. It is of central importance for researchers to know themselves in all their biases and preferences, as well as be academically honest about them. There are better and worse understandings of hunter/gatherers, with better ones incorporating the aspects of the triangle as well as self-knowledge of one’s own biases. However, it is important to
keep in mind that even the best understandings will still be subjective in their focus to some degree.

1.6 The Generalization Problem

Battiste points out that there has been an imbalanced push since the Man the Hunter conference to find commonality and generalizations at the expense of understanding diversity and variation. He argues that while this search was historically necessary, it is time to focus on cultural diversity and points of departure (Battiste, 2000, p.84). Gowdy is not so forgiving and thinks that hunter/gatherers have been vastly overgeneralized, and the resulting homogenizing effects of this have been harmful to indigenous peoples (Gowdy, 1998, p.52). However, there are fundamental worldview attributes, that in contrast to civilizations, hunter/gather cultures share. Generalization have been proposed regarding spirituality, importance of land, nutrition, art, and foraging strategies, while cultural practices and language have been a focus of diversity inquiry (Gowdy, 1998, p.11).

One of the challenges of the triangle of dispute is keeping difference and diversity in mind simultaneously, without sacrificing one for the other. Generalization plays into popular preconceived cultural notions of hunter/gatherer peoples as differing from each other only in terms of local resources. However, although groups may share basic assumptions such as a cyclical nature of time and lack the metanarratives of progress and competitive individualism, their belief systems and social organizations vary drastically.
This distinction becomes much more important when applied to the political realities of indigenous peoples presently fighting an uphill battle for land and cultural claims. Hunter/gatherers have been over-generalized, and whether or not it makes sense historically, this bias almost certainly feeds the flame of difficulties that indigenous peoples face regarding homogenization. For example, in Australia, the government actively tried to make the hundreds of distinct Aboriginal cultures appear to be one big single group, both to legitimate war against “them,” as well as to undercut opposition to their slaughter (Battiste, 2000, p.85).

1.7 Purists vs. Revisionists: Finding the Middle Way

Until recently, most researchers have operated under the assumption that relatively isolated hunter/gatherer groups have had negligible impact from civilized society, and that although they often live in extreme environments, as a whole they closely represent people living in the Pleistocene era. It is through this perspective, called traditionalism, that many cultures, such as the seminal San Bushmen in Africa, have been studied (Barnard, 2004, p.15). A logical conclusion that is made through this perspective is that the study of contemporary hunter/gatherer societies provides a “window” into the conditions that humans are adapted to suit.

However, more recently it has been argued that contemporary hunter/gatherer societies are so influenced by modern forces that they provide no meaningful parallels to groups prior to colonial contact. This view, termed revisionism, was a reaction against the traditionalists who didn’t take into account the influence of contact, and were overly idealistic about the “purity” of the cultures they were studying. Barnard points out the
ways in which the ethnography on the San Bushmen was biased against showing modern influence. A humorous example of this happened when Marjorie Shostak, while studying the San Bushmen of Africa, had an elder tell her his opinion on whether or not O.J. Simpson was guilty, while applying poison to an arrow (Battiste, 2000, p.28).

Another revisionist argument is that even if the contemporary hunter/gatherer societies were “pure” and isolated, they occupy atypical extreme environments, such as tundra and desert, due to the historical reality that they have only survived where colonialism has not bothered to claim and develop (Barnard, 2004, p.5). This is brought as more evidence for the irrelevance of the study of contemporary hunter/gatherer peoples in relation to understanding how a vast majority of humans lived before agriculture.

The revisionists bring up valid points about the problem of idealizing contemporary hunter/gatherer peoples. However, like most reactive perspectives, they go too far, claiming that contemporary hunter/gatherer societies share no commonalities with pre-contact hunter/gatherer societies. There is a spectrum of what could be called cultural “contamination” of the contemporary hunter/gatherer societies. The revisionists often have a “one drop” mentality regarding the so-called contamination of hunter/gatherer authenticity. A more reasonable perspective would be to examine each society on a case-by-case basis, evaluate the extent to which modern society has had an influence, and then openly report the findings.

In anthropology however, there is a high value placed on studying “hunter/gatherer” peoples. Over time, as contemporary hunter/gatherer peoples have had
more and more contact with modern society, the “litmus test” for what level of isolation a society requires to get “hunter/gatherer” status has gone down (Barnard, 2004, p.5).

At its worst, our culture’s desire to find pure hunter/gatherers has led to the acceptance of hoaxes such as the famous Tasaday hoax. The Tasaday were “discovered” in the Philippines in 1971. They perfectly fit every idealized stereotype. They had never had contact of any kind, had primitive technology, had no words for “weapon,” “war,” or “enemy,” and even lived in caves. They were celebrated, studied, and received protection for decades. It turned out, however, that they were an elaborate hoax perpetrated by a fame-hungry anthropologist. All the obvious signs of the hoax, from the fact that they used bamboo that didn’t grow locally, to the curiosity of never having seen the village that was within three miles, were ignored because the hoax played perfectly into a blinding desire to find a “pure” and “uncontaminated” hunter/gatherer society (Burch, 1994, p.91).

1.8 Hunter/Gatherer Ethnography as a Cultural Mirror

“The theory of cultural bias... is the idea that a culture is based on a particular form of organization. It can't be transplanted except to another variant of that organization.”

- Mary Douglas

An ethnographer’s nationality has a large influence on their findings. Ethnographers from the same culture may come up with wildly contesting reports of cultures. For example, Mitsuo Ichikawa, in his article, “The Japanese tradition in Central Africa”, shows the diverse ways in which American, French, and Japanese
anthropologists have studied the African Pygmies, leading to widely different results. The Japanese, tending to understand humans as part of a continuum with other animals, oriented their studies towards a holistic approach (Ichikawa, 2004, p. 109). This is largely due to the history of Japanese anthropology, which was pioneered mostly by primatologists (Sugawara, 2004, p.115).

The French were more concerned with human language and culture, focusing on their linguistic diversity and cultural rituals. They also pioneered ethnomusicology. The French, unlike the Americans who were quicker to determine meanings, preferred detailed description without declaring particular meanings. American ethnographers adopted a methodology based on economics and sociobiology, in which there is an implicit assumption of rational actors acting for their own self-interest. This is also the basic tenet of neo-classical economics, on which the American capitalist system is based. It is important to understand that each ethnographer was almost certainly attempting to study the Pygmies “objectively”. It is highly unlikely that they were self aware of their cultural bias, as ethnographers work primarily with researchers within their own culture. It is only through cross-cultural analyses of ethnographers, such as Ichikawa’s, that biases reveal themselves in painfully obvious ways.

Gender has also been a major source of researcher bias, as most ethnographers have been men. It is easy to see this bias in even the name of the first CHAGS conference, titled Man the Hunter. Feminist critiques of the field have put forth woman the gatherer as an equally valid interpretation of the evidence. There has been a bias to overemphasize the importance of male hunting, while females are often characterized as adapting primarily to men’s desires so that they can secure resources for their children.
Frances Dahlberg, author of *Woman the Gatherer*, points out several logical and factual flaws in this argument. For one thing, in nearly all primate species, males compete to be selected by females (Dahlberg, 1981, p.13). Also, the accumulation of ethnographic data on hunter/gatherer societies has shown that women usually bring in a majority of the daily caloric intake, including much protein (Lee and Daly, 1999, p.11). An equally reasonable theory could suggest that men often hunt in order to compete for the attention of females, trying desperately to entice a mating and eventually produce offspring (Dahlberg, 1981, p.24). This story, while more plausible, is also a simplistic understanding of human evolution. The fact that serious academics suggested such narrative explanations for a gendered evolution of humans shows how easy it is to paint our cultural ideology on understanding hunter/gatherers and their relationship to human evolution.

### 1.9 Indigenous Voices

“We are not myths of the past, ruins in the jungle, or zoos. We are people and we want to be respected, not to be victims of intolerance and racism.”

- Rigoberta Menchu, Guatemala Nobel Peace Prize Winner, 1992

A question that is not often asked in hunter/gatherer studies is, “Why and for whom are we doing our work?” Hunter/gatherer studies is not alone in this respect, and it is a question that far too commonly lacks thoughtful reflection. Historically, there has been a disconnect between hunter/gatherer studies and the political plight that indigenous peoples face on a daily basis.
Barnard terms the native perspectives in hunter/gatherer studies as “indigenous voices” (Barnard, 2004, p.7). He argues that historically, this perspective has been left out and it is only recently been seriously considered and encouraged by most researchers. While in one way it is positive that there has been a raising of indigenous voices, it also reflects increasing pressure on both hunter/gatherer populations and indigenous political movements (Barnard, 2004, p.8).

Part of the problem of a lack of indigenous voices in academic hunter/gatherer studies is that there are few native researchers. Anthropologists are almost always white males from countries tied deeply to colonialism (Adams, 1998, p.173). The recent ascendancy of indigenous views is not due totally to political desperation, but also a response to recent easier access of natives into academia (Adams, 1998, p.31). Regardless of the reasons that inclusion is increasing, it is only relative to a previous time when there were virtually no published indigenous scholarly works.

A typical example of indigenous voices being described by non-natives is the World Bank’s Edited Edition of Indigenous Views. This document outlines the indigenous views of five cultures without a single indigenous contributor or citation. While it does make a reasonable effort to convey the basic differences between western civilization and indigenous worldviews, it lumps together all indigenous peoples of the world in a few broad sweeping remarks such as “close attachment to the land and environment is the defining characteristic of Indigenous peoples” (Davis, 1993, p. 1). This statement may seem reasonable to western writers, but only because indigenous cultures as a whole seem relatively foreign. It would be akin to a casual observer claiming that the defining characteristic of cars is that they have rubber tires. It is a true statement that all share this
quality, but it misses the huge variation between a Geo Metro and a Ferrari F-150. It makes impossible for differences in various indigenous cultures to be “defining”. Also, in the document, the motivation for understanding indigenous peoples is stated as “the potential role… in environmental planning and management” (Davis, 1993, p.2). This perspective objectifies indigenous peoples as a natural resource to be tapped, as opposed to subjects that have an intrinsic right to exist.

Both native and nonnative authors have written much on how indigenous people should be included in the study of hunter/gatherers. Georges E. Sioui, in his book *For an Amerindian Autohistory*, describes history from a native perspective. As a Huron Amerindian, he believes that the western discourse on native peoples continues to be distorted by social evolutionary ideas (Sioui, 1995, p.100). He argues that one must understand native culture deeply in order to observe it without bias. However, the indigenous views perspective does carry its own bias as well, as the insiders’ view lacks the perspective of someone who is on the outside. While it is important for indigenous people to do this work, it is possible for non-natives to do it correctly as well if they are committed to a non-superficial understanding of native worldview and pedagogy (Sioui, 1995, p.xiii).

Sandy Grande, in his book *Red Pedagogy*, points out that too many indigenous resources are going into immediate concerns of land and cultural rights. However, it is important to fight not just on the battlefield, but also in the war room. More indigenous scholars should be encouraging native educational and postcolonial theory in order to combat theory written through colonial values (Grande, 2004, p.18). Postcolonial indigenous theory should not only be about describing the way things are today, but
should also focus on constructing a future that “imagines a better life in a postcolonial context” (Batistte, 2000, p.xix).

Mudrooroo, an Australian Aboriginal scholar, argues that hunter/gathers have become a “fourth world” peoples, in that they are surrounded by a modern world that controls them. He thinks that because of this situation, native literature has become westernized. An overwhelming majority is in English due to the colonization of language. He argues that native content in literature cannot and should not be expressed in this “white form,” and instead should be written in native languages that are taught to future generations (Mudrooroo, 1985, p.231). While writing in one’s own indigenous language would probably reduce some bias built into the language itself, the inability to reach a large audience would greatly reduce the ability of the scholar to have a significant impact in the larger discourse. It is an important point, however, which is part of a larger issue, which is that the whole system of modern western discourse is set up in forms that bias themselves towards colonial understandings.

1.10 Representation in Contemporary Popular Culture

“A picture is worth a thousand words”
- Chinese proverb

While scholarly debates hold an important place in academia, they often have little sway on the opinions and attitudes of the average person. Much more influential are images portrayed through media. John Berger, in *Ways of Seeing*, argues that the image is much more powerful than words used to describe it (Berger, 1973, p.4). While the dichotomy of the noble/nasty savage has been overwhelmingly rebuked in scholarly
works, their images are burned into our cultural memory and reveal themselves through popular representation.

Indian mascots for sports teams have been the focus of much criticism of native representation, due to the implications that it signifies a warlike and savage nature to their cultures. Here at Miami University, we had an icon of a noble Miami Indian with two feathers in his hair, looking off into the distance. In 1997, after a public outcry and lawsuit led by local Miami Native Americans, the Miami Redskins were officially changed to the Miami RedHawks.

This change in sports mascots has been a sweeping phenomenon, including major league sports teams. However, mass media images have gotten less attention but are potentially more harmful due to their ability to reach so many people (Lischke, 2005, p.41).

The American movie industry is one of the most powerful commercial arenas for hunter/gatherer representation. This most often takes one of two forms. Either they are portrayed as noble and idealized, or as violent and cultureless. There are few representations that show a realistic or well-rounded portrayal of hunter/gatherers.

There are many examples of noble idealized representations. One of the most explicit examples is in *Dances With Wolves*. This hugely popular film, starring Kevin
Costner, portrays the Sioux Indians as “peaceable and nature-loving to the point of submissiveness” (Norman, 1991). While it received generally good press, it dehumanizes one just as much to be seen as all good as all bad. Another movie that does this is The Gods must be Crazy. In this film, a hunter/gatherer San Bushman tribe fights over a coke bottle that was dropped from an airplane. It is thought to be evil so Xixo, the protagonist, is sent to return it to the Gods, and he makes his way into several humorous encounters in the modern world. While a charming film, it gives the false impression that it is ethnographic, as well as suggests that a single coke bottle could bring a hunter/gatherer culture to its knees. The idea that hunter/gatherer cultures are noble, but frail and weak, plays into the ideology that it is inevitable that these friendly “backwards” cultures would disintegrate once modern society touches them slightly. This reduces guilt, as inevitable results aren’t as regrettable and deny responsibility.

Examples of wild savage warrior representations tend not to be on specific cultures, but rather take the form of violent and often cannibalistic tribes that ambush unsuspecting white explorers. One example is in the recent King Kong movie, in which the main characters sail to scary and mythological “skull island”, only to be attacked by dozens of crazy and seemingly rabid savages. The movie presents great despair and tragedy when those in the crew are killed, but the killing of the savage natives is shown as exciting and impersonal. Similarly, in Pirates of the Caribbean 2, pirate Captain Jack Sparrow and his crew are taken hostage. The confused pagan tribe crowns Sparrow as a god, which they must sacrifice. This reinforces the myth that native people always react immediately and irrationally violent to anyone they encounter. However, this is far from
true, and most times that contact occurs, the natives are helpful as long as they are not threatened (Riley, 2003, p.23).

There are other more specific representational problems with hunter/gatherers in movies. Many positive representations have white narrators that take away the direct Indigenous voice, such as in *Dances with Wolves*. Also, there is an Indian princess phenomenon, in which a beautiful and powerful native “princess” leaves with a powerful white male (Kilpatrick, 1999, p.43). Native American Joseph Riverwind writes that this is a white construct, as Native Americans had no conceptions of royalty. The white man never stays, signifying a one-way relationship where the whites take away the “best” of the culture without giving anything back. A stark example of this is in the Disney movie *Pocahontas*, in which the Indian princess leaves with John Smith for England.

One might think that after reading the plethora of different problems of hunter/gatherer representation, that it is impossible to get past these ideological issues, or even that the arguments are really just “complaining.” However, this would only make sense if all films had these misrepresentations. They don’t. Not surprisingly, when indigenous people create their own films, these representational biases fade away, and what emerges are balanced and nuanced depictions of real people. While one could argue that the native’s point of view is biased, this is not a fair criticism. The indigenous created films show an accurate representation of the indigenous experience and the people and culture that they know, not a claim to any sort of objective truth. And while one could also argue that all representations are necessary to create a balanced one, this is not true when western depictions wildly idealize, fetishize, and objectify indigenous people. Though all representations are subjective to an extent, they are not created equal, with
some being attempts at subjectivity and accuracy, and others as total ideological fictions. It is important to note that I am not including ethnographic and documentary movies, in which the representation is often less biased.

One example of an indigenous created movie is *Harold of Orange*, which is a comedy about a reservation baseball game between Native Americans and whites. It is filled with ironic humor that appeals to a Native American aesthetic and perspective on history. It showcases a bittersweet Native American sentiment that only an indigenous person could pull off. Another example of a balanced indigenous made movie is *The Fast Runner*, a story of an Inuit village that overcomes an evil omen. The movie has no white characters, and is about a specific Native American legend in a particular culture. It doesn’t generalize Native Americans as a whole, and presents well-rounded and imperfect characters.

Indigenous people are able to make fairer representations about their cultures in a way that no outsider can, because our collective cultural images limit their full range of human qualities. People have a mix of what may be seen as positive and negative qualities. As soon as anyone creates an image that negates either part of that, the humanity of the individual or culture is stolen.

White filmmakers as a whole are not intending to misrepresent Native Americans, but it is virtually inevitable for it to happen. “Perhaps the problem is in telling a story about Indians. What about the stories Indians tell of themselves?” (Kilpatrick, 1999, p. 179). As I will explore in other aspects of indigenous representation, the act of representation needs more than good intentions and a big budget. It requires the personal
understanding of a culture, with all its history and collective memory, in which only a
member can accurately present.

1.11 Conclusion

In this chapter, I address several contemporary problems in understanding
hunter/gatherer societies. Any one of these could have been the topic of an entire project.
My purpose in this chapter, however, has not been to suggest solutions to these complex
issues, but rather to demonstrate the extreme difficulty, as well as danger of claiming
objectivity in the study of hunter/gatherers. Bias is involved at all levels of analysis, and
even the most even handed and thoughtful study will still have built in cultural
preferences. I wish to make it clear, however, that I am not trying to chastise
ethnographers who undertake hunter/gatherer studies. My point is rather that
hunter/gatherer studies is such a multifaceted and culturally loaded field of study, that
even experts who have devoted their whole careers to its study still struggle with many of
these issues. Also, the indigenous scholars who can provide more nuanced
understandings, as well as fresh perspectives, are often ignored or kept out of
representational arenas due to injudicious political and social realities. In contemporary
human nature discourse, which is the focus of the following chapter, I will demonstrate
how a lack of respect for the difficulties of hunter/gatherer studies has translated into
distorted and dangerous claims regarding universal human characteristics.
Chapter 2: “Human Nature” and its Discontents

“The universe is made of stories, not atoms”

-Muriel Rukeyser

2.1 Introduction

Human nature is not a given. In hunter/gatherer societies, the word for people almost always applies exclusively to those within one’s own culture (Bird-David, 1999). The modern idea that everybody across space and time may be understood as having the same universal properties is based on historical and ideological particulars in western intellectual thought. In this chapter, I outline the way in which human nature discourse began and evolved from antiquity up to the contemporary discourse. I show the logical and empirical problems from which the modern discourse suffers. Then I shift focus to the relationship of knowledge and power in the discourse, in an effort to contextualize the debate, showing how it is inextricably tied to colonial history and control. Ultimately, the discussion on “human nature” taking place at any given time and place serves as a mirror, revealing the lens through which individuals in a society understand themselves and view the other.

2.2 Conceptual Origins

The concept of a universal human nature as we think of it now begins at the point in western culture in which subject and object become conceptualized as separate. This tradition goes back to Plato. His dualism of mind and body has shaped thinkers on human nature from Descartes to Kant. Plato’s most famous student, Aristotle, in his
Nichomachian Ethics and Politics, declares that humans all share natural propensities such as the tendency towards politics and sociality (Arendt, 1958). His ethics were based on the idea that whatever went along with this human nature was good, especially the ability to reason (Aristotle, 1962).

The next important source of intellectual thought on human nature is from the Renaissance period in Europe. Thomas Hobbes characterized human nature as selfish individuals cooperating for their own benefit. He helped develop social contract theory, which states that individuals only cooperate to exploit each other for scarce resources. He reasons that this has always been so, and is famous for describing natives’ lives in a state of nature, and as “nasty, brutish, and short.” Rousseau, writing just before the French Revolution, went against the historical current of human nature discourse and declared that people are in fact malleable and changeable. His perspective led him to the idea that savages were noble and uncorrupted by modern society (Wallace, 1908). This line of thought was as equally unrealistic as Hobbes,’ and thus began a discussion that has led to a duality between the influences of nature and nurture on human behavior. Politically, this debate had deep implications, from Marx believing that deep down people are good and want equality and peace, to the Austrian School of economics declaring that humans have a thoroughly individualistic nature (Geras, 1983). It is clear that the political climate of the time had a heavy impact on the ideas regarding human nature.

2.3 Darwin Throws in a Monkey Wrench

When Darwin published The Origin of Species in 1859, it made a huge intellectual splash. However, it was not until the rediscovery of Mendelian genetics that a
synthesis between the theory of natural selection and a mechanism was achieved. However, Darwin’s ideas made the nature/nurture debate more complex, bringing it out of philosophy and into the natural and social sciences. From about 1915 to the 1970s, however, it was almost completely ignored in social sciences (Plotkin 2004, p. 48). This was due to a reactionary political climate against eugenics, Nazism, and by association, genetics. This historical circumstance would go on to have deep implications in human nature discourse throughout the twentieth century.

The seminal anthropologist Franz Boaz’s influential study on cephalic index suggested to many that it was nurture and not nature that made the biggest behavioral difference (Plotkin 2004, p. 63). Boas and his students would create a strong force lasting decades that focused on culture and deemphasized genetics for decades in social sciences, especially anthropology. A similar, though less extreme form of emphasis on nurture occurred in psychology with behavioralism, which was based on the hypothesis that behavior is almost completely formed through environmental feedback (Plotkin 2004, p. 69).

The evolutionary perspective began to make a comeback in the 1970s, beginning in zoology with ethology, or the study of animal behavior (Barkow, 2006, p.87). It was then that Konrad Lorenz, regarded as the most influential ethologist, famously claimed that “unless we know the natural behavior of a species, experiments are largely worthless” (Barkow, 2006, p.93). He was commended as well as criticized for his separation of learned instinctive behavior.

In the late ‘70s the focus began to shift from the individual level towards the genetic level of selection. While not the originator of these ideas, E. O. Wilson, in
Sociobiology, popularized the widespread debate on this perspective and its implications (Barkow, 2006, p.115). Richard Dawkins' The Selfish Gene further articulated this position as well as applied gene theory to ideas, or what he termed, memes. It was during this time as well that Stephen J. Gould and others were challenging the gradualist evolutionary model, suggesting that punctuated equilibrium was a common occurrence (Barkow, 2006, p.126). An implication of this idea is that adaptations are likely to be side effects of other selective pressures (Barkow, 2006, p.127).

The most recent discourse in human nature has taken place largely within evolutionary psychology (Plotkin, 2004, p.34). Because evolutionary psychology is the most popularized contemporary form of the debate, both in academia and in the general population, I will focus primarily on it. I wish to make it clear that I am doing so not because I believe it is the best form of the debate, nor conversely because I wish to pick on it, but simply because it currently makes the most noise, and therefore has the most potential for cultural and political impact.

2.4 Situating Evolutionary Psychology

Evolutionary psychology was created by John Tooby and Leda Cosmides at the University of Santa Barbara and seeks to integrate the cognitive revolution, anthropology, neuroscience, and evolutionary biology. Its goal is to create a “framework not only for psychology but for all of the social and behavioral sciences” (Buss, 2005, p.15, italics mine). Evolutionary psychologists have taken their evolutionary approach and, in the last couple decades, controversially applied it to individual behavior and the human brain. It performs a certain function, such as language.
Evolutionary psychology assumes that traits evolved during the environment of evolutionary adaptedness (EEA), which for humans, is considered primarily to be the Pleistocene (Holcomb, 2001). An example of how this process works is in explaining human mate preference. Evolutionary psychologists reason that males can invest for a short amount of time with many females, creating their highest possible reproductive success. Females however, are limited to several children at most and must carry each child to term, which is both dangerous and wearing on the body. Therefore, it is argued that it is in the male’s best interest to seek out many partners, while it is in the female’s best interest to keep one male with good genes and resources focused completely on her and their offspring (Schmitt, 2004).

2.5 The Island of Cultural Anthropology and the “EEA”

Across all social sciences in the middle of the twentieth century, there was a reaction against natural explanations for human behavior, due to the fear of the devastating eugenics programs that took place in Nazi Germany as well as too a lesser extent in America. In anthropology, this had the effect of isolating ethnographies of hundreds of diverse cultures from the natural sciences. This historical situation has had profound effects on what is included in human nature discourse. Wilson’s *Sociobiology* was criticized fairly for excluding human variation and the power of culture in shaping individual behavior (Barkow, 2006).

Evolutionary psychology claims to have overcome *Sociobiology* ‘s weakness with its theoretical basis based on an environment of evolutionary adaptation (EEA) that references a Pleistocene time period in human evolution when our most distinctive
adaptations were selected for. One problem with this approach is that little is known about the EEA (Ahous & Berwick, 1998). It also takes a position of viewing current hunter/gatherer societies as relatively similar snapshots back to the EEA, while most academics in the field of hunter/gatherer studies admit that there has been a large bias towards finding commonalities in the field’s history (Barnard, 2004). Anthropologist Susan McKinnon shows the way in which prominent evolutionary psychologists carefully pick and choose ethnographies of hunter/gatherer peoples that happen to match their theories, while ignoring the huge amount of conflicting ethnographic data (McKinnon, 2005).

Another problem with the EEA is that since it is so vague, any human feature that doesn’t seem to concord with the evolutionary perspective can be explained away as having been shaped through a different previous environment that we adapted to. The EEA concept makes evolutionary psychology immune to empirical testing.

2.6 Science or Stories?

Evolutionary psychology has become increasingly popular and there have been several best-selling human nature books by leaders in the field. Stephen Pinker, author of *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature*, believes that evolutionary psychology has become popular because it rings true to so many people due to its explanatory power (Buss, 2005, xii). However, it has been the focus of many critiques ranging from the methodological to the ideological.

Dagg argues that evolutionary psychology is based more on simplified storytelling than science (Dagg, 2005, 187). McKinnon argues that its popularity is
unrelated to its accuracy. However, she argues that the problem is not oversimplification, but rather that it resonates with the Euro/American meta-narrative of self-interest, gender role innateness, competition, rationality, and the power of the market to create social relations (McKinnon, 2005, 144). It is no accident that feminist academics have forged the most articulated critiques of evolutionary psychology, as feminism is well suited to deconstructing imbedded ideology in texts that claim to be value free.

Evolutionary psychology has been critiqued by many people from various fields as being too open to researcher bias, as well as to “just so” story telling that is often unfalsifiable. However, evolutionary psychologists argue that, when done well, the field is capable of new insights into human nature (Buss, 2005, p.169). Buss sees the criticisms against evolutionary psychology as straw man arguments and though admitting problems in the field, insists that they stem from its youth and not from any inherent and insurmountable flaws (Buss, 2005, p.29).

Biologist Edward Hagen, in his essay “Controversial Issues in Evolutionary Psychology,” suggests that the attacks on evolutionary psychology are based on a dislike of its findings, and not due to methodology. He goes through several attacks on the field and rebuts them at the level of theory (Buss, 2005, p. 148). Interestingly, however, he does not address the most serious criticisms on the field, including falsifiability, selective inclusion of cross-cultural data, and quality control. He equates the opposition to evolutionary psychology as similar to the opposition that Galileo received when he declared that the sun was the center of the universe (Hagen, 2005). However, the only parallel in the comparison is that both ideas have been highly criticized by a powerful group.
Other views attempt to find a midway between critique and support, viewing evolutionary psychology as part of a larger attempt at integrating the natural and social sciences. Holcomb, in *Conceptual Challenges in Evolutionary Psychology*, argues that the faults of evolutionary psychology should be seen as existent and potentially dangerous, but not lethal to the field. He thinks that self-consciousness of the limits of where science ends and stories begin is key in keeping evolutionary psychology from becoming a cloaked ideology of the dominant power (Holcomb, 2001, p. 375). Russell Gray is not as forgiving, and argues that evolutionary psychology currently has a “cartoon” understanding of Darwinism, in which the challenge of adaptive explanation has not been taken seriously enough. He is not completely negative however, and believes that a few adjustments could greatly improve the validity and relevancy of the field. One suggestion he has is to include studies of other species, as well as the diversity of ethnography. Also, he proposes that the a priori dogmatic assumption of mental modularity be dropped in favor of more complex possibilities (Gray 2003, p. 265).

To be entirely honest, my first thought after reading an introduction to evolutionary psychology was “this makes so much sense!” and “why didn’t I think of that?” I was enticed, partly because, as a strong believer in the power of natural selection, it seemed founded upon evolutionary principles. At last, a psychology securely anchored to human evolution! However, this house of cards was soon knocked over after taking a closer look at the evidence and logic used, as well as reading various criticisms of the emerging field. Evolutionary psychology is seductive as a theoretical foundation, but often results in a dangerous theoretical extension of western cultural imperialism, cloaked as scientific fact describing a universal human nature.
In the arguments for and against evolutionary psychology, many rhetorical techniques are used, and often rather persuasively. However, there is an overall tendency for the supporters of the field to speak in generalities, while those critiquing the field focus closer on the methods and bias. This is no accident. In a general sense, evolutionary psychology seems to work well. It does indeed seem plausible that human behavior would be shaped to a significant extent by our evolutionary past through natural selection. It also makes sense that if we could somehow pinpoint these adaptations, then we would have a human psychology grounded firmly in the evolutionary past. This is all well and good. However, as often is the case, the devil is in the details.

The overarching critical issue with the field is quality control. Behavioral adaptations are difficult to pinpoint. To do so would require the most serious attention to personal and cultural bias. However, this level of self-awareness has not, so far, manifested itself in the research. This is especially apparent in the selective use of ethnographic data of other cultures, especially traditional cultures. Hunter/gatherers are focused on as part of the vague environment of evolutionary adaptedness concept. However, as McKinnon points out, supporting data are carefully selected. Data that challenge the researchers claims is conveniently left out. Beyond the selective application of supporting ethnography, culture itself is dealt with only as an aspect of the environment. However, this narrow view of human adaptation leaves out the way that culture takes on a life of its own, following rules that differ from genetic selection. It also disregards other interconnected influences such as technology, environmental change, and language evolution.
Within the history of psychology, evolutionary psychology represents an attempt to create a foundation for human behavior studies that connects several disciplines. However, it is not based primarily on psychology experiments; and indeed, references only a few in passing. It is psychology more in the sense that it studies behavior at the level of the individual, and not so much that it is an active participant in the discipline. Evolutionary psychology prides itself on having a solid foundation for the first time in psychology. Ironically, its inability to empirically test for variables with confidence alienates it from mainstream psychology.

2.7 Getting Rid of the Bathwater, Keeping the Baby

Evolutionary psychology should not be totally condemned. The basic idea of applying evolutionary principles in the understanding of human behavior has a therapeutic and practical potential. However, the claim of a “universal human nature,” as well as the lack of dealing with bias, has attracted much deserved critique. The cartoon versions of human natural selection most often used do not account for research bias, cultural variation, and the extreme difficulty of finding causal evidence for adaptations.

As a comparison, this has been done remarkably well in the new field of evolutionary medicine. One reason is that social science is more difficult to quantify than is natural science. A related reason is that the hypotheses are falsifiable and live or die by empirical data. For example, one hypothesis in evolutionary medicine is that fevers are an adaptation by the body to fight infections. Experiments can be done that test if the body keeps the heightened body temperature, or it goes down when placed in a cold room. One could also test the difference between two groups of patients with mild temperatures,
with one group artificially lowering it. If the body keeps its elevated temperature despite a cold environment, as well as gets better faster than it would have if its temperature were lowered, there is solid evidence for viewing fevers as an adaptation. This model greatly reduces researcher bias (Neese and Williams, 1994).

It would be difficult to achieve the same level of accuracy in understanding human behavior, and perhaps it is an unfair demand. However, it is an ideal worth shooting for, as it would at the very least reduce researcher bias. An effective way to do this would be in the collaboration of the very critics of the field. The opponents of evolutionary psychology more often than not are fighting against its universal claims to human nature while drawing from fields in which the researchers lack a sophisticated understanding.

As an interdisciplinary team project, the research quality would go up. Cultural anthropologists could provide a rich understanding of what the EEA is likely to have been like in various environments, as well as emphasize the power and variation of human culture. Primatologists and other animal ethologists could articulate the ways in which human behavior is similar and different. Mainstream psychologists could compare the new field with the vast amount of research that has already been done in the discipline. Along the same lines, evolutionary biologists, sociologists, and other disciplines could provide their expertise.

Wilson, in *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge*, calls for an interdisciplinary collaboration, but he wants it only on his terms. He demands that it be a reductionist project in which universal human nature may be uncovered (Wilson, 1998). No handful of linguists and rogue psychologists or biologists, nor anyone else, is going to figure out
“human nature”, but a team of experts working for the common cause of understanding elements of adapted human behavior, has the potential to discover useful behavioral patterns in specific cultural contexts. However, in the next section, I will articulate the way in which the relationship between power, knowledge, and world history has made it impossible for scientists to reveal an unbiased “universal human nature”.

2.8 Knowledge and Power

“There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.”

-Michel Foucault

The debates surrounding the validity of the claims that evolutionary psychologists make about human nature have been directed primarily at the methodological problems of testability and bias. The critiques focus on evolutionary psychology’s claim to science. Instead of debating the “objective truth” of their claims, I will shift the focus of analysis to the relationship between knowledge and power, using Michel Foucault’s assertion that any claim in a discourse has an inherent relationship to power, and vice versa (Foucault, 1975). I will explore the ways in which knowledge claims to a universal human nature are implicated in power relationships and often serve to reinforce a neocolonialism of the West over marginalized peoples. I will draw upon feminist, postcolonial, and postmodern theorists in order to integrate various perspectives on this power/knowledge relationship.

In 1979 there was a televised debate between Michel Foucault and the famously political linguist Noam Chomsky. Throughout the debate, Chomsky, the intellectual
grandfather of the evolutionary psychologists’ modularity concept, argued for the existence of a universal human nature. He believed that this nature was important to understand, so that we could structure society in a way that would counteract the “worst of human instincts” and promote “more healthy instincts” (Wilkin, 1999, 181). Foucault however, responded that “in the history of knowledge, the notion of human nature seems to me mainly to have played the role of an epistemological indicator to designate certain types of discourse in relation to or in opposition to theology or biology or history. (He) would find it difficult to see in this a scientific concept” ” (Wilkin, 1999, 181). Foucault demonstrates that unlike concepts in chemistry or physics, the idea of human nature has served primarily as a mirror of social values and assumptions. Chomsky is concerned that justice is possible only when society accounts for human nature. However, Foucault replies that justice, like human nature, is a term culturally created by values. The way in which political ideals are reflected in human nature discourse may be seen clearly in this debate.

A discussion such as the Chomsky/Foucault debate on the relationship between human nature discourse and power is rare. In almost all cases, evolutionary psychologists consider their project in purely intellectual terms. This is due to deeply imbedded ideological assumptions that shape the way that evolutionary psychologists see the world. Louis Althusser, in “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” defines ideology in two ways, both as “the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence,” as well as their actual material existence (Althusser, 1968, p.693). These two definitions form a reinforcing cycle in which people’s stories directly affect the material world, shaping it to fit their ideology. One way of understanding evolutionary psychology
is as a form of ideology. When the researchers claim that humans are programmed to have as many children as they can, it serves to naturalize, and by association, justify men cheating on their partners.

In the book, *A Natural History of Rape*, Randy Thornhill and Craig Palmer apply evolutionary psychology to the act of rape. They state that the feminist theories about power and domination in rape, which implicate males in our society, are incorrect. They do this not by engaging feminist theory, but by telling an evolutionary story about how it is in the male nature to rape for biologically sound purposes. While it doesn’t condone rape explicitly, it naturalizes it. The story stays in a generalized theoretical form and does not involve any type of in-depth cross-cultural survey of rape, even though it claims universality. Yet it is in their suggestions on how to prevent rape that ideology becomes most apparent. They suggest that men be “taught not to rape” and young women to “consider the biological causes of rape when making decisions about dress, appearance, and social activities” (Thornhill and Palmer, 2000, p.7). This is the academic equivalent of “boys, now don’t you rape, but if it happens, she was asking for it.” Geneticist and animal behavioralist, Anne Dagg, deconstructs this book in “Love of Shopping” is Not a Gene. She finds everything from embarrassingly sloppy science to logical contradictions and even outright lies (Dagg, 2005, p.87).

While primatologists, anthropologists, geneticists, and most other researchers have heavily critiqued this book, one would never know this from the reviews by other evolutionary psychologists on the back cover. Stephen Pinker, one of the most popular evolutionary psychologists, and the author of many popular human nature books has this to say on the back cover:
This is a courageous, intelligent, and eye-opening book with a noble goal --- to understand and eliminate a loathsome crime. Armed with logic and copious data, *A Natural History of Rape* will force many intellectuals to decide which they value more: established dogma and ideology, or the welfare of real women in the real world.

With the cultural capital of being a Harvard psychologist, Pinker carries with him the authority of the most elite academics. What he refers to in this review as “established dogma and ideology” are not some old oppressive concepts, but some of the core critiques done by top intellectuals on male domination in Western culture. He then in effect, asks “intellectuals” to decide if they care more about that ol’ silly feminism or real women in the real world. “Intellectuals” in the sentence does not refer to the overwhelming proportion of actual academics who disagree fundamentally with the book’s claims, but instead serves as a rhetorical device to make it seem as though anyone against the book is either ignorant, or doesn’t care about women nor reality. I am not claiming that there is a conspiracy or even a self-awareness of the way in which evolutionary psychologists reinforce western domination of women. In fact, it is the very earnest and well-meaning way in which this happens that reveals the depth to which ideology works in evolutionary psychology.

Within our own culture, popular evolutionary psychology serves to reinforce the domination of women by men. Not only does it do this with gender, but also there are many examples of the same ideological process happening in relation to race and class. Instead of dwelling on the various ways in which ideology serves to reinforce values of
dominant powers in our culture, I would like to shift the focus to the power/knowledge relationship that the discourse has with other cultures; specifically indigenous cultures.

The evolutionary psychological project is the search for human nature with a capital H. This isn’t a quest for behavior in any specific context, but for universal features. Like Chomsky, evolutionary psychologists assume that a set of modules that exist independently of culture is waiting to be discovered. However, as I will show, even this basic assumption is soaked in ideology and imperialist values.

2.9 Human Nature and Empire

Postcolonialism is the name given to a certain historical and literary period. It does not mean after colonialism, but “rather, begins from the very first moment of colonial contact. It is the discourse of opposition which colonialism brings into being” (Ashcroft et al., 1995, p.117). It is not a historical period however, as to one who is living in poverty in a third-world country, colonialism is still very much present (Loomba, 1998, p.1101). Furthermore, the economic and cultural forms of colonialism that have changed form since the independence of the colonies, are referred to as neocolonialism (Loomba, 1998, p.1103).

However, as a literary movement, most of the postcolonial academic work has been done in parallel with the rise of postmodernism in Western academic discourse. This has led to confusion between the two. However, their distinction is crucial. Postmodernism exists primarily in opposition to the rationalist modernist movement that preceded it. It is a rejection or at least a reevaluation of the ideas of progress and metanarratives, which are grand cultural narratives that claim to explain everything
(Lyotard, 1979, p.355). Postcolonialism, however, differs in that it is focused on critiquing the Center/Margin dichotomy and power relationship, and not a reactionary movement against a previous one. Both postcolonial and postmodern perspectives are useful in understanding the power relationship that evolutionary psychology creates.

The metanarrative that Lyotard describes in *The Postmodern Condition* is similar to Althusser’s concept of ideology, although it differs in that ideology refers more to specific ideas, while Lyotard refers to the larger cultural story. Ideology is not easy to point to, but it can be done without threatening the whole cultural meaning system. Our culture could withstand changes in ideology, such as if gender roles reversed and women worked while men stayed home. However, a fundamental change in metanarrative, such as a total rejection of “progress” or “democracy”, could send our culture into confusion and chaos. This distinction will be useful in understanding why there have been many of what I will call ideological critiques of evolutionary psychology from a wide variety of perspectives, while metanarrative critiques that question it at more primary levels have been virtually nonexistent.

In order to create this critique, I will begin by asking the most fundamental of questions. For starters, “why study human nature?” There has been relatively little written on this basic topic. The question has been primarily and uniquely one of western academic discourse. It comes from the modernist metanarrative of progress. This progress assumes that because we have built knowledge from science, reductionism, and reason that goes back to Aristotle, this intellectual progress will continue until nothing is uncertain (Clark, 2002, p.6). The logical conclusion from this mindset is that even the most complex system, such as human behavior, will inevitably be understood as well as
particle physics. Kumkum Sangari, in *The Politics of the Possible*, traces the history of the existential problem in the West that has developed to the enlightenment and modernity. The rising rationalism clashed with explanations that religion gave for human origin and purpose. As a result, much of western discourse is implicated in a “crisis of meaning”, that does not necessarily apply in the same form to other societies (Sangari, 1987, p.143).

Another basic question that has also attracted a disturbingly small amount of debate is “what basis is there for assuming or even supporting a *universal* human nature?” I have already discussed possible cultural reasons accounting for the desire to understand human nature. However, evolutionary psychologists are not looking to understand the behavior and nature of Americans, or even just of westerners, but of *every human being across time and cultures*. John Tooby and Leda Cosmides, the founders of the field and the Center for Evolutionary Psychology, explicitly describe the goal of the field as “the mapping of our universal human nature” (Buss, 1992, p.5).

There are many parallel examples of the application of universal attributes in various western discourses. For example Charles Larson discusses the application of universality in western literature. Using examples, he shows the difficulty in understanding western literature that is supposed to appeal to “universal themes.” Larson shows how the western concept of universality “ignores the multiplicity of cultural experiences… implying that our own culture should be the standard of measurement (Larson, 1973, p.63). This universalism is shown in evolutionary psychology in the use of the “environment of evolutionary adaptation” concept that serves to generalize every
single hunter/gatherer society that has ever existed, while ignoring the huge amount of cultural diversity within them.

Aijaz Ahmed takes this idea farther and talks about how worldism, or the western tendency to universalize its own culture, is directly implicated in the history of colonialism (Ahmad, 1987, p.78). Whereas once we stuck flags and made slaves for the motherland; the neocolonialist model now involves a cultural and intellectual domination. Worldism is an example of neocolonialism. Edward Said shows how the most seemingly politically neutral literature is implicated in the history of empire (Said, 1993). Even math, long thought the least culturally loaded of all subjects, has been shown to have an ideological structure (Bishop, 1990, p.72). Some authors have even abandoned colonial languages such as English in favor of their native tongue, due to the colonial structure of language itself (Ngugi, 1986, p.1126).

Considering the deep problems with such basics as using western math and language, the idea that the evolutionary psychologists make neutral claims about universal human nature would be amusing, if it wasn’t so disturbing. The researchers are making claims about one of the most culturally loaded topics imaginable, from the perspective of intellectual elites in arguably the most dominant society in history. When considering power, whether or not the claims are scientifically sound is not as critical as what gets talked about and what is left out. While it is probable that some of the claims hold a certain sort of validity on certain aspects of human behavior, the colonial history in our culture has resulted in a filter that at best, ignores anything that doesn’t fit into the western metanarrative, and at worst, creates total fiction in the service of it. In the
neocolonial world we operate in today, discourse about human nature reflects historical power relationships more accurately than any objective “reality”.

"We know next to nothing about virtually everything. Civilization depends not on any particular knowledge, but on the disposition to crave knowledge."

-George F. Will
Chapter 3: What’s Politics got to do with it?

There are no political solutions to spiritual problems.
- Native American Proverb

3.1 Introduction

Western political theorists rely on world history as well as philosophers of human nature to inform their theories. Political theory is more influential than human nature discourse on the everyday lives of most people, as it forms the basis for political vision and policies. The human nature discourse and history that political theorists draw on, however, is heavily biased towards a hostile view of the world due to the history of western thought, power structures, and history. The most influential contemporary political theories, most notably the “realism” school of thought, are based on human nature philosophers that are hundreds of years old (Coates, 2004, p.13).

As indigenous people worldwide fight for their land and cultural rights, they must constantly overcome cultural and political barriers of countries founded on the destruction of indigenous cultures. However there has been a recent increase in what could be termed the indigenous rights movement, though it lacks the solidarity of other movements. I will summarize the history of the indigenous rights movement, and explore the ways in which it is interconnected to the history of human nature discourse and political theory. Finally, I will discuss possibilities for the indigenous rights movement at the governmental level, as well as the use and effectiveness of indigenous media in order to combat stereotypes and increase advocacy.
3.2 A Short History of Political Theory

Political theories carry with them broad implications about human nature and cultural values. Although the most accepted and dominating theories are realism and liberalism, alternative theories, including Marxist theory and critical theory seek to include a historical dimension as well as alternate perspectives to the mainstream theories. I will review these theories and flesh out their basic assumptions about human nature and history.

Realism is the oldest of the mainstream theories, with its official beginnings after World War One and its origins rooting back much farther to classical theorists such as Hobbes and Machiavelli. It has been the most dominant theory. Realism views human nature pessimistically, believing humans are flawed and must be controlled. This is partially due to its focus on the persistence and devastation of war throughout history. It is statist in that it places almost all importance on the state as the main actor in world politics. It argues that since human nature is flawed, states exist in a world of competition with each other described as anarchy, with the goal of each state to act in their own best interest in order to increase relative and absolute power. (Dunne, 2001, p. 229)

Liberalism emerged from the Enlightenment’s emphasis on individual liberty. It has been regarded as the historical alternative to realism. Unlike realism it holds the “optimistic” view that human nature is inherently good. Also unlike realism, other actors such as corporations, terrorist groups, and indigenous peoples are considered along with states as important actors internationally. It is statist in that it believes that states are necessary for liberties to be implemented within, but advocates in the progression of social justice and fairness not only within states, but also outside of them. Decisions are
seen as tradeoffs between order and justice. However there is disagreement as to how this progress should occur. Liberal internationalists support the tenet that democracies don’t go to war with each other and that if only democracy were spread world wide, an umbrella government could be organized to reduce and possibly stop anarchy between states. Liberal institutionalists believe in creating more common rules and support organizations such as the European Union and NAFTA, while idealists are skeptical about the powerful spreading democracy and think that it must happen internally as opposed to by coercion (Dunne, 2001, p.225).

Marxism is different from realism and liberalism in that it situates itself within an historical context. Although it lost credibility with the fall of the Soviet Union, it has seen a resurgence recently as it is the most prominent critique of capitalism to date. It is an all-inclusive theory and breaks ideas into subgroups as little as possible. It is a theory about changing the world as opposed to explaining it. A basic assumption it holds is that history is the driving force in world politics, with the greatest force of change residing in the base of society. It focuses on class conflict between bourgeoisie and workers. Marxism views capitalism as a necessary step in political evolution in which the workers will rise up and institute a revolution for socialism. World Systems theory details different models of capitalist oppression, while Gramscianism describes how the manufacturing of consent has prevented revolutions thus far (Hobden, 2001, p.219).

To gain a more broad understanding and synthesis of these different theories, it is important to consider Cox’s idea that “Theory is always for some one, and for some purpose” (Cox, 2001, p. 68). This especially challenges the realist and liberalist ahistorical stance as existing outside of time and space. Instead of problem-solving
theories such as these, which seek to explain away the world, Critical theory suggests alternatives to basic “common sense” structural assumptions. These fringe theories help to deconstruct the dominant theories, showcasing their ties to dominant power relationships (Dunne, 2001, p.234).

3.3 Political Theory and Human Nature

Political theories are based largely on particular views of human nature. Examining the human nature assumptions built into political theories provides great insight into their differences. Realism views human nature as individualistic, competitive, and chaotic. Liberalism, however, is not as different as it appears to be at first. Although it is optimistic of human nature in that it believes people are ultimately good, it still sees people as unable to do express this innate goodness without large states and organizations to control them.

One could draw a parallel from these theories to the nasty/noble dichotomy in hunter/gatherer representation. Both realism and the savage native come out of the Hobbsian conception of the state of nature in which power structures are the only barrier keeping people from anarchy. Likewise, both liberalism and the noble savage come out of the romantic ideal that deep down, humans are good and peaceful, but that we have ruined this perfect nature with modern society. Now that we have fallen from this proverbial Garden of Eden, we need the wise and powerful to keep people from doing any more harm to ourselves. Although these theories lie on two extremes of a false duality, their concurrence that people need the powerful to control them leads them to remarkably similar outcomes. Both see the state as a key important actor and accept its
existence as valid. Both also color the whole world with western cultural ideals, placing importance on material wealth, individual liberty, democracy, and state power. Both are also self-fulfilling in that they create the very situation they describe, with realists their anarchy conflicts, and liberalists their progressive movements.

Marxist theories, such as Gramscianism, world-systems theory, and critical theory, argue that people can and should overthrow those who control them. While Marx’s theory, like that of realism revolves mostly around an examination of historical conflict; it views this conflict as historical as opposed to an essential human nature. This allows him to view human nature as capable of large-scale compromise, communal-consciousness, and self-control (Hobden, 2001, p.217).

Reflectivist and constructivist approaches to political theory don’t take a stand on human nature so much as they critically examine the epistemology and validity of dominate political theories. Some of these perspectives include post-modernism, feminism, and critical theory. They share a common a belief that there is no way to see the world objectively, and that positivism in social science serves the powerful and oppresses marginalized groups (Dunne, 2001, p. 227).

Alexander Wendt has developed a version of social constructivism that seeks to bridge the gap between reflectionist theories and rationalist theories. In his seminal article “Anarchy is what states make of it”, he agrees with realism, in that states do behave in an anarchic world. However, he believes that this is not a result of human nature, but of particular historical circumstances as well as a self-fulfilling prophesy of realism (Dunne, 2001, p.246). It is worth noting that many reflectionists are not satisfied with his theory and believe that it does not justify preferencing state as prime actors.
Not only do political theories interact with and assume qualities of human nature, but also, the political climate of the time has a profound influence upon human nature discourse. Anthropologist Franz Boas’s cephalic index studies, within the political context of the early twentieth century in the United States, provided convincing evidence to many at the time that nurture trumps nature (Plotkin, 2004, p.63). Boas’ was grounded in the liberal humanism that he grew up with (Plotkin, 2004, p.65). Biology-based arguments were reacted against due to their implied connection with eugenics, including the Hitler-led holocaust in World War 2 (Plotkin, 2004, p.68). However, when Sparks and Jantz replicated these same studies on cephalic index today, they provide evidence for a genetic argument in which nurture plays a small but definite role (Plotkin, 2004, p.7).

Shennan argues that sociobiology in the ‘70s served to reinforce the right wing Reagan-Thatcher political climate of the time. The de-emphasis of cultural diversity and malleability served to marginalize social activism fields such as feminisms, as gender roles could be viewed as biologically based and rigid (Shennan, 2002, p.12). McKinnon argues that evolutionary psychology of the ‘90s is also steeped in subtle political ideology, which in this case is neo-liberalism. Neo-liberalism promotes self-interest economics in all areas of life, believing that free markets will increase efficiency and the subsequent rising tide raises all ships (Shennan, 2002, p.144). Often however, neo-liberalism is merely a friendlier version of economic imperialism, since those with the least power are virtually powerless in a global “free market” compared to huge western multinationals.
3.4 Integrating Contemporary Human Nature Discourse

"The world of politics is always twenty years behind the world of thought."
- John Jay Chapman

Crawford points out that philosophers on human nature going back to Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Marx formed the foundation of contemporary political theory. He argues that since their theories were based on the best guesses about human behavior, newer evolutionary perspectives will and should be integrated into existing and new political theories and into public policy. While proponents of modern political theories claim that their theories describe the way the world actually is, these theories are self-confirming and create the conditions that they assume (Crawford, 200, p.350).

Few political theorists have interacted with the contemporary human nature discourse directly; however John Burton, an influential theorist in contemporary political theory, drew on E.O. Wilson’s *Sociobiology*. In articles from 1979 to 1990, he wrote about a basic needs approach to international relations that has been seen by many as the beginning of the first general or unified theory of international relations, and was one of the first to successfully challenge realism in the discipline. He drew from socio-psychology as well as sociobiology (Buzan, 2000, p.127). As sociobiology has been attacked, so to have been Burton’s ideas by association. However, Daniel Wetzel argues that as human nature discourse has evolved in the last thirty years to be more open to its own subjectivity, so too should Burton’s ideas be seen as evolving with the discourse rather than negated (Chen, 1997, p.28).

Chen argues that Burton’s theory includes in political theory of only the most determinist and reductionist elements of human nature discourse (Chen, 1997, p.30).
Another example of this reductionist inclusion is the use of game theory, an economic theory of self-interested and rational individuals that is based on a Hobbsian anarchistic state of nature (Hanami, 2003, p.9). The more subjective theories on human nature and ethnographic studies of hunter/gather peoples are not addressed in mainstream political literature.

Bradley Thayer, in his book *Darwin and International Relations*, questions the validity of creating political theories based on recent history, since deciding what history to include and how to interpret it is so tied to ideology. Instead, he uses evolutionary theory to ground theoretical claims into the context of human evolution (Thayer, 2004, p.67). However, he believes that much more connecting of biological sciences to the social sciences including political science need to understand both the proximate and ultimate causes for behavior of states and groups. He argues that a political theory that is based on human nature discourse needs to be a collaboration of many disciplines including political science, anthropology, biology, and psychology in the spirit of theoretical integration, and not competition between them (Thayer, 2004, p.267).

### 3.5 The Indigenous Rights Movement

The indigenous rights movement differs from other social movements in a fundamental way. Unlike other movements, such as the feminist movement, indigenous peoples are often extremely isolated. Tribes such as hunter/gatherer groups living relatively traditional lifestyles do not have the cultural precedent or technology to communicate and organize with other groups. Therefore, it is most often the “white
educated” indigenous people who exist in both the modern and indigenous worlds, who are able to fight for indigenous rights (Hendry, 2005, p. 58).

One of the most difficult issues in discussing indigenous rights is defining exactly who is indigenous. Often argued in the definition are the issues of how old a society must be, how they view themselves, as what kind of society they were indigenous to. United Nations Special Reporter to the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities provides a useful and pragmatic definition that reads:

Those which having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop, and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems. (Martinez-Cobo, 1984)

This definition includes not only hunter/gatherer groups, but also farmers and herdsmen, in the order of hundreds of millions of people. However, for the purposes of this project, I will focus on specifically on hunter/gatherers in discussing indigenous rights. There are many aspects of indigenous rights that need to be addressed including land rights, cultural rights, health care, poverty, and stolen generations.

Violations of the human rights of indigenous peoples go to before the colonial invasion of native lands. Over the last few hundreds of years, indigenous peoples have had their land, culture, and children stolen from them. They were given devastating diseases, both accidentally and intentionally, as well as slaughtered outright. While these overt forms of human rights violations have become less commonplace from the
tenth century onwards, contemporary indigenous peoples still commonly face poverty and health standards that are so poor, that they are often referred to as fourth world peoples, even while residing within modern first world countries (Coates, 2004, p.232).

In *Victims of Progress*, by John Bodley, connects the history of the indigenous rights movement to the political theoretical framework in which it has historically had to work. Drawing from the realist political school of thought, most political policies on indigenous peoples declared that their destruction was an inevitable outcome of world power relationships. This destiny explanation justified to many the destruction of indigenous peoples. Those claiming that indigenous cultural survival was possible were labeled “idealists” and while they have been arguing for this for hundreds of years, it is only in the past 50 years that they have been able to have a significant influence on wide scale policy. However, idealists, drawing on political liberalism had differing motivations for wanting to save indigenous peoples. Many academics, particularly anthropologists and geneticists, have wanted to protect indigenous peoples for their research value. This has often been a fair criticism by realists; however, this motivation has been over-emphasized by them in order to discredit the movement to protect indigenous peoples (Bodley, 1990, p.179).

Another highly influential motivation has been religious. Christian missionaries in particular have helped save untold thousands of indigenous peoples who would have otherwise have been exterminated by colonial aggressors. However, their motivation is not to preserve the culture, but usually to convert the people to their own religion. Environmentalists have also argued for protecting indigenous peoples in order to preserve
their sustainable philosophy and practices that would potentially help our society become more sustainable. Even this perspective, however, ultimately views indigenous people and culture as an exploitable resource. It is only the humanitarian preservationists that have argued for indigenous people to be protected because of their inherent right to exist. It is the increased prevalence of this perspective that has fostered the indigenous self-representation and political agency of the late twentieth century (Bodley, 1990, p.175)

### 3.6 International Progress

The United Nations was created after World War II replacing the League of Nations. In 1948, the United Nations (UN) passed a revolutionary document titled The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, theoretically guaranteeing fundamental rights to all people. However, in reality, this had little effect on furthering justice indigenous people’s rights (Coates, 2004, p. 23). One problem with the document is that it is designed to protect collective rights, and does not work well at protecting group rights. In 1984, a revolutionary draft of indigenous rights was created by the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, the world’s largest human rights forum. It took nine years to get it adopted by the United Nations Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights. This began one of the longest debates within the UN on passing a human rights resolution in the general assembly. A working group that included over two hundred indigenous organizations worked on this resolution. They declared a decade of indigenous rights from 1995 to 2004, with the goal of passing an indigenous rights resolution by its end.
While this has not been accepted by the general assembly yet, in 2006 it was adopted by the newly restructured Human Rights Council. After decades of negotiation, it will be put to vote in the next UN session in 2007. If it passes it won’t be legally binding to UN, but will create a strong moral precedent for indigenous claims. The main obstacle in getting the resolution passed is the worry by many nations that they will be pressured into granting autonomous land rights to their indigenous peoples. Because of this, the document specifically states that indigenous peoples cannot be forcibly removed from land that they now occupy, but it does not accord them the right to reclaim all native lands (www.un.org).

This will be important in nations that have resisted concessions to their indigenous peoples. In countries such as Russia in which the indigenous Siberian Sakha and Komi peoples now control their own autonomous republics within the Russian state, this will likely have little effect. However, in countries such as in Botswana in which the Government ministers described the Bushmen as "stone age creatures" and likened their forced eviction to a cull of elephants (Anaya, 2004, p.39). While the resolution would not force governments into any specific action, they could face UN sanctions if they violate it. If a government attacked its own indigenous peoples, the UN could send in a protective force. For the first time in history, there would be a genuine international protection of indigenous peoples.

3.7 Regional Success

This recent international success comes at a time when indigenous peoples are achieving local and national victories for their rights. Much of the success has taken form
of negotiation, in which the government and indigenous peoples compromise on what are largely land claims. Before the ‘60s in which indigenous peoples began seriously protesting for their rights, land claims were mostly done through individual judicial trials. This was due to an assimilationist or integrationist agenda. Indigenous people were not seen as having special rights. In the ‘60s, what could be called a loosely formed indigenous people came together for the first time over large land claims, showing that they could form political entities that would have real political impacts. One of the largest indicators of how effective land claim negotiation will be, is in the strength of sub-national states. States within a national government are less likely to agree to any land claim due to pressure to compete economically with surrounding states. (Scholtz, 2006, p.164) Inuit have received large tracts of their original territory in northern Canada and Alaska. Land claims are now being considered for the Maori in New Zealand, and Australian Aborigines currently control 12 percent of the continent though it is largely desert.

In the last thirty years, the focus of indigenous rights has shifted from land to a more holistic model that is based on indigenous sovereignty in all dimensions of life. A large emphasis has been placed on language survival, youth education, and self-determination in the arenas of health, welfare, and self-government. Indigenous groups have fought for and gained rights in a multitude of arenas including fishing, hunting, and even casinos (Burger, 1990, p. 87).

In the last twenty years, indigenous organizations have increasingly formed national and inter-national networks with each other. Some of the larger networks are able to create solidarity over large areas, such as COICA, which is an organization
representing most South American indigenous groups. Due to their solidarity, they are able to politically mobilize. Many of these groups have thus been able to secure land claims and even cause the United Nations to investigate problems of gold miners trespassing on their territories (Bodley, 1990, p.172). Much of the increased networking and steady progress has resulted from recent technology that indigenous peoples have been able to utilize in order to increase understanding and political solidarity while reducing false stereotyping and racism.

3.8 Making the Personal Political: Indigenous Media as Resistance

*Don’t hate the media, become the media.*

- *Jello Biafra*

Indigenous owned and run media has in many ways helped turn the isolated and local indigenous battles for their rights into increasingly interconnected regional and international movements. Indigenous media outlets help indigenous groups culturally, socially, and politically, as well as providing jobs. Culturally, indigenous media promotes the revitalization and appreciation of indigenous culture for its members. The effect in the local society is the increased understanding of the real local indigenous people. By seeing the various aspects of the indigenous culture, stereotypes held by other groups in the society either positive or negative break down along with barriers of discrimination and segregation. On the political level, indigenous media are able to make their issues known to a significant population.

Indigenous media also provides jobs for the people who work directly within them, as well as creative professional opportunities for all community members in the
form of playing indigenous musicians, advertising indigenous businesses, and consulting local indigenous community leaders for projects. There are many examples of indigenous media providing a multitude of benefits in communities. The Shuar Indians of Ecuador have created a radio station that allows them to teach indigenous youth in the region, who would otherwise have to go to the local government-run boarding schools. Over 240 local centers use the broadcasts (Burger, 1990, p.78). There are indigenous media outlets virtually everywhere there are indigenous peoples. Australia has an especially developed network of indigenous media outlets including the Goolarri Media Corporation, in which I spent one month interning. I will discuss this experience as a case study of indigenous media in the final chapter of my project.

In 2002, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights asked the Associated Press to create a website that would help organize and network indigenous media organizations as well as to train indigenous journalists to run it (www.un.org). As regional and national indigenous media organizations are able to create larger networks, their political influence will increase exponentially.

3.9 Conclusion

Western assumptions in politics and human nature discourse have had a heavy influence on the ways in which our political world works. Indigenous peoples have been historically neglected and abused within this system, and it is only in the last 50 years that this has begun to change. The recent relative success in indigenous rights has created increased networking and political agency on regional, national, and even international scales. Indigenous media has provided a way to connect the individual and community to
keep their identity while creating solidarity within a larger network that can influence international organizations such as the UN. Along with this recent success is the increased pressure on indigenous lands and cultures. There is room however, for a cautious optimism for the future of indigenous peoples.
Chapter 4: *Noble Savages Down Under*: The Politics of Indigenous Representation in The Kimberley, Australia

4.1 Introduction

In my project, I have explored the difficulty in studying hunter/gatherers through various disciplinary perspectives. I also showed the ease in which researcher bias can creep into projects based on hunter/gatherer studies, specifically in the discourse on human nature. I explored the ways in which political theory comes out of antiquated human nature discourse, largely creating our modern world. Finally, I showed how the Indigenous rights movement has made progress despite the innumerable political and cultural barriers that have historically stacked the deck against them. In my final chapter, I will use these explorations as a toolbox with which to examine a case study on Indigenous representation in Australia.

In spring of 2006, I gathered research in Broome, Australia. Broome is an isolated city in the northwest corner of Australia. It is in a region called the Kimberley, which is characterized by bright red sands, blue skies, and a dry heat. It contained magnificent landforms created by a dried up ancient river that would have challenged the Nile, all of which were sacred to the local Indigenous peoples. I volunteered for a month at an Indigenous owned and run media outlet called Goolarri Media Corporation. Goolarri ran a multitude of media including the most popular radio station in the city and a 24-hour local television station. My research explored the way that Indigenous music interacted with Indigenous identity, politics, and community. The contemporary musicians mixed their Indigenous traditions with the contemporary in ways that challenge preconceptions of hunter/gatherers, assimilation, and politics.
4.2 Defining Terms

Although I will often refer in this chapter to “contemporary” and “traditional” music and culture, I do so only as a way to organize information and recognize the danger of creating a dichotomy between the pre-colonial and the post-colonial. This dichotomy could also give a false impression that “traditional” music was stable over thousands of years, when in fact, Indigenous music is “a thread of expression that has always, and is continually changing” (Dunbar-Hall, 2000, p.16). There are many shades of grey. For example, since traditional has no specific definition, it could be argued that an Indigenous person who is a second-generation gospel singer is traditional or that a European living many years in an Indigenous community plays traditional music. It is with the understanding of the problems of these terms that I use them as the most effective way I can figure out to communicate my project.

I also refer to the term Indigenous as opposed to Aboriginal to refer to people whose genetic and cultural heritage is of native Australian descent. This was done for two reasons. One is that I soon found that there were many Torres Straight Islanders in the Kimberley. The Torres Straight Islands are just off the northern tip of Australia. Although they exist in the modern political entity of Australia and are therefore “native Australians”, their isolation from the mainland created cultures that were culturally isolated from the mainland Indigenous peoples. Also, the term Aboriginal has many negative connotations stemming from colonization. It lumps hundreds of distinct cultures and languages into one word, implying “an artificial uniformity” (Dunbar-Hall, 2004 p.27). The word Indigenous unfortunately has this connotation as well, although there is a
consensus that it is less so. Unlike previously in the project, I will capitalize Indigenous in order to show how it refers to a specific group of peoples and not to a general category.

4.3 History of Australian Colonization:

Relative to the amount of time people have lived in Australia, colonization has been a recent event. Out of at least 50,000 years of occupying the continent, it is only the last few hundred years that white people have been there, or less than 1% of the times. There were at least 600 to 700 dialects to at least 200 languages spoken before European arrival (Bodley, 1990, p.168). It is estimated that there were over 500 tribes with different cultures and traditions (Broome, 1999, p.11).

Since the British colonists, by their country’s own code, could not take someone else’s land, they declared it Terra Nullius, meaning it was unused and unoccupied. This allowed the colonists to justify taking the land by whatever means necessary and often much more violently than necessary (Coates, 2004, p.43). This was the beginning of a culture of misunderstanding that persists today, with Europeans viewing the Indigenous culture as backward and uncivilized. There were European attempts to destroy Indigenous culture by lumping all of the groups into the racial category of “Aboriginal”, as well as taking any mixed Indigenous child permanently away from the Indigenous parent (Coates, 2004, p.49). The children who were taken from their families are known as the “stolen generation”, directly affecting virtually every Indigenous family.

The sanctioned theft of Indigenous children went on until as recently as the 1970’s and only in the last decade has the government officially claimed fault and instituted a national Sorry day. However, current Prime Minister Howard still refuses
personally to show remorse on behalf of the government, stating that it wouldn’t change what happened. This statement of the obvious seems to disregard the symbolic antagonistic significance of his refusal (Bodley, 1990, p.168).

4.4 Native Title and the Indigenous Movement

Recently, there have been many positive effects from an increasingly strong Indigenous rights movement. The Australian movement for Indigenous rights took off in the 60s’ when there were several Indigenous protests against multinational mining corporations who wanted to exploit bauxite in the Northern Territory where there were relatively dense Indigenous populations. While they were overpowered and the mining occurred, this began an Australian Indigenous movement. By the late 60s’ there were legal proceedings over Indigenous land claims. While these court cases were lost, it served to make the movement even stronger by showing how blatantly biased the courts were against the Indigenous peoples (Bodley, 1990, p.169).

In 1972, Indigenous people camped outside of the parliament building in Canberra, Australia’s capital city, and organized a huge demonstration. The police destroyed it only to have them rebuild it. Finally, the next year when a more liberal Labor party government was elected, the government began to listen to their demands, creating the Aboriginal Land Rights Commission. By 1976, the huge tracts of the Northern Territory were given to the Indigenous people. This at least reduced the mining. The Northern Territory Native Titles created a precedent for negotiating claims as opposed to making concessions or treaties (Scholtz, 2006, p.110). Since the ‘70s there has been an increasing number of Native Titles granted for Indigenous Australians, which presently
accounts for more than ten percent of the continent, though much of the land is desert (Bodley, 1990, p.170). It was the realization by the Australian government that the Indigenous people could organize in political solidarity that caused them to directly deal with Indigenous claims. In other places such as the United States, the government takes a hands off, let the courts settle disputes, which serves to distance the government from accepting official and widely publicized historical responsibility (Scholtz, 2006, p.152).

Across Australia, there are now numerous Indigenous organizations owned, managed, and operated by the local people, including successful Indigenous tourism ventures and community services. Increasingly, Native Titles are being granted to original inhabitants, with the most recent happening for the Broome shire region on April 28th, 2006. I was fortunate enough to view this Native Title ceremony, in which the government of Australia gave the local Indigenous people all the local urban and rural lands. Although personal property rights still hold, this was a historical moment in that it was the first time an Australian city had been given in a Native Title. This allows Indigenous people to use the land for traditional practices as well as gives a strong say in development, although not veto power (Yu, 2006).

Many Indigenous corporations and companies have been formed, creating Indigenous control of significant media, art, and tourism. There are also many Indigenous communities in the Kimberley. Some, such as Beagle Bay, began as Christian missions and are currently being continued by those who grew up there. Others have been formed more recently as alcohol free communities. In either case, they generally serve as tight knit communities and provide support for youth (Dunbar, 2004, p.233).
4.5 Wise Elders and Drunk Abo’s: Deconstructing the Noble/Savage Duality

Unlike other parts of Australia, Broome is very culturally mixed, not just diverse. The blending of Asian, Indigenous, and European culture from the pearling industry and history has resulted in a town in which it is extremely common to have all of these cultural backgrounds. This has created a less rigid identity for people of the Kimberley in general. After saying this, however, there does seem to be something different about being Indigenous than European or Asian.

In one sense, there is a lot of pride in being Indigenous in the Kimberley. However, I also often came across the opinion from people (usually white males) that there were “good” and “bad” Aborigines; “good” being ones who work and are involved in traditional culture, and “bad” being ones who drink, don’t work, and hang out in parks while receiving a sizable Indigenous welfare check each month. My impression is that this duality has created pressure for people of Indigenous descent to be seen as the “good” kind. This subtle racism, while seemingly positive in one sense of praising certain people, creates an either/or mentality and demonizes all who won’t fit the white romanticized image.

The strangest thing about the white Australian impression that Indigenous people receive special treatment, is that statistically, the Indigenous people live in third world country conditions. Their lifespan is almost twenty years less on average and they are at least two to three times as likely to get most diseases. They tend to have more substance abuse, poverty, crime, homelessness, and poorer schooling. There aren’t even any Indigenous parliamentary representatives (Australian Bureau of Statistics). When bringing up these facts to those arguing that “most of the abo’s are just plain lazy”, they
would often switch their argument to a naturalized one. People would retort with something about how the natives aren’t wired right for working. People didn’t seem to care if Indigenous health issues were caused by nature, nurture, or free choice, as long as it wasn’t the fault of white Australians. As in I discussed in chapter 2 of my project, one’s politics on human nature is revealed not through one’s intellectual stance, so much as the narrative that explains it.

In *Reclaiming Culture: Indigenous People and Self-Representation*, Joy Hendry discusses the ways in which Indigenous Australian art has been a mixed blessing. On one hand, it has provided much in terms of resources for Indigenous artists, communities, and organizations. People are often drawn to the unique, beautiful, and varied Indigenous traditions for their depth and sophistication, often increasing cultural understanding (Hendry, 2005, p.54).

However, prestigious art collectors tend to market the Indigenous art as “primitive art”, as though it was frozen in time. This desire for a pure “authentically” Indigenous art has often made it difficult for Indigenous artists to incorporate their experiences in postcolonial Australia. This plays into a noble savage bias, in which people want to see the perfect didgeridoo playing natives living peacefully, and not the ugly reality of European contact on the Indigenous peoples and the subsequent pain that followed. Also, there is often an indifference to the art’s significance for the Indigenous people. This disregard can be seen in the commoditization of dot art, a sacred way to recognize dreaming locations to Indigenous Australians. It was adopted by European art dealers who recognized both its “primitive” appeal as well as its fit into the current avante garde
movement. Indigenous artists usually have little choice but to appeal to Western art dealers and tourists if they are to survive, often at the expense of their culture.

4.6 Dreaming Songlines: History of Indigenous Kimberley Music

Traditionally in the Kimberley as well as in the rest of Australia, the Indigenous people share a belief in the Dreaming, which can best be described as an origin story and a spirituality as well as a law (Mary Graham, 2006). It involves ancestors who moved across the land, shaping it into what it is now. The paths they took are understood as songlines that were sung and are still being sung across the land. The Indigenous stories, art, and music may often be read as a map of the physical country or culture. Songs were seen as a healing, used to affect the world as well as other people. Songs also communicated law and secret knowledge (Coates, 2004, p.159).

The Kimberley region serves as a case study in contemporary Indigenous music and representation. The missionaries created an influence musically in the form of Christian hymns and songs, with a stress on harmony (Manolis, 2006). Going back to the late 1800’s, the different cultures of the people involved in pearling mixed through many means, including music. (Torres) The different music cultures mixed with each other. There was further mixing of music from the 1920’s when Country and Western music became extremely popular. This largely American tradition was adapted to local and regional themes of the Kimberley (Kalar 2005, p.6).

In the last twenty years, there has been an increase in commercial success and Indigenous control of contemporary Indigenous musicians in the Kimberley. This seems to have paralleled the increased progress in Australian Indigenous rights. The Pigram
Brothers, Kerrianne Cox, Fitzroy Express, Groovy Lips and the Yang, Wayne Barker, Peter Brandy, and many others have given the region an impressive legacy considering the relatively low population and the region’s isolation. There are also widely acclaimed music festivals including Stompem Ground and the Broome Arts and Music Festival (BAMF), which showcase local talent while also bringing in outside acts.

4.7 Goolarri Media: A Case Study of Indigenous Self-Representation

At Goolarri, I conducting a daily radio show and interviewed local Indigenous musicians and community leaders. Fortunately, both Goolarri and I benefited from this arrangement, as they were in need of another radio show host. I also attended numerous musical and cultural events, meeting musicians’ families and getting a feel for the rich and relaxed lifestyle known as “Broometime”.

Beginning from a simple desire to have a voice of Indigenous Kimberley people and culture, Goolarri has become an influential organization in Broome, the Kimberley region, and throughout other areas of Australia. Goolarri has a strong focus on training Indigenous people in its diverse aspects of the media. With its highly experience-based learning, Goolarri has won numerous awards for excellence in training (gme.com.au).

Recently, Goolarri has enacted a Music Workshop Tour around the Kimberley. Phase one occurred in 2005. These consisted of local musicians traveling to many communities to conduct music workshops as well as evaluate where the most need is for future support of music programs in different communities. Additional workshops were provided in phase two to the communities with the most potential and demand for development. Also incorporated into phase two was the Family Concert Tour, in which
workshop participants got the opportunity to perform on stage. Another part of the music development strategy is to provide marketing and distribution skills to band managers and members seeking to improve their ability to promote themselves.

Like most Indigenous organizations, Goolarri has been given little funding and does a lot with a little. To help remedy this, the Broome Aboriginal Media Association (BAMA) set up the BAMA Indigenous Stock Exchange (ISX). Unlike its name suggests, it is not actually a stock exchange. It is a place for the allocation of available funds to “develop human, natural, social, cultural and financial capital for Indigenous businesses” (isx.org.au). It helps to get new Indigenous businesses off the ground as well as support established ones and fund new projects. It is more than just the allocation of funds, however, and also tries to create a network in which people can match with appropriate environments and skills.

Although the central office is in Broome, much of it is run on the Internet through its website, www.isx.org.au, making it accessible for most Indigenous Australian business. Often trading events are held in various Indigenous communities around Australia. On June 21 and 22 of 2006 there was the first Ngarda Trading Floor event (isx.org.au).

Despite difficulties in funding, Goolarri has plans in the next few years to expand the organization to include an interactive Cultural Center that will serve to share information about Indigenous culture as well as train Indigenous people in media and technology (isx.org.au).
4.8 The Relationship Between Politics and Music

I did not encounter much overtly political music in Kimberley contemporary Indigenous music. Everyone I interviewed seemed to feel that it was better to be subtle about politics. Peter Yu, Director of the Kimberley Land Council, was of the opinion that it is the very subtlety of the politics in Kimberley contemporary Indigenous musicians that makes it so successful. Since the music remains so accessible, he argues that it reaches a broad group of people, instead of preaching to the choir (Yu, 2006). That being said, there is a particularly rich historical interaction between music and the Indigenous political movement in the Kimberley.

In their book *Deadly Sounds, Deadly Places*, Dunbar-Hall and Gibson devote a chapter to the Kimberley region, in the only published study on the region’s Indigenous contemporary music. They claim that one major aspect that distinguishes the Kimberley Contemporary Indigenous music scene from others in Australia is its sense of a regional identity. It is argued that this grew, in a large part, due to the solidarity of most of the local people in protest against a proposed mine at a sacred site in Noonkanbah in the 70s’. They credit the event to the creation of the Bran Nue Dae musical, which was written by locals and went on to national acclaim. This era marked an increase in experimentation with the musical styles of Reggae and Rock. Though the protest was successful in that the mining company was technically denied a permit, they mined regardless and the government protected them from resistance. This highlighted government’s lack of support of Indigenous people in the region and helped motivate the creation of a contemporary regional music culture, retaining its local as well as political flavor throughout the years. The music contributed to the success of the Kimberley Land
Council (KLC) which has won political fights for land in the region (Dunbar, 2004, p.240).

4.9 Ethnographic Method and Ethics

In the history of Indigenous studies, there has been a legacy of opportunistic anthropologists and others going into exotic places, taking information, then leaving with no benefit to those studied. Unfortunately, all too often those studied are harmed through the disruption of culture and subsequent misrepresentation. A study that takes more than it gives to those studied, barring extraordinary circumstances, should not be conducted, as it is a continuation of the historical power abuses of colonization. For my project, I made every attempt to prioritize the benefit of those I worked with along with my data collection. Ironically, I found that this method gave me much more access to relevant data than I would have received had I prioritized information for my project.

Outside of Goolarri, I attended practically every Indigenous music event that I could find out about. Since I arrived at the beginning of the month-long Broome Arts and Music Festival, there was something to go to nearly every day. In my first few days, due to the opening music festivals, I was able to meet several musicians including Baamba, The Pigrams, The Fitzroy Express, Mick Manolis, Groovy Lips and the Yang, and many others. This was fortunate, since when I contacted the musicians for radio interviews, they had met me and knew a little about what I was doing.

I talked to hundreds of people around town about Indigenous issues and the local music. Although it was casual conversation and would not be appropriate to refer to in this project, it has been invaluable in creating a basis for comparison of the official
interviews I did. I was also fortunate enough to spend time with some of the top musicians in Broome after concerts, sometimes even playing songs and conversing for many hours. Since music does not exist in isolation and often weaves in and out of many aspects of life, it was extremely valuable to meet musician’s families, attend family events including a wedding, as well as talking to them about everything and anything. Instead of being shunned as another white American studying Indigenous people, I was welcomed with open arms and amazed at the trust that people afforded me. More than once I was handed a guitar and asked to share my music as they were doing, which hopefully I was able to do in a small way.

Through having a daily radio show, I was able to listen to hours of the extensive Indigenous music that Goolarri has archived. This gave me a good cross-section of Kimberley music that I would not have had access to otherwise, as well as gave me a basis for comparing Kimberley music to that of other regions of Australia.

My personal experience of volunteering at Goolarri was much different than I expected at the outset of my fieldwork. Instead of being invisible and in a corner licking envelopes, I was given a radio show, important responsibility, and total trust that I would follow through, as well as understanding when I made mistakes. People were proactive in giving me suggestions on how I might learn more by watching certain DVD’s, going to certain places, and providing me with contacts. People were genuinely interested in me as a person, where I came from, and what I thought about my experiences. These were things everyone seemed to know about everyone else working there. I was invited to work parties and coworkers showed me around town and introduced me to people. I felt more like the new guy working there than someone “studying” the organization.
Many of the offices were open air and designed so that people walked passed each other and could communicate freely. There seemed to be little of people looking over each other’s shoulder. Instead of causing people to slack off, the opposite seemed to occur. Everyone was always working hard and got their tasks done. Overall, the atmosphere was by far the friendliest I have ever seen in an office atmosphere.

Particularly noticeable was the appreciating and embracing of differences in ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability. From my month’s stay, I can claim no blanket statements to be made on the topic of Indigenous self-representation, and questions have led to more questions, as well as a personal reexamination of applying the Western scientific idea of “study” to a fundamentally different and marginalized culture.

Ultimately, what surfaces is a humbling at the various levels of communication, identity, and representation that weave together in the personal and cultural fabric I was briefly welcomed into.

4.10 The Issue of Under-funding Indigenous Organizations:

Compared to mainstream funding, Indigenous organizations receive extremely little. Indigenous media for all of Australia only receives a few million a year total to run, which only allows for a skeleton budget, especially since the Australian dollar is only worth about two thirds of a US dollar. This often creates conflict between different under-funded Indigenous organizations for the small amount available. While there are many competing models for ways that the money should be divided, the real question is why there is so little money to begin with.
Like many aspects of money going to Indigenous people in Australia, there is the popular impression in the minds of many Australians that natives get an unfair and disproportionate amount of assistance. This occurs tragically in areas such as health and education. One reason it occurs in funding is that there is a separate funding pool dedicated to Indigenous organizations. Because of this, when applying to other, more general funding pools, Indigenous organizations are often turned down since there is already specific money for Indigenous organizations. The problem with this setup is that there is relatively little in the Indigenous funding pool itself. Another reason that there is little funding, is that Indigenous organizations lack the sophisticated lobbies of big business and multi-national corporations (Kira Fong, 2006).

Another reason that organizations such as Goolarri receive little money is that they are judged on a single bottom line of money generated and spent. The social and ecological bottom lines are ignored. If the social benefit that Goolarri has on Kimberley region were given weight in funding, it would multiply (Kevin Fong, 2006).

One hates to think that a factor in the small amount of funding is racism, although I have to suggest that it plays a role. The strong Indigenous rights movement in the Kimberley, supported by the Kimberley Land Council, and Goolarri, has led to increased native control of land, including the Native Title of the largest town in the region and surrounding areas. Historically, many Australians have held the fear of Indigenous peoples being given their land and then having to leave their homes. This has been based on ignorance of the specifics of Native Title; however it has been a belief held by many. Since many Indigenous organizations work towards Native Title and other means of land
control, discrimination is a real factor in the disproportionately small amount of funding for Indigenous organizations.

4.11 Conclusion

Through my fieldwork, I was able to get a personal feel for the positive effects that an Indigenous run and owned media outlet can have on the local people in a variety of ways. I saw firsthand the problematic nature of the “authentic” or “pure” Indigenous representation, as how destructive it can be to fetishize this. Identity and politics are interwoven in Indigenous communities, and creative work that allows for the expression of people simultaneously identifying with different cultural traditions, is a powerful way to break down stereotypes and racism. Self-representation creates a forum in which the native voices that have been silenced for hundreds of years may finally be heard by all willing to listen.
Conclusion

In my project I have explored a multitude of ways in which the study of human nature, origins, and politics interact with real contemporary indigenous peoples. An unfortunate overarching theme in these academic traditions I discuss is the ease in which ideology colors how scholars understand human nature and origins. However, the scholars that were more self-conscious of this difficulty were able to present their ideas in a specific context, as opposed to universal truth claims. The project shows the need for a total reevaluation of human nature discourse, not just from a methodological standpoint as many contemporary critics propose, but more importantly, a reexamination of the ideological bias which colors the questions asked, as well as the source of the bizarre acceptance of low scientific standards of data interpretation. Fanatical reductionism and a disregard for the relationship of power to knowledge have created an intellectual climate in which elite American academics lay claim to knowledge of the human nature of every human being, past and present. This comes from an imperialist attitude that has become less fashionable since colonialism; however, its modern subtlety is ultimately no less effective. The use and abuse of the world’s indigenous peoples continues both in their lack of land and cultural rights as well as the denial of the right to speak for oneself.

This project highlights the beneficial nature of interdisciplinary work, as it is only by juxtaposing and integrating various disciplinary perspectives on hunter/gatherer representation that many of the representational issues come to the surface. For example, it is only after an exploration of the difficulties of experts in hunter/gatherer studies, can it be shown just how absurdly simplified the concept of the evolutionary psychologist’s “environment of evolutionary adaptedness” really is. I have shown how even seemingly
distant hunter/gatherer representational issues really are interconnected, from Hollywood movies, to indigenous art sales, political theory, and even the policy of the UN. Areas with the most need for further research are anthropological critiques of evolutionary psychology and historical connections of political theory with indigenous policies.

The future of the indigenous rights movement will depend on a multi-level approach through local, national, as well as international political involvements. It is also crucial that indigenous scholars as well as other genuinely concerned academics have an increasing voice in the theoretical forums that affect them. The battle for representation must also occur in various arenas such as indigenous made films and local indigenous media outlets. In a world increasingly influence by images, representation is political whether it is in the UN or as a tiny isolated radio station. While contemporary hunter/gatherers and indigenous people have been largely destroyed and their cultures commodified, the fact that they have made significant progress on many fronts despite the disadvantages throughout history, academia, and politics, reveals the deep strength and resolve of the world’s indigenous peoples.
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