WHAT SORT OF INDIAN WILL SHOW THE WAY?
COLONIZATION, MEDIATION, AND INTERPRETATION IN THE SUN DANCE CONTACT ZONE

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy
in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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ABSTRACT

This research project focuses on the Sun Dance, an Indigenous ritual particularly associated with Siouan people, as a site of cultural expression where multiple, often conflicting concerns, compete for hegemonic dominance. Since European contact the Sun Dance has been variously practiced, suppressed, reclaimed, revitalized, and transformed. It has also evoked strong sentiments both from those that sought to eradicate its practices as well as those who have sought its continuance. In spite of a period of intense colonial repression, during the last three decades the Siouan form of the Sun Dance has become one of the most widely practiced religious rituals from Indigenous North America and the number of Sun Dances held and the numbers of people participating has grown significantly. How has the Sun Dance ritual endured in spite of a lengthy history of repression? What is it about the Sun Dance that evokes such powerful sentiments? And, how do we account for the growth of the Sun Dance.

I argue that the current growth and practice of the Sun Dance must be considered within the context of colonialism; a central focus of this dissertation. I identify the complex and messy ways that individuals mediate the inequitable power relations that shape colonialisit interactions, as well as the way they interpret these social spaces. One of the hallmarks of power is the way that it works to conceal its processes and produce invisibility. This project seeks to uncover the concealed processes and the invisible, which continue to shape the contemporary Sun Dance practice. Each section of this
dissertation, which is provisionally divided to attend to four eras of contact, is attentive to the ways that the Sun Dance ritual has been shaped by the historical conditions of colonialism that “in the past banished certain individuals, things or ideas, how circumstances rendered them marginal, excluded or repressed.”

Representation is one of the critical forces of the colonial project. In spite of the tremendous volume of published works on the Sun Dance, there has been relatively little attention paid to the material effect of the circulation of either the representation of this practice or the lived experiences of those participating. This project historicizes representations of the Sun through textual, archival, and ethnographic research and demonstrates that Native interventions in these productions of knowledge have been largely concealed and underrepresented.

The dissertation reveals multiple layers of concealment that go beyond the obfuscation of Native contribution. In each historical era, a Native contributor is brought to the fore: George Sword, Ella Deloria, the Medicine Men’s Association, and Elmer Running. Each has contributed significantly to the way we think about Sun Dance today. By tracing these contributors, I show that Native contributions and interventions were not monolithic; rather there was a wide range of approaches used to negotiate and mediate the lived experience of colonialism, which in turn shaped their own engagement with and interpretation of the ritual.

DEDICATION

Dedicated to Agna Iyanka nahan Wanbli Gleska Cikala.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Graduate school and the final product, the dissertation, are not possible without a tremendous amount of support, guidance, and advice from many and I am indebted to countless people and organizations. Foremost among them is my dissertation advisor, Lindsay R. Jones. He has been (beyond the “call of duty”) exceedingly generous with his time, guidance, and advice throughout my graduate training and in particular throughout this process. He has modeled patience and flexibility with a student that has not always been an easy one with whom to work. Words cannot express my gratitude. As a committee member and reader, Maurice E. Stevens, exemplifies a pedagogical approach that transforms. His support, encouragement, and quiet, well-timed advice has nurtured not only this project, but has contributed greatly to a climate in which I have grown and thrived. Tanya Erzen has supported this project and my graduate training in countless ways—as a reader, teacher, and letter writer. She has supported and enriched my work and her guidance on ethnography has been crucial to this project. Dick Shiels graciously agreed to step in at the very end of this process. I have worked for him at the Newark Earthworks Center for a numbers of years and his dedication to and passion for education is a model to which I aspire. His support on many levels has been very important at critical junctures of this process.
Coursework, conversations, and email exchanges with scholars have introduced key ideas, approaches, and concepts that inform this project. To that end I want to thank Chad Allen, Christine Ballengee-Morris, Sandra Black Crow, Maria Cotera, Raymond DeMallie, Barbara Lloyd, Lucy Murphy, Malea Powell, Dan Reff, Brian Rotman, Philip Round, Barry Shank, Amy Shuman, Pat Stuhr, Robert Warrior, and Julia Watson. Similarly I am indebted to my graduate cohorts. Our writing groups, student organizations, and various conversations about our projects have caused me to think and talk through aspects of this project and I value our exchanges. Thanks to Lindsay Bernhagen, Tracy Carpenter, Anne Keener, Alana Kumbier, Annelieke Dirks, Kathryn Magee-Labelle, Teresa Roberts, Beth Shively, and everyone in InterSect and the Religious Studies Roundtable.

I have benefitted immensely as a result of my association with a number of organizations and from presenting at numerous conferences. Foremost, I have appreciated and learned a great deal from my association with the Consortium for Institutional Cooperation in American Indian Studies (now the CIC-AISC). The climate created by this organization has been crucial to my development as a scholar in American Indians Studies. I have learned a great deal from the seminars, workshops, and conferences organized by this group. In addition to scholars already mentioned as a result of my involvement with the CIC-AIS, I’d also like to thank Susan Sleeper-Smith and remember Susan Applegate Krause. Both exemplify a strong commitment to graduate training. I have also developed as a result of the opportunity to attend and present at the Native American and Indigenous Studies Conference. It is uplifting to
attend a conference that draws hundreds of Native scholars and gives hope for the future of American Indian and Indigenous studies. There is no other place that I can imagine as a “fit” for me during my graduate training than the Department of Comparative Studies. I have learned a great deal from every faculty member in the department. I have also appreciated the opportunity to work at the Center for Folklore Studies this past year, where I saw enacted a truly supportive intellectual exchange. Last, but not least, my association with the Newark Earthworks Center and, the various projects and programs developed by this organization has sustained and enriched me. In addition to Dick Shiels I want to thank Marti Chaatsmith, whose support and advice has been very important.

I received financial support from a number of organizations and could not have completed this research without this help. A pre-dissertation Tinker Grant from the Center of Latin American Studies (OSU) helped me hone the topic of this project and resulted in a journal article that was published in the fall of 2009. American Indian Studies at OSU, the Newark Earthworks Center, and the Department of Comparative Studies provided funds that allowed me to travel to a number of conferences and workshops. A research grant from the American Philosophical Society supported fieldwork in South Dakota in the summer of 2008, which was critical to this project. And, research grants from the CIC-AISC and The Ohio State University Alumni Research Graduate Grant provided funding for the completion of fieldwork in 2010.

I would not have finished this project without a strong supportive circle of friends and family. I am blessed and grateful. I want to remember Brenda Hubbard, who passed away during this process. There is no one that I’ve ever known who possessed such an
open heart and generosity. She took me in when I had nowhere else to go and celebrated my decision to go back to school. I would not have begun this process without her encouragement. My long-time friends Sheila Kelly, Janice Musick, and Joan Staufer have “had my back” and encouraged me every step of the way. Thanks to Jen Black, a colleague whom I greatly respect and adore, who would never allow me to talk about “work;” only the magic—a wonderful reprieve. I was fortunate early on to become a part of a wonderful, brilliant, supportive, and nurturing group of women. I would not have made it through this process without the companionship of the “fab four”—Kate Dean-Haidet, Peggy Reynolds, and Rita Trimble. I am grateful to each of you as you have enriched my world and I know we have developed a lifelong bond—personal and intellectual. I would like to thank Rita in particular—who has gone above and beyond—not only reading and offering editing suggestions on this entire dissertation, but providing a safe, supportive, and intelligent space where I could talk out issues.

My family has been exceedingly patient and supportive. I dedicated this dissertation to Agna Iyanka and Wanbli Gleska Cikala, the center from which a wide network of relations extend—wakanja: Beah, Anthony, and George, takoja: Lydia, Wakinyela, Iyankawin, Anpo, Arlis, Hoksila, Anthony, Jr., Anukasan, and Wakan Gli, the Running family, the Rosebud community, and many communities of Sun Dancers. I am grateful to you all. Finally, I want to thank my sons, Desmond and Hunter. My heart is full and my gratitude great.
Vita

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CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION

PROJECT OVERVIEW: DANCING IS LIFE!

When they stopped dancing, we died. We stopped living. We felt there was nothing left to live for. Now we can dance again, and it brings sunshine into our hearts. We feel j-u-s-t good!”

Brings Home a Blue Horse, 1934^2

In their 1977 book *Indian Dances of North America*, ethnographers and dance performers Reginald and Gladys Laubin credit Brings Home a Blue Horse, a Lakota from the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in South Dakota with this exclamation. The year was 1934 and the Laubins had been adopted into the One Bull family. Hinto Agliwin (Brings Home a Blue Horse) was their new sister. The statement expressed her response to the recent removal of a three-decade-long federal ban on Native dancing that had specifically targeted “[t]he ‘sun dance,’ and all other similar dances and so-called religious ceremonies.”^3 The Laubins write, “That is how important dancing was! To Indians it was not just recreation or relaxation. It was the way of life. During the bans more than a generation had been effectively removed from direct contact with the dance.”^4

This vignette and the claims made by the Laubins and Brings Home a Blue Horse are intriguing and worthy of a closer examination. Four general, interrelated observations can be made. First, Brings Home a Blue Horse identified herself as part of a group

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^4 Ibid.
through her usage of the plural pronoun, we. Second, she claimed that the Sun Dance ritual was necessary to the life of the group. Third, she made her claims with tremendous emotional intensity. Fourth, she provided historical information; the ritual underwent a period of suppression.

Over a number of years I have returned to this quote many times as it is productive for thinking about the Sun Dance, one of the most widely practiced rituals from Indigenous North America.5 Today, in spite of decades of suppression under colonialism, the Siouan form of the Sun Dance is extremely popular and significant growth has occurred in terms of the number of Sun Dances held and the numbers of people participating. Not only are Sun Dances occurring in virtually every state in the U.S., they are also being performed globally in locales such as Mexico, Denmark, and Germany (to name a few). Participants cross tribal affiliations and Native (and non-Native) ethnicities. This means that the pool of participants has shifted significantly since contact. Communities of practice vary widely from Sun Dance to Sun Dance as dance alliances are built not only within Siouan communities, but with Native peoples more broadly, indigenous based movements globally, and in some cases with non-Native participants. The Sun Dance is an amazingly resilient ritual that has undergone various configurations over centuries, yet it continues to evoke powerful sentiments such as those expressed by Brings Home a Blue Horse. Three primary questions motivate this project. How has the Sun Dance ritual endured in spite of a lengthy history of repression? What

5 The Native American Church may take the record as the most widely practiced Native ritual in the contemporary era, but a comparison is difficult.
is it about the Sun Dance that evokes such powerful sentiments? And, how do we account for the growth of the Sun Dance?

While the practice of the ritual can be traced to pre-contact life in North America, what we know of the ritual and the contemporary practice of the Sun Dance cannot be considered outside of the context of colonialism. Since the 1980s a wide and diverse range of scholars such as post-colonial theorist and historian of religions, Charles Long and scholar of comparative literature, Mary Louise Pratt persuasively argue that the “contact zone” is a critical site of academic inquiry. Pratt defines “contact zones” as social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination. Pratt’s work examines the way that knowledge produced about the Native was complicit in the colonial project. And, Long argues that, in order to appreciate the full ramifications of colonial forces, scholars must find a way of “crawling back” into those sorts of histories, and experiencing as fully as possible the challenges of those colonialist contexts, via whatever resources are available. His interest focuses on the way this approach creates space for thinking about the creative responses of marginalized groups in response to colonialism. These approaches examine the messy and complex exchanges shaped by power relations—colonialist interactions. Highlighting the dynamics of conquest and colonialism reveals a complex set of relationships.

I return to the opening quote to illuminate the colonialist interactions shaping the exchange. Reginald and Gladys Laubin were non-Native peoples with an intense fascination for Indian culture, in particular Indian dance and material culture. Reginald Laubin reflected that his fascination with Indians began early in life as a result of a brief interaction with two Indians who taught him a few dance steps. This experience was further fueled by his upbringing; as a child of two concert performers he was well-versed in performance art. As such he began to imagine himself performing Indian dance concerts and set about to learn as much as he could about Indian dance from libraries, museums, and from Indian people he met. Fortuitously his path crossed that of Gladys Tortoiseshell, who supported him in his vision. The two married and decided to move “West to live with the Indians.”

According to the Laubins, almost immediately upon their arrival in the Dakotas they attended an Indian Fair at Fort Yates (North Dakota) where they met Chief One Bull who was related to the famous Chief Sitting Bull. At once, One Bull adopted the Laubins into his family and gave both Indian names; the event during which Brings Home a Blue Horse made her exclamation. Indeed Laubin realized his dream, successful at performing Indian dance concerts he traveled the world representing “authentic” Indian dance.

The Laubins are exemplary of a particular phenomenon described by contemporary scholars, such as historian Philip Deloria, as “playing Indian,” which Deloria demonstrates “is a persistent tradition in American culture.” Shari Huhndorf refers to the phenomenon as “going Native,” and she argues the practice serves to

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8 Laubin, Indian Dances, xxxiii.
construct whiteness, naturalize conquest, and inscribe power relations within American culture. These analyses foreground the role of the non-Native in the contact zone of Native and non-Native colonialist interactions. In these examples scholars identify a sympathetic approach that locates the Native as valuable or noble in some regard, but still (re)inscribes the power dynamics of colonialism. The sympathetic approach was certainly not the only approach employed by non-Natives in the contact zone.

There is a Native role in the contact zone as well; Native people negotiate the oppression of colonialism in various ways. In the case of the Laubins we see for example that Louis R. Bruce, the second Native person to be named commissioner of Indian Affairs (1969-1973), wrote the introduction to their book and praised the Laubins’ performance as a great exhibition of “real Indian dancing” and “[o]ne of the finest programs I have ever witnessed,” thus evoking a sense of Native approval. The One Bull family from Standing Rock Reservation in South Dakota adopted the Laubins, gave each Lakota names, and shared dance knowledge. And Crow leaders, such a Thomas Yellowtail, who revitalized the Crow-Shoshone Sun Dance, and Joe Medicine Crow, tribal historian of the Crow, traveled internationally with the Laubins as part of the dance troupe performing among other dance exhibitions, the Sun Dance.

In this dissertation I examine various colonialist interactions regarding the Sun Dance ritual in order to think about how the ritual has endured despite over a century of colonialism. Since contact the Sun Dance has been variously practiced, suppressed,

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11 See the introduction written by Louis R. Bruce in Laubin, Indian Dances, xi.
reclaimed, revitalized, and transformed, as well as being a frequent object of popular and scholarly scrutiny. In spite of the tremendous volume of works about the Sun Dance, there has been relatively little attention paid to the colonial context of the production of these many representations, their circulation, and the material effect of this attention. This project historicizes the many representations of the Sun Dance and, through new archival research and fieldwork, argues that Native interventions in these productions of knowledge have been largely concealed and underrepresented. In other words, it is attentive to what Long refers to as the “dynamics of concealment.” However, I further argue that Native interventions were not monolithic; in fact there was a wide range of approaches that Native people used to negotiate colonialism, which in turn shaped their own engagement with the ritual.

In the remainder of this introduction I describe the texts, archives and ethnographic data used as a basis for this project; explain the methodological approach; and introduce three recurring themes identified as a result of the research. Then I briefly discuss two recurring themes related to this project: ritual and ethnography. I close with other considerations, in particular terminology used, and I offer a rationale for the title of this dissertation.

**Data: Texts, Archives, and Ethnography**

To convey the huge corpus of material produced about the Sun Dance I turn to Phillip M. White’s annotated bibliography *The Native American Sun Dance Religion and Ceremony* (1998), which is the most recent survey of works on Sun Dance. At 105 pages

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in length and offering 335 entries, this list is not exhaustive as it focuses heavily on non-fiction and generally does not include other genres (e.g., fiction) or media (e.g., films). White offers a short inventory of canonical texts on Sun Dance and he organizes the remainder of works by tribe.\footnote{White’s list is short enough to record here: Dorsey, Jorgensen, Lowie, Mails, Powell, Spier, Voget, Walker, and Yellowtail. Philip White, \textit{The Native American Sun Dance Religion and Ceremony: An Annotated Bibliography} (Westport, Connecticut, London: Greenwood Press, 1998), xxiii-xxiv.} This large body of work about the Sun Dance engages a wide time span.\footnote{The range is two-fold in that Sun Dances are described from pre-contact to the present. For example, one approach to the study of the Sun Dance is to seek the origin of the ritual and describe the diffusion of the ritual, which sets the analytic lens on an imagined pre-contact past. Second, the range of publication dates for the materials range as early as the mid 1840s through the publication of White’s bibliography in 1998.} 

My research focuses specifically on the Siouan practice of the Sun Dance. I selected this focus for several reasons. First, the most common representation of the Sun Dance emerges from the Siouan practice. It has been the most frequently studied and represented form of the ritual. In White’s bibliography, the largest tribal section is devoted to the Sioux, which includes ninety-eight entries—nearly one third of the entire project.\footnote{It is interesting to note that another broader category, texts that approach the Plains Indians more generally (which would include the Sioux) comprises another third of White’s entries. In other words, all of the other works about the Sun Dance as practiced in tribes other than the Sioux comprises only one-third of the entries in White’s annotated bibliography.} Second, the majority of Sun Dances held in the contemporary era can be traced to the Siouan practice. This is particularly true for dances held off reservations and in countries outside of the U.S. Third, my interest in the Sun Dance, which shapes the research questions asked in this dissertation, emerged out of personal experience with the Siouan form.\footnote{While I am not particularly interested in legitimizing my authority to write about and analyze the Sun Dance practice because of my experience with the practice, I do acknowledge that the motivation that propelled this project is directly connected to that experience. I discuss my association in chapter five, (5).}
“Crawling back” into this enormous body of representations, reveals a complex web of relations—processes that have imagined, produced, appropriated/(re)appropriated, and circulated/(re)circulated knowledge about the Sun Dance (and by extension “Indians”) by both insiders and outsiders in practically every genre (e.g., scientific, journalistic, governmental, autobiographical, and popular writing) and media (e.g., written, visual, performance, music). Some surprising insights emerge as Native and non-Native, academic and popular assumptions about the Sun Dance are illuminated and challenged.

Foremost among these assumptions is the extent to which the suppression of the Sun Dance actually occurred. The majority of academic analyses and popular expressions accept the notion that there was a period of time during which the Sun Dance was no longer practiced and was “lost.”17 As a result, the contemporary Sun Dance practice is largely conceived as a reinvention. For example, one contemporary effort, by philosophy of religion scholar Clyde Holler, is Black Elk’s Religion: The Sun Dance and Lakota Catholicism (1995). Motivated to understand the influence of Catholicism on Lakota religion, Holler argues that the repression of Lakota traditional religion had profound consequences in that the ability of the Lakota practice to adapt to change was “retarded” as a result of the oppression.18

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17 Narratives about the length of suppression vary depending on whether early reservation bans starting in the 1880s or the federal ban imposed in 1904 is considered as a starting date. Further, some consider the official ending of the ban in 1934 as the end of the period while others do not locate the official ending date until the passage of the Native American Religious Freedom Act in 1978. In other words, the perception of the period of time during which time Indian religion was being lost ranges from three decades to nearly a century.

18 Clyde Holler, Black Elk’s Religion: The Sun Dance and Lakota Catholicism (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1995), xxxi.
A close examination of primary and secondary sources exposes an important example of the “dynamics of concealment.” These sources document that at least at some sites, such as the Pine Ridge and Rosebud reservations, both public and private Sun Dances took place with regularity during the period of suppression, albeit with constraints. It is clear that as early as 1910, a “semipublic Sun Dance” was held on the Rosebud Reservation. Pictures from photographer John Anderson, an official government reporter attached to the Crook Treaty Commission who lived on that reservation for over forty years, document a Sun Dance held in 1910 six miles from the agency seat, in Rosebud. By the 1920s, a Sun Dance was incorporated into the annual Rosebud Fair, a public gathering, featuring Native dance and song, rodeos, and carnival activities—a practice that occurred on the Pine Ridge reservation as well.

I focus the lens of this project on activities on these two specific reservations in large part because the historical record challenges the many representations of the Sun Dance that insist there was a period of time when the dance was not practiced and certain knowledge(s) were lost. The Rosebud and Pine Ridge reservations are located in present-day South Dakota and are home to two bands of Lakota, a tribe of the Sioux. Members of the band residing on the Rosebud Sioux Indian Reservation are commonly referred to

19 Long, Significations, 141.
20 Thomas Mails coins this term to describe Sun Dances that took place away from the agency seat, but were public. In other words, they were not legitimized by the colonial government but they were not hidden away from public view either. See Thomas Mails, Sundancing at Rosebud and Pine Ridge (Sioux Falls, S.D.: Center for Western Studies, 1978), 3-14.
21 Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota are distinct but related languages used by the three tribes that comprise the broader designation Sioux. Each tribe is comprised of various bands. Many scholars have worked to clarify these distinctions, which is outside the scope of this project. For one contemporary extended treatment see James R. Walker, Lakota Society, ed. Raymond DeMallie (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 3-67.
as Brulé or Sicangu.\textsuperscript{22} Members of the band residing on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation are referred to as Oglala.\textsuperscript{23} The two reservations are in close proximity and closely related. There is a lengthy history of considerable interaction between the two bands on many levels, yet they maintain distinct group identities.

In addition to the texts written about the Siouan Sun Dance, there is an extensive archive of primary documents from these locations as a result of an intense and sustained ethnographic gaze. I rely heavily on secondary presentations of these sources and am particularly indebted to Ella Deloria, Raymond DeMallie, and Elaine Jahner, who have offered significant contributions in their efforts to compile and translate these records.\textsuperscript{24}

In one case, I engage a primary source, the archive of which is held at Marquette University. This archive consists of transcripts from a five-year dialogue that took place between priests and medicine men on Rosebud Reservation during the 1970s.\textsuperscript{25}

Lastly, this project draws from observations of several contemporary Sun Dances on the Rosebud Reservation, as well interviews with contemporary Native and non-Native peoples who participate in the Sun Dance ritual, in order to analyze the importance of their participation to their personal lives and identity. Research was conducted at the Rosebud Reservation in during the summer of 2008, as well as return trips in the fall of 2009 and the summer of 2010.\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{22} Brulé is an “other-ascribed” name for the band, while Sicangu is the “self-ascribed” name.
\textsuperscript{23} Throughout the historical record, Oglala has undergone a variety of spellings.
\textsuperscript{24} These contributions are addressed more fully throughout this dissertation.
\textsuperscript{25} This primary source is the basis for chapter four (4).
\textsuperscript{26} This data contributes specifically to chapter five (5) of the dissertation.
Methodology

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of any detailed examination of the contact zone involves how to be attentive to the complexities, multiple layers, and contradictions of the colonialist interaction with clarity. Legal scholar Patricia Williams observes “[t]hat life is complicated is a fact of great analytic importance.”27 Sociologist Avery Gordon notes that even though this statement might seem all too simplistic and a matter of “common sense,” “it is nonetheless a profound and theoretical statement.”28 Generatively expanding on Williams’ concept, Gordon suggests that there are two related aspects to this theoretical frame: historical contexts and “complex personhood.”29

For Gordon there is a relationship between the “historically embedded society” and complex personhood shaped by issues of dominance and governmentality.30 Like Long, who discusses this process in terms of the “dynamics of concealment,” Gordon is interested in the ways that power works to conceal its processes, as well as the way it produces invisibility. In other words, in power relations, although systems of domination can be blatant, they can also be obscured and concealed; they are invisible influences and they produce invisibility. Gordon draws on the metaphor of the ghost and refers to these dynamics as “ghostly matters,” which continue to “haunt” us. For her it is a phenomenon so prevalent that she declares it is “a constituent element of modern social life.”31

29 Ibid., 3-4.
30 Ibid., 11.
31 Gordon, Ghostly Matters, 7.
The second aspect of Gordon’s theoretical frame, “life is complicated” involves the notion of complex personhood. Gordon writes,

> complex personhood means that all people…remember and forget, are beset by contradiction, and recognize and misrecognize themselves and others. Complex personhood means that people suffer graciously and selfishly too, get stuck in the symptoms of their troubles, and also transform themselves…Complex personhood means that the stories people tell about themselves, about their troubles, about their social worlds, and about their society’s problems are entangled and weave between what is immediately available as a story and what their imaginations are reaching toward.

This approach is very productive for thinking about the Sun Dance ritual. Each section of this dissertation is attentive to the ways that the Sun Dance ritual has been shaped by the historical conditions of colonialism that “in the past banished certain individuals, things, or ideas, how circumstances rendered them marginal, excluded, or repressed.” Further, I examine the ways these time-bound circumstances have “concrete impacts on the people most affected by them” and the very complex and messy ways that individuals respond.

There has certainly been a great deal of work generated that examines the processes and conditions of colonialism, which in turn has fueled a great deal of recovery work. As already mentioned in this introduction, the work of DeMallie, in particular, has been critical to recovery efforts about the production of knowledge about the Sun Dance. For example, his work on the James R. Walker materials (in collaboration with Jahner)

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33 Radway, “Foreword,” viii.
foregrounds the important contributions of Native informants that were rendered invisible in Walker’s classic work on the Sun Dance. Yet, there is a troubling aspect to these efforts in that they adhere “in various ways to forms of idealism…and essentialism.”

Gordon’s attention to complex personhood provides a way to avoid this pitfall. Therefore this project traces the historical process of colonialism and Lakota response to those processes, in regards to the Sun Dance, in a way that is attentive to the reality that neither the colonizer nor the oppressed possesses a monolithic or static approach to colonialist interactions.

I organize this project into four historic chronological categories, not unlike one of the more recent efforts to consider the Siouan Sun Dance offered by Holler. Like White, Holler does not examine material across genre and media; rather he focuses on academic accounts. His organizational structure follows: The Classic Sun Dance Observed, 1866-1882; The Classic Sun Dance Remembered, 1887-1911; The Sun Dance Under Ban, 1883-1934/1952; and Black Elk and the Revival of the Sun Dance (to present).

The flexible boundaries of the historical eras I construct for this project differ in that they are co-determined by historical processes of colonialism and watershed cultural productions that mark transitions in the production of knowledge about Sun Dance. In each case, I follow a specific Native individual (or in the case of chapter four a group of individuals) who contributed significantly to the cultural production marking the era.

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35 I quote Robert Warrior’s critical analysis of the majority of work taking place—both about and by American Indian intellectuals. He observes the hesitancy to offer critical analyses and encourages Native critics to “engage one another with more vigor and energy than in the past.” See Robert Warrior, *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), xvi-xix.
focus on individual responses to colonialisit interactions in the contact. Our ghostly guides provide a point of entry to think about the historical processes of colonialism, as well as providing examples of the ways that individuals are shaped by their time-bound circumstances. Further I foreground the notion of these individuals as complex persons, which allows us to see a wide range of Native responses to the colonial project and by extension a wide range of approaches to the Sun Dance. I am not suggesting that each individual is exemplary of the response to the historical era in which we find them in this project. Rather, I would argue that we see in each an example of the diverse range of Native responses found in every era. Nor would I suggest that the choices made are the only available choices. There are many ghosts not followed in this dissertation (although we cross their paths) who would also likely provide a productive point of departure.\footnote{For example, Nicholas Black Elk, Charles Eastman, and Frank Fools Crow would also provide useful insights.}

Chapter two (2) of this project explores colonialist interactions from early contact with the western bands of the Sioux until the publication of James R. Walker’s canonical text on the Sun Dance published in 1917. In this chapter I follow George Sword, one of the principal informants/contributors to Walker’s work on the Sun Dance ritual and Lakota thought. For over seven decades, Sword’s role in the production of Walker’s text was nearly invisible. Sword’s life intersects many of the important historical moments of his time—The Battle of Little Big Horn, early reservation life, the Ghost Dance movement, and the Massacre at Wounded Knee. This was an era characterized by forced containment, violence, intense surveillance, and assimilation. Sword’s response to colonialism was to embrace the new world order, assimilate, and work in service of the
colonizer. During this era Sword challenged the authority of the chiefs of his tribe and played a significant role in the repression of the Sun Dance. Yet, his contribution to our understanding of the Sun Dance is significant.

Chapter three (3) examines the first generation of Lakota born on the reservation. Ella Deloria’s text Speaking of Indians marks the closing of this era, which covers the years 1917-1944 and Deloria is the focus of the chapter. Although Speaking of Indians enjoyed some popular success, Deloria was unable to obtain funding or a publisher for two other important texts that she worked on for years; eventually both were published posthumously. Deloria’s life was profoundly shaped by her time-bound circumstances. Her father, Philip, was an ordained priest in the Episcopal Church; and respected community leader. Deloria was Christian and well-educated receiving her B.S. in education from Columbia. At Columbia she met Franz Boas, known as the father of American anthropology, beginning a collaboration that continued for years. During this era the modes of governmentality shifted significantly. Although the focus on the “Indian problem” remained one of how to best assimilate the Indian to American life, the strategies of the previous era were called into question. Known primarily as a linguist, one of Deloria’s contributions was her translation of texts written by Native informants such as George Sword. While Deloria believed that the Sun Dance was a ritual of the past, her analysis was attentive to the centrality of the ritual to the people and her descriptions were filled with affective intensity conveying a positive interpretation of the ritual as she sought to verify the humanity of Indian people.
Chapter four (4) focuses on a group of medicine men from the Rosebud Reservation. The watershed cultural production marking the end of this era is the publication of Frank Fools Crow’s (auto)biography written by Thomas Mails, which was initially published in 1979; thus this era roughly extends from 1945-1979. Fools Crow was well-known because of his role as spiritual advisor to the American Indian Movement (AIM) and his biography, which was very popular, was significant in that it brought attention to the reality that Lakota religious practices had continued throughout the period of repression. This era was one of great social unrest and transformations in regards to institutional approaches to Native peoples, national sentiment about Native peoples, and Native sentiments about themselves. In this chapter I focus on a group that formed on the Rosebud Reservation, the Medicine Men’s Association (MMA). The strategies of social, political, and religious activism deployed by this group are obscured by the focus on AIM. Among their activities was a five-year long dialogue between members of this group and religious personnel from the St. Francis Mission. Over forty different medicine men took part in the dialogues, many of whom played critical roles in the continuation of the Sun Dance.

Chapter five (5) focuses on the contemporary practice of the Sun Dance from 1980 through the present, an era that has seen not only an incredible resurgence of the Sun Dance ritual, but also a growing interest in American Indians more broadly. It is an era marked by self-determination for Indian people in politics, governance, the production of knowledge, and cultural expressions. It is also an era characterized by the tensions of competing ideas among Indian people as they strive to imagine their future.
In this chapter I look to Elmer Norbert Running as a point of departure to think about the ways that knowledge about the Sun Dance continues to be produced from a western perspective and internal contestation surrounding the contemporary Sun Dance practice. Running, a medicine man from the Rosebud Reservation, contributed significantly to contemporary understandings of the ritual. Further, many of the contemporary Sun Dances began at his dance. Yet, Running’s stance that Sun Dances should be all-inclusive is a marginalized view in the Indian community. Lastly, chapter six (6) provides a brief summation of the dissertation overall and suggests areas that deserve further investigation.

Three recurring themes: colonialism, mediation, and interpretation

While foregrounding the complex personhood of our guides in each era demonstrates significantly different approaches to colonialist interactions and the Sun Dance ritual, there are three primary similarities or recurring themes among the approaches across time. These are colonialism, mediation, and interpretation. The first theme, colonialism, at first glance, seems so obvious as to question its placement on this list. Yet, I want to emphasize several important aspects of colonialism that are missed even in the extended treatment of the colonial project. In each case our guides were aware that dominant culture was seeking the domination of Indian people and they self-consciously fashioned their response to the subjectification. Regardless of how strongly they built alliances with dominant culture, each imagined a future for a distinct Indian
people—a hallmark of what Robert Warrior calls an American Indian intellectual tradition.37

The second recurring theme is mediation. In each case our guides saw themselves as mediators in the colonist interactions of the contact zone. Certainly not every Native person in the contact zone saw themselves or functioned as a mediator; each had to negotiate their changing circumstances, but not all chose positions that functioned to mediate between the colonizer and the colonized. Gordon writes, “As a concept, mediation describes the process that links an institution and an individual, a social structure and a subject, and history and a biography.” She argues that mediation involves identifying the gap between “systemic structures” and the way that impact is “felt in everyday life” and then filling the content in the gap differently.38

The third recurring theme is interpretation. Each of the guides saw themselves as interpreters39 of colonialist interactions in the contact zone. Interpretation is an activity distinct from translation although the terms are often interchanged. Interpretation is a process of translation that seeks to filter, reframe and explain. Interpretation involves an accretion of meaning. In the case of our guides we can identify interpretation in three sorts of exchanges, although each guide does not necessarily operate in each of these capacities. In one capacity the interpreter works to interpret the operations of dominant culture for Indian people. In another, and one that each of our guides was involved with,

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39 It is interesting to note that this is also the term used by medicine men in regards to their communications with the Spirits.
they sought to interpret Indian knowledge, culture, and responses for dominant culture.
In the final register they sought to interpret Indian knowledge for Indian people.

**Ritual**

The emphasis on context, colonialism, and complex personhood can obscure that the Sun Dance is a ritual,\(^{40}\) one that is amazing in its resiliency and flexibility. Over time numerous scholars have offered an array of definitions for ritual, each of which, as scholar of religion Ronald Grimes observes, “can sound as if it were describing an obvious fact but each is really a proposal, an attempt either to legislate or garner agreement in the scholarly community about the nature of ritual.”\(^{41}\) Catherine Bell concurs, “To anyone interested in ritual in general, it becomes quickly evident that there is no clear and widely shared explanation of what constitutes ritual or how to understand it.”\(^{42}\) However, there is some consensus on perspectives about ritual regardless of the approach used to describe, explain, categorize, or determine efficacy. Broadly, aspects of these perspectives include: ritual is constructed, it is symbol-laden, involves mediation, consists of thought and action, and efficacy is related to orientation.\(^{43}\)

This project centers on a specific ritual, the Sun Dance, of a specific culture, the Sioux; it is local and particular. The treatment of the Sun Dance as a ritual in this project is admittedly uneven, as most of the focus is on the construction of knowledge about the

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\(^{40}\) Throughout this project I interchange the terms ritual, ceremony, and practice, perhaps with imprecision. There are discussions, in particular distinguishing ritual and ceremony. Yet, according to Bobby Alexander, scholars of Native American religion do not generally make this sort of distinction. See Bobby Alexander, “Ceremony,” *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Lindsay Jones, Vol. 3, 2nd ed. (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), 1518.


\(^{43}\) Bell, *Ritual*, xi.
Sun Dance as it is shaped in colonialist interaction, which I argue shapes the contemporary practice of the ritual. In other words, this project offers “concrete particulars” that lend themselves to future theoretical examinations of ritual. Specifically, four tentative, broad observations concerning the Sun Dance ritual that emerge from this project contribute to the study of ritual. Briefly I refer to these as: people, staged event, complex, and constellation.

That the Sun Dance ritual involves people is a glaringly obvious observation. Yet considered within the frame of complex personhood and colonialist interaction in the contact zone, this observation carries significance as it points to the constructed nature of the ritual and the myriad approaches to the Sun Dance undertaken by its practitioners. To draw on Gordon this means that participants in the Sun Dance “remember and forget, are beset with contradiction, and recognize and misrecognize” what is going on in the ritual. For example, this frame helps situate the contradictions of George Sword who actively worked to prohibit the ritual, yet later claimed to be a medicine man who conducted the Sun Dance. Or Ella Deloria, who wrote about the Sun Dance from a positive, almost enchanted perspective, but misrecognized the ritual as a demonstration when she witnessed one in the 1920s.

Second, the Sun Dance is a staged event. In each case the Sun Dance is described as a particular space set apart in time and place from everyday life. The ritual proper has a beginning and an end. This can be observed from the earliest accounts, such as Sitting Bull’s Sun Dance, to contemporary accounts. There are many ways that the ritual space

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44 Grimes, Readings, xi.
45 Gordon, Ghostly Matters, 4.
and the participants are prepared as different and special. In the Sun Dance a new camp is built around the Sun Dance grounds, which are carefully constructed as a space set apart by the physical erection of a circular structure referred to as the dance arena. The dancers wear specific clothing and are purified in the sweat lodge before entering the dance arena. This leads to the third observation; the Sun Dance is a ritual complex.

The staged event provides an umbrella, so to speak, for a wide range of attendant and related rituals; it is a ritual complex on several levels. For example, dancers take part in the sweat lodge and smoke the pipe, each a ritual that can be performed on its own outside of the Sun Dance. In other words dancing encompasses a nesting of rituals. The Sun Dance also provides the occasion for other rituals not directly related to the Sun Dance proper, which are undertaken by people who are not dancing. For example, there are frequently give-aways, naming ceremonies, ear piercings, and flesh offerings—rituals that are not directly a part of the actual Sun Dance. This provides, among other things, the opportunity for people to participate in the Sun Dance without actually dancing.

The last observation, which I refer to as constellation, has to do with four aspects of the Sun Dance—thought, action, emotion, and social. In some way the majority of discussions about ritual either foreground one of these aspects or focuses on the relationship between several. Many scholars foreground action because of the embodied nature of ritual. Thus many definitions of ritual contain some observation of repetition, stylized gestures/actions. Others such as Bell are interested in the intersection of

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thought and action. Still others observe the emotional intensity of ritual, what Emile Durkheim refers to “effervescence” or Victor Turner, drawing on Arnold Van Gennup refers to as “liminality.” These approaches are attentive to the powerful emotions evoked in ritual that frequently serve to transform the individual and/or cohere the social body. Each aspect is observed in the Sun Dance ritual, but this project does not pursue the ways that they interact and circulate.

**Ethnography**

While one might expect to find ethnography in a methodology section, ethnography is a central component of this dissertation project in three respects; exceeding its methodological function. First, ethnography is a category of critical examination in that the ethnographic project of anthropology has been the primary contributor to the production of knowledge about the Sun Dance and by extension to the public imaginings of Native peoples and the Sun Dance. In 1960, anthropologist Margaret Mead edited a retrospective collection about the period she referred to as American anthropology’s “Golden Age.” She argued that the growth of a particular American engagement with anthropology was critically linked to the salvage of American Indian customs and practices, marking American anthropology as unique. She wrote, “Had there been no American Indian, anthropology would have been taught and

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47 Examining this intersection and its historical context is the primary concern of Catherine Bell in *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

48 For me this is one of the most interesting aspects of the Sun Dance and is a trajectory I want to pursue in the future.
perhaps elaborated in the U.S. on the basis of European models." By far, the majority of materials contributing to this dissertation are a result of ethnographic projects.

Second, there is a contemporary academic interest in ethnography as a practice, product, and the ways that ethnography is implicated in the colonial project. American Indian culture was not only the staple of early anthropology, but problems facing early fieldworkers such as those recorded by Walker and Deloria anticipated difficulties and issues that continue to plague anthropology and ethnography today. Although it is beyond the scope of this project, a close examination of these relationships and exchanges may provide insight into ways that ethnography as a practice can decolonize and be resituated in a way that contributes to the production of knowledge about Indian people and the Sun Dance.

Ethnographic research methodologies have a long tradition. Contemporary scholarship advocates the importance of building rapport with the communities being researched through the establishment of trust with and respect for the human populations that are studied (Visweswaran). I am further persuaded by arguments made by folklorist Diane Goldstein, who argues that it is critical to conduct a number of interviews with the same participants as narratives change over time, particularly in the case of major life changes and events. Anthropology and folklore utilize an interpretative/historicist framework and reflexive methodologies as ethnographic research works to interrogate the

50 For example, this is one of the concerns of Pratt’s work regarding the contact zones, see Pratt, Imperial Eyes.
51 See chapter two (2) for a description of these issues in regards to James Walker’s work and chapter three (3) regarding Ella Deloria’s work.
subject positioning/bias of the scholar while being attentive to potential power relations between the researcher(s) and the human subjects involved with the study (Clifford, Visweswaran, Behar). There have been important moves that serve to cultivate an ethical climate for research that include a focus on: decolonizing methodologies that deconstruct western productions of knowledge, the politics of representation, and incorporate indigenous perspectives (Tuhiwai-Smith); accountable positioning that interrogates the researcher’s role (Haraway); and situational knowledge, consideration of the ways that knowledge is produced in and for specific contexts (Lawless).

Research for chapter five includes observations of several Sun Dances on the Rosebud Reservation and interviews with Native and non-Native peoples who participate in the Sun Dance ritual. My interview questions explore how the participants felt about their participation, how they made meaning out of their ritual experience. Research for this project was conducted at the Rosebud Reservation in south-central South Dakota throughout the summer 2008, and shorter trips in 2009 and 2010.

In many respects ethnography is a road not taken in this project, although its centrality to the project is obvious. I do not attempt to foreground ethnographic practice

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and product, draw connections between the eras, or offer an analysis of ethnography per se. I do not examine my personal experience with the practice of the Sun Dance over twenty years before beginning this project until chapter five. Nor do I follow the trajectory of my own forays into the practice and how that may contribute to our thinking about ethnography.  

Other Considerations

One consideration that I would like to address is the use of terminology to identify Indian people. There has been considerable debate: do we speak of Native Americans, American Indians, Indigenous people, First Nations people (used more frequently in Canada), or Indian? I understand the debates about this issue in that each of these labels is problematic as each is a product of colonialism. I am not persuaded that any one of the terms circumvents the problems more than another, thus I use the terms interchangeably. However, I am mindful to deploy the terms, when the situation warrants, used by the Native peoples encountered in each chapter.

Similarly, the names for tribal groups, which in contemporary practice are more frequently preferred over general terms such as American Indian, are also confusing.

53 For example one draft of this project included reflections about my summer of 2008 visit to Rosebud Reservation during which time I lived with my father-in-law, Elmer Running, the focus of chapter five. I wrote, “The year before he passed away, I spent the summer at his home. Proposed as a research trip, my visit turned into a caretaking venture because of Running’s deteriorating health. I spent many more hours cooking a variety of soups trying to coax him to eat, washing dishes, and hauling dirty water outside because the drain underneath the kitchen sink was broken, than I did collecting interviews. I spent many hours with him on a number of occasions at the Rosebud Hospital emergency room, fussing with him to be patient and let the hospital personal administer the fluids necessary for life instead of collecting his oral history. I tried to buffer him from alcoholic disturbances, family members showing up drunk and asking for money. And, then listened as he got angry that I had driven his children off or caused them to be put in jail (although we both knew that the tribal police were just going to remove the person and take him next door to a sister’s home).” At some point this will lend itself to an article as it offers a contribution to thinking about the complexities of ethnographic research.
Often I use the term Sioux (or its derivative Siouan) to point to the large tribal group of Plains Indians whose Sun Dance practice is the focus of this dissertation. This term is also problematic as it is “other-ascribed” and a product of colonialism, but it is a term familiar to most people. When possible I prefer the self-ascribed tribal names such as Lakota and Dakota. However, even this becomes problematic, particularly in the work of Ella Deloria, who uses the term Dakota to refer to the general population of the Sioux. In this case, like that of the broader “Indian” designation, I follow Deloria’s lead when engaging her work.

One of the principal themes of the project is that there is no monolithic, static, Sun Dance ritual. As such, the focus is not on the practice of the Sun Dance. This project does not offer a description of the ritual, nor does it seek to explain its origins. Rather, I focus on the Sun Dance as a site of multiple ideologies, practices, symbols, and meanings, which are frequently competing for hegemonic dominance and are always shaped by their historical circumstances. I am quite fond of a quote from the records of the MMA, which conveys this notion better than any other—“Which one of these kinds of Indians is going to be the one that’s going to show us the Indian way of life?”54 I draw on this quote in a shortened version, “What Sort of Indian Will Show the Way?” as the title of this project to foreground multiple and complex approaches to and engagements with the Sun Dance.

54 Unknown Speaker, Medicine Men and Pastors Meetings, St. Francis, South Dakota, Tape 22, Page 54, 4/8/75.
CHAPTER 2: RECONSIDERING GEORGE SWORD

Early Colonialist Interactions and Constructions of the Sun Dance

There is no doubt that James R. Walker’s *The Sun Dance and Other Ceremonies of the Oglala Division of the Teton Dakota*, published by order of the trustees of The American Museum of Natural History in 1917, remains to this day the canonical text on the Siouan Sun Dance ritual. Anthropologist Raymond DeMallie observes, “Walker’s *Sun Dance* has become a classic, a key work for understanding the traditional Lakota way of life.” While the processes deployed by Walker have come under some criticism and the validity of some data has been challenged, *The Sun Dance and Other Ceremonies of the Oglala Division of the Teton Dakota* remains the primary source on the ritual, Lakota religious concepts, and Lakota myth. Walker was the agency physician at the Pine Ridge Reservation for eighteen years (1896-1914) and during that time amassed considerable materials about “almost every facet of the old Lakota way of life,” which he synthesized for his book on the Sun Dance.

Critical to Walker’s endeavor was the information given to him by a number of Oglala. In his introduction, Walker names “Little-Wound, American-horse, Bad-wound,

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56 DeMallie and Jahner have raised a number of issues regarding translation of Walker’s materials, his choice of translators and his composite description, which will be discussed further in this chapter.
57 See chapter 2 for a discussion of Ella Deloria’s questioning of Walker’s data.
Short-bull, No-flesh, Ringing-shield, Tyon, and Sword.60 Tyon, an interpreter and professional storyteller, and Sword receive the most attention from Walker. About Sword, Walker wrote:

Sword was a man of marked ability with a philosophical trend far beyond the average Oglala. He could neither write nor speak English, but wrote much in old Lakota and the translations of his texts have been used in preparation of this paper. As but few Oglala can, he was able to talk interestingly of the former habits and conduct of his people, so as to give distinct ideas of their daily lives. He began an autobiography which promised to be of historical value, but died before completing it.61

Who was this man called Sword, who garnered the longest introduction in Walker’s text? And, what did he contribute to the work? Walker’s text provides very few clues. His own composite description of the Sun Dance ritual does not cite specific contributors. And, in only a few instances does he credit a specific story-teller as the source for key concepts, terms, and narratives (myths and legends).

It was not until 1978, under the direction of DeMallie and Elaine Jahner, that Walker’s primary materials were gathered together from numerous archives; these included interview materials and Lakota texts. Three volumes were published as a result: *Lakota Belief and Ritual* (1980, editors, DeMallie and Jahner), *Lakota Society* (1982, editor, DeMallie), and *Lakota Myth* (1983, editor, Jahner). Although Walker is credited as author for each volume, specific attention and detail is paid to individual Lakota informants. Of the informants, George Sword takes center stage—so much so that a

fourth volume was initially conceptualized that would focus specifically on the Sword material, in particular a ledgerbook written by Sword.62

Elaine Jahner suggests that “[s]tandard historiographic narrative conventions, however, distort the roles of people, such as Sword, who remained at the sidelines.”63 I would argue that Sword was not a marginal person during the early reservation years. He traveled extensively, was a member of several delegations of Lakota to Washington, D.C. who sought to speak on behalf of the Oglala, and he held powerful positions during the early days of the Pine Ridge reservation. He warranted mention in Charles Eastman’s autobiography, From the Deep Woods to Civilization. He is mentioned by name in a number of New York Times’ articles published during his lifetime. One article written by schoolteacher Emma Sickels about the “Rival Chiefs” Red Cloud and Little Wound, printed in the New York Times on July 19, 1893, includes a drawn sketch of the man. Further, he was an informant par excellence for other works about the Oglala written by non-Native peoples, which will be discussed later in this chapter. George Sword was indeed an influential and powerful man on the Pine Ridge agency and among the Oglala during his lifetime. Jahner notes that “[a]t his funeral, orators called him the Abraham Lincoln of the Sioux nation.”64

62 In an email message to the author on June 24, 2010, DeMallie wrote that the main reason for the delay was technical. He noted that he has freed up time in the spring of 2011 in order to return to and complete the project on the Sword texts.
64 Jahner is drawing on the oration delivered by A. F. Johnson of the Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church at Sword’s funeral. After referring to Sword as “the Abraham Lincoln of the Sioux,” he stated, “Perhaps the next generation may appreciate his worth.” See Jahner, “Transitional Narratives,” 149 n2.
The (re)invigoration of Sword’s legacy is to be credited to the recovery work of DeMallie and Jahner. Sword’s role and individual identity certainly would have drifted into obscurity had it not been for the materials compiled and published by the team. Whereas prior to this collection, references to Lakota thought, myth, and ritual cited Walker; today specific concepts are credited to Sword. For example, in the recently published text by David Martínez, a description of ceremonial offerings is credited to Sword⁶⁵ and Martínez even marks Sword as ancestor of a “Dakota/Lakota/Nakota intellectual tradition.”⁶⁶ While, the significance of DeMallie and Jahner’s contribution cannot be underestimated, important critical readings of Sword’s material and his life have not been undertaken.

During Sword’s lifetime, the Lakota underwent tremendous change and faced enormous challenges as they were forced to give up a way of life and submit to reservation living. As Jahner notes, “Sword lived through fundamental social and cultural changes. During his lifetime, the United States forced the Oglala to move from their traditional, seminomadic culture to reservation living.”⁶⁷ His life provides insight into one way of negotiating those changes. In many ways his choices, the roles he assumed during the transitional processes and their implications are disturbing.⁶⁸ As historian, Jeffrey Ostler notes, “Though many Lakota leaders advocated selective adoption of American ways of life, Sword went farther in the direction of acculturation.

⁶⁶Martínez, *Dakota Philosopher*, 4.
⁶⁷Jahner, “Transitional Narratives,” 149.
⁶⁸Robert Warrior has made a similar observation about Charles Eastman and members of the Society for American Indians, which has caused a tremendous backlash. Warrior’s statement is available at Warrior, *Tribal Secrets*, 8. For an example of the backlash see, Martínez, *Dakota Philosopher*, 5-6.
than most. From his position as semipermanent head of the Indian police (he was not a band leader), he assisted in the suppression of Lakota religious practices and was a strong advocate of farming and allotment. His role, overseeing the first Indian police force on the reservation, put him at odds with the elders and chiefs of his people and contributed significantly to undermining their power. He clearly aligned himself with the oppressor, the U.S. government.

Accounts from the period, such as that offered by Nebraska rancher Edgar Beecher Bronson, focus on Sword’s allegiance to reservation agent Dr. Valentine McGillycuddy. One chapter in his reminiscences, “McGillycuddy’s Sword,” describes a tense situation where Sword, with a handful of men, put himself between several hundred angry “bucks” and McGillycuddy and visitors to his office in order to protect the latter. This sort of allegiance was unusual as suggested in a letter Bronson wrote to McGillicuddy decades later, in which he asked “Was there really a Sword?” These sorts of vignettes have been discounted as “slanted and prejudiced.” But, there are a number of them from various sources. A strong case can be made that Sword consistently acted in the interest of the colonizer and nurtured these relationships.

Was Sword “The Abraham Lincoln of the Sioux Nation” or “McGillycuddy’s Sword?” Certainly the answer to this question is more complicated than the binary choice offered. But, the more pressing concern is how the answer to this question shapes

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71 Jahner makes this argument in regards to similar vignettes offered by McGillycuddy’s second wife, Julia. I would however, argue that in spite of the troubling language of non-Native accounts from the era, there are enough of them to suggest their reliability. Jahner, “Transitional Narratives,” 149 n3.
our reading of the materials about the Sun Dance and narratives offered by Sword.

Jahner astutely locates Sword’s texts as transitional narratives and I quote her at length.

Fiction that emerges from the immediate and consciously negotiated experience of radical cultural change constitutes a category of world literature with exemplary pragmatic value for contemporary criticism. American Indian writing provides some notable examples of transitional texts, in which the act of writing is simultaneously a development of an imaginative tradition and an attempted entry into a new cultural order without known precedent and beyond any anticipation implied by the cultural past. Such writing lets us glimpse the challenge of the unimaginable as it provokes experiments with form and content in order to increase the range of a society’s imaginative resources…

One largely unpublished body of writing that promises to be a significant stimulus to thoughtful analysis of transition texts when it is finally published was written by George Sword.72

Two points from Jahner’s description are important. First, Sword’s contributions to our understanding of Lakota culture have more to do with how they reflect one response to “radical cultural change,” than with an accurate portrayal of pre-contact culture. Second, she locates Sword’s work as fiction.

In this chapter I trace the life of George Sword as a point of entry to think about early colonialist interactions and constructions of the Sun Dance. Sword is fruitful in this regard as his own life experiences intersected with major historical events related to the radical cultural change. Tracing Sword’s response via the multiple roles—warrior, tribal judge, delegate to Washington, performer in Buffalo Bill’s shows, and informant—he performed, illuminates one sort of response to these events. In the first section, “George

72 Ibid., 148.
Sword, the Early Years,” I look at Sword’s early years, beginning with his birth in 1847 until the Battle of Little Big Horn (Greasy Creek). During this period it is difficult to distinguish George Sword from his brother, who also went by the name Sword. It is almost as if George Sword does not exist until the death of his brother sometime around 1876. In a sub-section, “Sitting Bull’s Sun Dance and the Battle of Little Big Horn,” I examine a series of constructions about the Sun Dance as there are numerous accounts that link a Sun Dance with that battle. In a second sub-section, “The Aftermath of Little Big Horn,” I focus particular attention on the role Sword played in persuading Crazy Horse to turn himself and his band over to the reservation following the. It is in this moment that George Sword clearly emerges. After this effort on behalf of the U.S. government Sword travels for a time as a performer Bill Cody in a precursor for the Buffalo Bill Wild West shows. In the next section, “Sword on the Reservation: McGillycuddy’s Sword?,” I follow Sword’s life during the early reservation days as he takes on the role of Captain of the newly formed Indian police force on the reservation through the 1890 massacre at Wounded Knee. I am particularly attentive to the multiple constructions of the last Sun Dances held on the Pine Ridge reservation during the late 1870s and early 1880s. In the last section of this chapter, “James R. Walker, George Sword and The Sun Dance” I trace Sword’s life after Wounded Knee through his death in 1910. In this section I focus on the collaboration between Sword and Walker and suggest alternative readings of the constructions of the Sun Dance as a result of this colonist interaction.
George Sword, the Early Years

George Sword was born sometime around 1847. Jahner states the year of birth was 1846, but in interviews with Eli Ricker in 1907 Sword supplied a genealogy of his family dating back to 1793, which listed his birth as 1847. 1847 is also the date used in the Pine Ridge Census beginning in 1897, which also notes his ancestry as Sioux and Cheyenne. There are only two accounts from Sword’s young adult life. He told Ricker that he took part in the Fetterman Fight, which occurred in 1866, as well as the Wagon Box Fight in 1867. Sword would have been barely twenty years old at the time of the former. Sword’s description of the Wagon Box Fight hardly describes a well-managed fighting force.

He says there was no person in command of the Indians, these were young men thirsting for the fray. In those days

73 Ibid.
74 Eli Ricker lived in Chadron, Nebraska from the late 1800s through the early 1900s. He was a lawyer, politician, and judge. He was fascinated by Indian history and sought to tell the story of Native/White relations. He undertook a huge ethnographic project, interviewing both Native and non-Native peoples about their experiences and memories of the early years of contact. For more information see, Richard Jensen, “Introduction,” Eli S. Ricker, Voices of the American West, Vol. 1: The Indian Interviews of Eli S. Ricker, 1903-1919, (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), xi-xxvii.
76 The earliest census citations from Pine Ridge note Sword’s ancestry as both Sioux and Cheyenne, however the Cheyenne ancestry was quickly dropped and does not appear in later census records.
77 The Fetterman Fight took place on December 21, 1866 near the newly constructed Fort Phil Kearney. Ft. Kearney was constructed near the Bozeman Trail in the Powder River area in present-day Wyoming. At issue was the Bozeman trail, which ran through Sioux territory. The fight lasted approximately a half hour; Fetterman and eighty men were killed. The Fetterman Fight (which at the time was referred to as a massacre) was the second most important victory for the Sioux (after the Battle at Little Big Horn). For more information see the Fort Phil Kearny State Historic Site at http://www.philkearny.vcn.com/fettermanfight.htm, internet.
78 The Wagon Box Fight took place on August 2, 1867 also near Fort Kearney. The scenario was very similar to that of the Fetterman Fight as woodcutters and soldiers were attacked by Indian forces. This time however, soldiers were armed with rapid-fire rifles. Using wagon boxes to create a corral, U.S. army soldiers were able to fend off the attack. For more information see the Fort Phil Kearny State Historic Site at http://www.philkearny.vcn.com/wagonboxfight.htm, internet. Also Robert W. Larson describes how the estimates of Sioux casualties were greatly exaggerated by the U. S. government. Robert W. Larson, Red Cloud: Warrior-Statesman of the Lakota Sioux, (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 113.
they were not looking up to chiefs. The custom was for someone to make a feast and this gave him the privilege to act as leader. He could announce at the feast that he wished to make fight or make a foray for horses, and the braves went with him. Of course the most daring and ambitious ones would try to outstrip him; but he was on his mettle to make a brave showing; if he failed he won nothing [but] ridicule. The braves, for lack of a regular chief or leader, kept their eyes on those having repute for great bravery, and when these were seen to dash into action the others followed, and when the bravest turned back they were followed by the others again.79

Sword’s take on the activities of the young Indian warriors or the power of the chiefs was not complimentary. Nor does he mention that his brother, known as Sword Owner, was selected as a Shirt Wearer in 1868,80 due in part to his valor as assistant to Crazy Horse during the Fetterman Fight, but also as a result of family prestige. The brothers’ father, Brave Bear, had also been a Shirt Wearer, which added to Sword Owner’s cultural capital.

In early June of 1870 a delegation of Sioux arrived in Washington, D.C. According to a report in the New York Times, the visit of the Oglala overlapped another by the Sicangu (Rosebud Sioux).81 The Oglala delegation included Brave Bear, Sword,

79 Ricker, Voices of the American West, Vol. 1, 329.
80 Shirt Wearers oversaw hunting procedures, selected campsites, kept order in the camp, mediated internal quarrels, and protected women and children. In 1868, four shirt wearers were selected. In addition to Sword, American Horse, Young Man Afraid of his Horses, and Crazy Horse were chosen. There are numerous accounts of this particular selection of shirt wearers, due in large part to the fact that Crazy Horse was one of those selected. For example see: Larsen, Red Cloud: Warrior-Statesman. A first-hand account of the selection of the four Shirt Wearers is offered by translator, Billy Garnett in interviews with Ricker, Voices of the American West, Vol. 1, 4.
and Sword’s wife, the White Cow Rattler.\textsuperscript{82} Richard Jensen, editor of the Ricker interviews, identifies George Sword as the delegate referred to in the delegation and cites this visit as the turning point in Sword’s life. Jensen also identifies this Sword as the same person chosen as Shirt Wearer in 1868. This reading suggests that there was only one Sword. However, in the 1907 interview with Ricker, George Sword clearly states that he had a brother, with whom he fought during the Wagon Box Fight and that his brother was a chief.\textsuperscript{83}

George Sword\textsuperscript{84} was not a birth name and at different times in his life Sword gave dissimilar accounts as to how he acquired the name. He told Ricker that his name previously was Chase the Animal, but upon his brother’s death, he took the brother’s name, which was Sword.\textsuperscript{85} The explanation Sword gave to Walker had to do with an epiphany during his first travel to Washington, D.C. “I went to Washington and to other large cities, and that showed me that the white people dug in the ground and built houses that could not be moved. Then I knew that when they came they could not be driven away. For this reason I took a new name, the name of Sword, because the leaders of the white solders wore swords.”\textsuperscript{86} There is a third telling of the name that comes from Billy

\textsuperscript{82} During this trip one of the delegates accompanying Spotted Tail recognizes a young white woman, Fanny Kelly, who had been a captive of the Lakota for five months in 1864. Kelly was seeking recompense from the government on account of her captivity. On June 9\textsuperscript{th} a number of delegates sign an affidavit requesting that she be compensated out of their annuity funds. Signatures, marked with an X by the name included Spotted Tail and Swift Bear. Witnesses who certified that the terms of the affidavit were duly explained included Red Cloud and Sword. See Fanny Kelly, \textit{Narrative of My Captivity Among the Sioux Indians}, (Cincinnati, OH: Wilstach, Baldwin & Co., Printers, 1871), 271-273.
\textsuperscript{83} Ricker, \textit{Voices of the American West, Vol. 1}, 330.
\textsuperscript{84} If the discussion about who Sword was isn’t difficult enough there is debate over the Lakota/English translation of Sword. See Severt Young Bear and R.D. Theisz, \textit{Standing in the Light: A Lakota Way of Seeing}, (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), xv-xvi, 13.
\textsuperscript{86} Walker, \textit{Lakota Belief and Ritual}, 74.
Garnett in the Ricker interviews. “Garnett says Sword did not have the name of Sword until some months later when he went to the Custer battlefield with Generals Sheridan and Crook (summer of 1877); that his name, as he recollects, was Hunts the Enemy.”

Jahner, provides a fourth telling. Drawing on Ella Deloria’s translation of the Sword ledgerbook, Jahner states that the original name was Enemy Bait, which he still went by in 1877.

Members of the 1870 delegation were chosen by Red Cloud, who had requested a meeting with the President. At stake for the Lakota was the 1868 Ft. Laramie Treaty, which had not stemmed the tide of white encroachment in Lakota territory, particularly in the Powder River area. The encroachment had significantly reduced available game, particularly buffalo, and the winters of 1869 and 1870 had been particularly harsh, driving Lakota to various forts to ask for provisions. The treaty called for selection of an agency site within the Great Sioux Reservation and the Oglala preferred a site near the Platte, but the U.S. government preferred a site near the Missouri. Also at risk were the Black Hills as rumors swirled as early as 1870 that there was gold there.

Red Cloud had not yet chosen an agency site and disappeared in 1872. In his absence many bands of the Oglala agreed to a site on the North Platte near Fort Laramie; construction of agency was completed in 1871. This location proved to be temporary and in 1872 a new location along the White River was chosen by the Oglala, this time

87 Ricker, Voices of the American West, Vol. 1, 45.
89 Larson writes Red Cloud chose twelve Lakota to accompany him. The journey began from Ft. Fetterman and “five hundred enthusiastic Lakotas were there to give him a proper sendoff.” Larson, Red Cloud: Warrior-Statesman, 129.
90 Ibid., 126-129.
91 Ibid., 146.
with the blessing of Red Cloud. The years between 1872 and 1874 brought other crises.\textsuperscript{92} Not all Lakota bands had signed the treaty. The non-treaty Indians were having difficulties finding game and frequently came to the forts and agencies for food in order to prevent starvation. The White River location was not a satisfactory one to the U.S. government and plans were underway to move the agency yet again. Further, in 1874, Custer’s expedition to the Black Hills confirmed the rumors of gold.

This is also the year that Sword again appears in the historical record in regards to two related incidents. Dr. Saville, the agent at the new Oglala’s Red Cloud Agency, reported “to his Washington superiors that his beef supply was nearly exhausted. Feeding thirteen thousand Indians—Saville’s own estimate—required eight hundred thousand pounds of beef per month, which was double the original calculation.”\textsuperscript{93} Since the treaty only committed to feed those Indians who had signed, Saville determined the best possible solution was to conduct a census to determine “how many legitimate treaty Indians there were to feed.”\textsuperscript{94} Many were opposed to the census, but Sword and Young Man Afraid of his Horses supported the effort and were the first to bring their bands to the agency seat in order to take part in the count.\textsuperscript{95} The second incident occurred over efforts to build a flagstaff in order to fly the American flag over the agency stockade. Again Sword and Young Man Afraid stepped in, putting themselves between an angry contingency of Lakota who objected and the government employees.\textsuperscript{96}

\textsuperscript{92} Another interesting fact is that Red Cloud returned to Washington again in 1872. Only one of the members of the original delegation was invited by him to participate.
\textsuperscript{93} Larson, \textit{Red Cloud: Warrior-Statesman}, 155.
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., 156.
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid., 159.
\textsuperscript{96} Ricker, \textit{Voices of the American West, Vol. 1}, 88.
Whether there was one Sword, who dramatically changed his worldview and image, or there were two brothers is difficult to ascertain. It is unknown which Sword participated in the Washington trip in 1870, the census issue, and the flagpole incident. Whichever the case may be, Sword the Shirt Wearer\textsuperscript{97} disappears from the historical record in the early 1870s and in his place was George Sword, who by 1876 was working for the U.S. government as First Sergeant of U.S. Scouts.\textsuperscript{98} Importantly, Sword also distanced himself from perhaps the most important battle of all, known to the Lakota as the Battle at Greasy Creek and historically as the Battle of Little Big Horn, claiming he played no role in the battle whatsoever.\textsuperscript{99}

**Sitting Bull’s Sun Dance and the Battle at Little Big Horn**

The Battle at Little Big Horn (Greasy Creek) and the defeat of Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer and Seventh Calvary (June 25, 1876) is arguably the most widely circulated story of the Indian/American archives—for both Natives and non-Natives.\textsuperscript{100} And there is no narrative that more clearly illustrates differences in worldviews, values, and beliefs between the two groups. DeMallie argues,

\textsuperscript{97} There is a discussion in *Lakota Society* about the selection of *akicita* into the *Tokala* society, which makes me wonder if this had some bearing on Sword’s name. Iron Tail described the installation of officers and how he, an outsider to the society, was chosen, “they (the two men who were leaders) hunted him out of the crowd and presented him with a long knife. Generally it is customary to promote within the society. This office of long knife, or to get the correct meaning, *mi wakan*, sword, was introduced in the society when they later got these from white people.” Walker, *Lakota Society*, 34.

\textsuperscript{98} Ricker, *Voices of the American West*, Vol. 1, 327.

\textsuperscript{99} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{100} In order to emphasize this point, I draw attention to *The Last Stand: Custer, Sitting Bull and the Battle of the Little Big Horn*, by Nathaniel Philbrick, which as of June 27, 2010 has enjoyed six weeks on the *New York Times* “Best Sellers list,” following the success of 2008’s *A Terrible Glory: Custer and the Little Bighorn* by James Donovan. I juxtapose this with the knowledge that as I edit this chapter, three of my children are attending the 134\textsuperscript{97} Little Bighorn Battle Anniversary as descendants of a Lakota chief who participated in the battle.

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The events chronicled in the two sets of records [Native and non-Native] are by and large the same, but the significance and meaning of them frequently is seen to lie in completely different aspects of those events. In other words, Lakota and non-Lakota documents provide complementary perspectives based on different cultural premises; in a fundamental sense they represent conflicting realities, rooted in radically different epistemologies.  

Popular culture spawned hundreds of films, books, and articles for the American public about “the Massacre” and Custer. Historian Colin Calloway notes, “Few moments in American history are as clearly etched in the popular imagination as the last stand of Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer and his Seventh Cavalry.” These material productions reflect shifting perspectives throughout history. The earliest accounts focused on the savage brutality of Indians and the incident was cited as the reason the Indian “problem” needed to be settled once and for all. As Frederick Jackson Turner famously noted, once westward expansion reached its conclusion and Native peoples were confined to the reservation, early twentieth-century accounts shifted. And Sitting Bull, one of the renowned leaders of the battle, was for a time a famous headliner in the Buffalo Bill’s Wild West shows, where the public could safely partake of the spectacle of Indian savages. “The Last Great Indian Council” was held at the historic site in 1909 for the purpose of determining who actually killed Custer. Raymond DeMallie observes that the dominant non-Native narrative can be characterized by the way that

103 Sword attended this event.
Custer’s defeat is never attributed to the Sioux but to Custer himself…what he did wrong.  

Similarly there have been many accounts produced by Native peoples. These included testimonies, drawings that pictorially represented the battle, and oral histories. These accounts generally relate the battle to what is euphemistically referred to as Sitting Bull’s Sun Dance. Eleven days before the battle there was a Sun Dance during which Sitting Bull received a vision of the coming defeat of the soldiers. For Native people, the battle was “supernaturally foretold.”  

DeMallie astutely observes, “Needless to say, the Indian participant in this event would not have surrendered the credit for it to Custer, but neither did they see it as the result of their military skill or stratagem. Instead, for the Sioux, the victory at the Little Big Horn was religiously sanctioned.”

One of the earliest testimonials to emerge from a Siouan perspective was an interview printed in a St. Paul newspaper in 1883 with Mrs. Spotted Horn Bull, who was in the Indian camp at the time of the battle. She situated her narrative by describing Sitting Bull’s role in a Sun Dance that had occurred eleven days before. “On that occasion, Sitting Bull joined other petitioners in fasting, making ritual offerings of flesh, and dancing. He fell into a trance and, when he revived, he told of “a dream in which it had been foreshadowed to him that his people were soon to meet Custer and his followers, and would annihilate them.”

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104 DeMallie, “These Have No Ears,” 517.
105 Ibid., 523.
106 Ibid., 517.
107 Ibid., 517.
Affirmation of the Sun Dance also came from Arikara scout Red Star, known at the time of the battle as Strikes the Bear. Strikes the Bear was a scout for U.S. forces during the 1876 campaign and he describes the “signs” read by Indian scouts in pursuit of the Sioux with Custer.

About nightfall they came to an abandoned Dakota camp where there were signs of a sun dance circle. Here there was evidence of the Dakotas having made medicine, the sand had been arranged and smoothed, and pictures had been drawn. The Dakota scouts in Custer’s army said that this meant the enemy knew the army was coming. In one of the sweat lodges was a long heap or ridge of same. On this one Red Bear, Red Star and Soldier saw figures drawn indicating by hoof prints Custer’s men on one side and the Dakota on the other. Between them dead men were drawn lying with their heads toward the Dakotas. The Arikara scouts understood this to mean that the Dakota medicine was too strong for them and that they would be defeated by the Dakota…On the right bank of the Rosebud as they marched they saw Dakota inscriptions on the sandstone of the hills at their left. One of these inscriptions showed two buffalo fighting, and various interpretations were given by the Arikara as to the meaning of these figures.¹⁰⁸

Strikes the Bear goes on to describe several other signs of ceremonial activity and notes that later they heard Sitting Bull had conducted the ceremonies.

The inscriptions on the sandstone on the bank of the Rosebud coincide with Nicholas Black Elk’s description years later. DeMallie notes that Black Elk did not specifically connect Custer’s defeat with Sitting Bull or the Sun Dance, but that he did mention an image on “Picture Rock on the Rosebud River.”¹⁰⁹ However, Black Elk’s close friend Stephen Standing Bear did connect the two as seen in pictorial

¹⁰⁹ DeMallie, “These Have No Ears,” 523.
representations that he drew circa 1889-1903. Standing Bear was an accomplished artist and he drew the pictures for *Black Elk Speaks*. He claimed that he participated in both the Sun Dance and the battle when he was sixteen.\textsuperscript{110} His is one example of many pictorial representations. Art historian Louise Lincoln argues that there was a preponderance of art objects from this era. She connects this to the emphasis placed on “salvage” efforts as Indian people and their culture were seen as quickly fading away and many of these works of art were commissioned as was the case for the Standing Bear drawings.\textsuperscript{111}

The Standing Bear representation was drawn on muslin and the scene is divided into three sections. At center stage is a large active camp that surrounds the heart of the scene, a Sun Dance circle. Inside the circle there are a number of dancers, a group of singers (both men and women), and horses. The dancers are depicted in various stages of dancing and piercing. Some are tied to the Sun Dance tree and all have eagle bone whistles in their mouths. Numerous people are watching the scene. The Sun Dance camp is bordered by two rivers. In the lower left hand corner, separated from the dance camp by a river, is a depiction of another ceremony, which Peter Powell argues is an “Animal Dreamers’ Dance.”\textsuperscript{112} At the top of the drawing, again separating by water is a scene depicting the battle at Greasy Grass. In the picture the outcome is revealed as the

\textsuperscript{110} Standing Bear traveled with the Buffalo Bill’s Wild West shows, both in the U.S. and abroad and was stranded by the show in Europe. He returned to Pine Ridge at the height of the Ghost Dance movement and his first wife was killed at Wounded Knee. He later married the daughter of the Austrian family who took him in when he was stranded in Europe. For more on Standing Bear’s biography see, Father Peter J. Powell, “Sacrifice Transformed into Victory: Standing Bear Portrays Sitting Bull’s Sun Dance and the Final Summer of Lakota Freedom,” *Visions of the People: A Pictorial History of Plains Indian Life*, Evan M. Maurer, (Minneapolis: The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 1992), 82-84.


\textsuperscript{112} Powell, “Sacrifice Transformed,” 81.
majority of U.S. soldiers have already fallen. It is clear from the picture that the Sun
Dance is the essential element as it takes up nearly two-thirds of the picture.113

A series of oral tradition narratives regarding the Sun Dance prophesies of Sitting
Bull emerged in the 1920s and 1930s as Walter S. Campbell (wrote under the pen name
Stanley Vestal) began a series of interviews for his biography of Sitting Bull. In three
separate accounts, two of Sitting Bull’s nephews, One Bull114 and White Bull, recounted
very similar versions of Sitting Bull’s vision during the Sun Dance. One transcribed by
Cecelia Brown, One Bull’s daughter follows: “[Sitting Bull] participated in a Sun Dance
on Rosebud Creek at the Picture Rock. Now when it was noon he heard a human voice
from above, so he looked up; then it said: ‘These have no ears!’ So these white men came
with their heads down. They were on horseback. The horses came head over heels. He
told the people.”115

This vast array of Native perceptions of the battle produced in a wide variety of
cultural expressions offer important contributions for thinking about the role and
importance of the Sun Dance for the Siouan people. The battle did not take place as an
isolated event, but was intimately linked to the ritual and prophesies that resulted from
the ceremony. After the battle, Indian forces divided and fled to various directions as the
U.S. army increased their numbers, weaponry, and efforts to drive all onto the

113 Powell draws heavily from Walker in his interpretation of the painting.
114 This is likely the same One Bull who adopted the Laubins in 1934, see chapter two (2).
115 DeMallie shares this account, which he translated from the materials in the Campbell Collection.
DeMallie’s point in the argument has to do with the way that Campbell told the narrative from a western
perspective missing the detail of meaning in the phrase, “these have no ears.” DeMallie, "These Have No
Ears," 518-519.
reservation. While Sword denied participating in the battle, it was in the aftermath that he clearly emerged in the historical record as George Sword.

**The Aftermath of Little Big Horn**

Historian Robert Utley describes the aftermath of the battle at Little Big Horn. “[T]hese triumphs in the end brought defeat. Throughout the summer, autumn, and winter of 1876 growing hordes of soldiers hounded the Sioux so persistently that the agencies, with free rations, looked increasingly attractive.”116 Considered hostiles, many refused to turn themselves in at agencies. Sitting Bull and several thousand followers crossed the border into Canada, seeking refuge there. Crazy Horse and his followers managed to stay one step ahead of the U.S. military forces for almost a year. In January of 1877, Sword and Few Tails were sent by Lieutenant Clark to negotiate the return of Crazy Horse and his followers. Three accounts of the effort follow.

William Garnett described the situation in his interview with Ricker noting “according to Sioux custom” tobacco was sent. “Packages of tobacco [were] wrapped in blue cloth and some in red cloth, a package to be give to the chief of each band in Crazy Horse’s camp. If these packages were opened the act was an acceptance of the proposition which the bearers announced as the object of their business; if they were returned unopened it was rejected.”117 Garnett reported that the couriers returned after several weeks with some of the Indians from the hostile camps noting that Crazy Horse conveyed that he would return as well. In Sword’s interview with Ricker the event is mentioned in passing as he describes leaving Fort Robinson on January 1, 1877 with

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thirty Indians, including three or four women, for the Big Horn mountains on a peace mission. The group carried tobacco offerings to gift Crazy Horse. “Capt. Sword says that none of this delegation went as scouts, but as volunteer Indians carrying the olive branch of peace and good will.” Sword recounted that it was only after he returned with word that Crazy Horse would come in to the agency that “Red Cloud and Spotted Tail, each with a multitude of followers, went to visit this formidable chief in his mountain fastness and supplements Sword’s work with their own powerful influence.”

DeMallie offers another account from Sword’s ledgerbook written for Walker. The narrative is interesting as Sword refers to himself in the third person and uses his previous name, Enemy Bait. Sword contextualizes the event by describing the tension at the agency. Although the agency Indians had not taken part in the Custer affair, the government knew that communication between the agency and non-agency Indians continued and the former provided supplies to the latter. As a result the government was increasing pressure on the agency Indians. Sword describes a group of approximately fourteen who “were sent out to where the Indians lived to make peace with Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull.” Sword’s account of the council at Crazy Horse’s camp is related as one between himself and Iron Hawk and the conclusion is that Iron Hawk agrees to return, but notes that the movement will be slow due to the size of the camp, the large food stores and snow. Sword concludes the narrative, “And the people all returned in peace.”

118 Ibid., 328.
119 Ibid.
120 DeMallie, “These Have No Ears,” 528.
121 Ibid., 530.
This was clearly a memorable event for Sword and he takes credit for successfully completing the negotiations. Yet, Crazy Horse and the various bands did not return to the agency for another five months as it was May 6, 1877 when the group entered Camp Robinson and “[t]he Crazy Horse hostiles laid down their arms and promised to fight no more.” Sword is mentioned in a few other accounts in the spring and summer of 1877 in his capacity as a scout for the Army. First, returning to the scene of the Custer battle along with Generals Sheridan and Crook. He was also involved with the arrest of Cheyenne people as they turned themselves in at the agency. However, in the fall of 1877 he took on a new role when he joined Bill Cody for one of the earliest versions of the Wild West shows.

Buffalo Bill Cody was born around the same time as George Sword and it is likely the two men met shortly after the Battle at Little Big Horn. Cody, already a theatrical star at the time, previously worked as a scout for the Fifth Cavalry. After the defeat of Custer, his service was requested and he arrived at the Red Cloud Agency in early July. Historian Louis Warren argues that Cody’s presence was requested not so much for his scouting skills, but rather the “symbolic value” that Cody’s presence brought to the situation. Hundreds of Cheyenne had left the agency in order to meet up with the Crazy Horse contingency and the Fifth Cavalry’s mission was to prevent this meeting. On July 17th the cavalry came across a small party of Cheyenne. A small skirmish ensued and Cody, on his way to warn the others about a possible ambush,

122 Utley, The Last Days, 19.
encountered Yellow Hair, a Cheyenne sub-chief. The two men fired and Yellow Hair was killed. Cody, apparently dressed in his stage costume, reportedly jerked off Yellow Hair’s war bonnet and scalped the man. Swinging the scalp and bonnet in the air, Cody is reported to have shouted, “The first scalp for Custer.” This relatively minor incident was exaggerated when “Cody commissioned a stage play based on the event” that was to be known at First Scalp for Custer. It became one of the most famous skits in Cody’s future Wild West shows.

Until this time, “practically all of Cody’s stage Indians were played by “super,” or white extras.” But in 1877 Cody decided to change his approach and hire “real” Indians to play these roles. He turned to the Red Cloud Agency for recruits and found two Sioux—Man Who Carries the Sword (George Sword) and Two Bears—who were willing to participate. Sword and Two Bears were both known as “prominent peace advocates.” Sword traveled throughout the east with Cody’s show from 1877-1878. In the scenes depicting the conquest of the frontier, Sword did not play a blood-thirsty savage. Rather, he and Two Bears were noble savages helping “Buffalo Bill to recover his sister, vanquish the evil whites, and thereby remove the impulse for any Indians to be bad any longer.”

Little is known about Sword’s brief stint as a performer for Cody’s shows.

Several surviving quotes from newspaper interviews suggest that he considered it an

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125 Ibid., 119.
126 Ibid., 118.
127 Ibid., 191.
128 Two Bears was Hunkpapa Lakota and later, like Sword, became the Captain of the Indian Police at the Standing Rock reservation.
129 Warren, Buffalo Bill’s America, 193.
130 Ibid., 194.
important opportunity to learn about white “civilization.” In each he is quoted as saying that he enjoyed learning “the ways of the pale faces.”

In October of 1877 his path crossed that of a Sioux delegation visiting Washington, D.C. as Cody’s show was performing in the same city at the time. Although he was not an official member of the delegation, there are several pictures of him with the group as well as separate photos of him with Cody.

Sword could be considered a trailblazer in regards to his work with Cody as one of the first Oglala performers. In the years to follow numerous Sioux operated in similar domains as many actively engaged with the American scene, circulating through and interacting with the public on many different fronts. Leaders from the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Agencies, such as Spotted Tail, Milk, Two Strike and American Horse, sent their children to the Carlisle Indian Industrial School for education. In all, 82 children were sent during the first year (1879) and leaders traveled to Pennsylvania on several occasions to monitor the situation and in each case their visits took on a performative air. Many leaders also traveled to Washington D.C. on numerous occasions (1877, 1891, 1904 to name a few) to meet with presidents and high ranking government officials. Their visits were covered by national news, which emphasized their “full savage costume, replete with feathers and council paint.”

131 Ibid., 367.
132 This has caused considerable discussion and oftentimes Sword is listed as a member of the delegation. Pictures of Sword with Cody are available at: http://www.american-tribes.com/Lakota/BIO/GeorgeSword.htm, internet. Pictures of Sword with the delegation are available at: http://amertribes.proboards.com/index.cgi?board=wash&action=print&thread=323, internet.
133 Barbara Landis has worked for years pulling together the archive on the Carlisle Indian School and its history. This is available on-line at: http://home.epix.net/~landis/, internet.
134 Published: September 19, 1872 Copyright © The New York Times.
Bull, Black Elk, Standing Bear, traveled the U.S. and abroad with performance troupes such as the Buffalo Bill’s Wild West show, at the Chicago World’s Fair of 1893, and participating in a variety of spin-offs, such as the 1896 visit of eighty-nine Sicangu Sioux Indians to the Cincinnati Zoological Gardens for a summer-long stay.

These activities were critical to the public imaginary of Indian people. By 1886, the Wild West show’s performances in New York City sold over a half million tickets, a number not diminished by reports of an “insane Sioux Indian” among the performers. And by 1907 the show was performing at prestigious locations such as Madison Square Garden. The shows also presented an opportunity for cosmopolitan exposure for the Native performers. The headline of one New York Times article in 1906 reported the return of the Wild West show from Europe and noted “Indians Full of Strange Speech After Trip Abroad” as individual performers had learned French, German, Italian, and even Polish during their lengthy stay abroad. In the early years however, while Sword and Two Bears traveled with the troupe, Bill Cody was still honing the dramatic art of performance.

135 Also during this period there was an emergence of dime store novels about Indians and the closing of the American West. For example, Ned Buntline published over 550 such novels based on the character of Buffalo Bill.
136 This is one small story that fascinates me as the Lakota troupe actually lived in the zoo during their entire three-month long stay; taking anthropological exhibition to a new extreme. For more information see Susan Labry Meyn, “Who’s Who: The 1896 Sicangu Sioux Visit to the Cincinnati Zoological Gardens,” Museum Anthropology, Vol. 16, No. 2, 21-26.
137 Published: August 8, 1886 Copyright © The New York Times.
138 Published: April 15, 1907 Copyright © The New York Times.
139 Published: October 2, 1906 Copyright © The New York Times.
Sword on the Reservation: McGillicuddy’s Sword?

While Sword traveled with Bill Cody, the Oglala agency was moved yet again. In October of 1877, the final location was chosen after much debate. The locale was not far from the Red Cloud agency, but the move was an important one in that the people of Nebraska were unwilling to allow an Indian agency within state boundaries. The present-day reservation is the site of the final move and the agency was renamed Pine Ridge.140 Sword returned to a new agency and nothing further is known about his life until the spring of 1879, when on March 10th, Dr. Valentine McGillycuddy arrived to take his new position as agent in charge at Pine Ridge.141 McGillycuddy possessed “strong opinions on how to guide the Oglalas along the white man’s path.”142 Foremost among his plans was to break the hold of influence exerted by the traditional chiefs, such as Red Cloud, and one way to accomplish this task was through the creation of an Indian police force. Utley observes, “The chiefs rightly viewed the Indian police force as a menace to their supremacy.”143

Most accounts credit Young Man Afraid of His Horses with McGillycuddy’s choice of Sword to head up the reservation Indian police force on Pine Ridge agency.144 This put Sword in direct opposition with Red Cloud, who strongly opposed both the plan and the choice of Sword. Julia McGillycuddy, second wife of the agent, wrote about the

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141 Ibid.
142 Ibid.
144 There are numerous accounts of this decision. See for example: Julia B. McGillycuddy, *McGillycuddy Agent: A Biography of Dr. Valentine T. McGillycuddy*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1941), 113; Agonito, “Young Man Afraid of his Horses,” 121; and Bronson, *Reminiscences*, 204.
tension as Sword set about to recruit fifty young warriors to serve in the police force as Red Cloud exerted pressure to prevent participation. She recalls an incident when Sword proposed to hold a barbecue for potential recruits, but the event was disrupted when members of Red Cloud’s band “swooped upon them, seized the roasting beef, and devoured it.” Sword eventually persuaded fifty young men to join and the police force was established with Sword at the helm. With the police force in place, now attention was turned to providing a vehicle for trials and punishment, which was under the jurisdiction of the agent. On Pine Ridge this issue was resolved with the organization of “a Board of Councilmen to regulate Indian conduct and punish offenders. The one hundred councilmen, elected from different camps at Pine Ridge, selected Young Man Afraid of His Horses as president, with George Sword as secretary.” Rancher, Edgar Beecher Bronson astutely observes in his recollection of the time that for Sword, “it not only gave an important command to a man then only a warrior, but also gave him, as executor of the agent’s orders, general authority over even the elders and chiefs of the tribe. And little did the tribe like it, old or young.” At approximately thirty years old, Sword was a very powerful man in the new order of life on the reservation.

Sword’s allegiance was tested early. For example, McGillycuddy recalls a tense situation that emerged when Spotted Wolf and a small band of Cheyenne passed through the agency on their way to meet up with the still “hostile” Sitting Bull. McGillycuddy sent for Sword and told him to gather a group of men to head out after the group of

145 Traditional feed.
146 McGillycuddy issued more beef and told Sword “to assemble his party in a more secluded spot.” McGillycuddy, McGillycuddy, 113.
147 Agonito, “Young Man Afraid of his Horses,” 121.
Cheyenne and bring them back “alive—or dead.” Ten days passed and concern started to spread that Sword and the group had perhaps met with an unfortunate fate or had decided to join the group. On the eleventh day Sword returned with the group, which included the body of Spotted Wolf. The story was told that Sword and his police force had caught up with Spotted Wolf’s band and Sword had ordered the group to return with him. “Sword had told him if he did not come he would carry him back. At that Spotted Wolf had reached for his gun; but Sword had been quicker—he had fired, and the chief had fallen. The others had seen it was useless to fight and had surrendered.”

Another instance was recalled by Bronson. A number of men including Bronson, McGillycuddy, Lieutenants Waite and Goldman, and Major John Bourke, who had arrived at the agency in order to study the Sun Dance, were gathered in McGillycuddy’s office. They were preparing to travel to the site of that year’s Sun Dance (1881). Bronson noted that Sword, who usually was attired in his uniform, was dressed differently on the occasion.

But this morning Sword was a sartorial wonder. Above beautifully beaded moccasins of golden yellow buckskin rose the graceful lines of well-fitting dark blue broadcloth trousers, circled at the waist by a beaded belt carrying two six-shooters and a knife, topped by a white shirt, standing collar, and black bow tie, and by a perfectly made vest and “cutaway” coat matching the trousers (the vest decorated with a metal watch-chain yellow as the moccasins), crested by a well-brushed silk top hat—while from beneath the top hat defiantly swung Sword’s scalp-lock, a standing challenge to whomsoever dared try to take it!

148 McGillycuddy, McGillycuddy, 124.
149 Ibid., 125.
And yet, despite this opera bouffe rig, Sword, with the bronze of handsome features lit by the flash of piercing black eyes, supple of movement, soft of tread, dignified in bearing, Sword stood a serious and even a heroic figure—the man who dared court the most bitter tribal opposition and enmity by undertaking the enforcement of white men’s law as administered by Agent McGillicuddy.\(^{150}\)

A band of several hundred Brulé from the adjoining Rosebud agency arrived to attend the Sun Dance and descended upon the agent’s office demanding food, which McGillycuddy refused. According to Bronson, the chief of the group then threatened to “kill every white man on this reservation” and McGillycuddy physically threw the chief out of the office.\(^{151}\) The anxiety of the situation is palpable in Bronson’s account written decades later. The group feared for their lives, a fear that was compounded when Sword and his men left the office. Again I quote at length from Bronson:

> Down we all dropped behind the fence wall, rifles cocked and leveled, and we were barely down when up over the bluff, not thirty yards distant, charging us at mad speed, came a sure-enough war party. Keen eyes sought sights and fingers were already pressing triggers when Changro [translator] shouted:

> “No shoot! Sword he come!”

> It was indeed our trusty Sword, with every manjack of his youngsters!

> Reining in at the gate, Sword quietly led his men behind—to the north of—the office, left the ponies in charge of a few horse holders, and then lined his men along the wall beside us—honest Sword! Ready to come to death grips with his own flesh and blood in defence of his white chief! (sic)

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\(^{150}\) Bronson, *Reminiscences*, 208-209. Also notice Bronson’s different spelling of the McGillycuddy name.

\(^{151}\) Ibid., 212.
Dr. McGillicuddy may have known a prouder and happier moment than this, but I doubt it.\textsuperscript{152}

In preparation for the defense, Sword and his men had changed into their Native war gear. The presence of Sword and his men had according to Bronson, averted a potential disaster. After a heated exchange among the Brulé, they turned and headed toward the Sun Dance grounds, leaving the group unharmed. In spite of Bronson’s language describing the Oglala of his day, which reflected white perceptions of Indian people, he and McGillycuddy held Sword in high esteem.

\textit{The Last Great Sun Dance(s)}

Sun Dances during those early years were observed and studied by numerous non-Native people: reservation agents and their families, military personnel, anthropologists and local ranchers. It is important to note that many of these observers were there for the purpose of surveillance. Although there were numerous dances from 1877-1883 on or near the Pine Ridge and Rosebud agencies, each was proclaimed “the Last Great Sun Dance.” In the following section, I survey these many descriptions, which perhaps tell us more about the sentiments of the observers than the actual ritual. In interviews with Ricker, Billy Garnett described a Sun Dance that was held in 1877, at the Red Cloud Agency.\textsuperscript{153} Many details of the dance from the selection of the “Medicine Pole” to the piercing of the dancers coincide with multiple reports from various dances held during those years. This dance included a ritual described in other accounts, but in this year the ritual included a twist that was particularly significant. Garnett described how an effigy

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., 215.
\textsuperscript{153} In the Ricker Interviews Garnett recalled another Sun Dance held that year, as well as two Sun Dances held the year before, not including Sitting Bear’s Sun Dance. See Ricker, \textit{Voices of the American West, Vol. I}, 56-57.
of a man, “a monument” was erected.154 There was a charge of warriors to determine who would count coup first, followed by a sham battle. It was nearing the one year anniversary of the defeat of Custer and in this particular year the battle “was arranged to represent the Custer fight.” Crazy Horse’s men played the part that reflected their roles in the battle and “the friendly Indians were to stand for the Custer soldiers.”155 As a “friendly Indian,” Garnett was chosen to be on the Custer side. The sham quickly turned as the blows upon the Custer representatives were delivered with force rather than the light blows that were supposed to be delivered. “Garnett was on the Custer side and when he and the others got enraged they opened fire with their revolvers on the other side and drove them out of the dancing camp.”156 According to Garnett, catastrophe was averted only when Lieutenant Clark, on hand to witness the cutting of the Mystery Pole, intervened.157

Sun Dances held on the Red Cloud agency in 1881 and 1882 are the most well-known as there are various outsider accounts of the events. The Sun Dance in 1881 is the same one during which Sword challenged the Brulé visitors upon their arrival at the agency. Sword offered one more performative challenge to the camp that year. After the incident with the Brulé, McGillycuddy and Bourke were uncertain whether or not to visit the dance as they were concerned about the repercussions. However Bronson recalled that, “both agreed a bold front was likely to permanently settle the Brules’s grouch and the Ogallalas’ resentment of the doctor’s police organization, more likely than to stay

154 Ibid., 55.
155 Ibid.
156 Ibid.
157 Ibid.
tight at the Agency, and leave them suspicious we were afraid of them.”158 The group set out from the agency with Sword’s police in tow as protection.

When well within the circle, Sword asked the doctor to stop the ambulances a few minutes. He then proceeded to put his police through a mounted company drill of no mean accuracy, good enough to command the commendation of Major Bourke and Lieutenants Waite and Goldman.

The drill finished, and without the least hint to us of his purpose, Sword suddenly broke his cavalry formation and, at the head of his men, started a mad charge, in disordered savage mass, straight at the nearest point of the line of tepees to the west; and, come within twenty yards of the line, reined to the left parallel to the line, and so charge round the entire circle, his men shouting their war-cries and shooting as fast as they could load and fire over the heads of their people, sometimes actually through the tops of the lodges.

It was Sword’s challenge to the tribe! One hundred challenging twelve thousand! …

Altogether it made about the most uncomfortable ten or fifteen minutes I ever passed, for we had nothing to do but sit idly in our ambulances, awaiting whatever row this mad freak might stir. At length, the circuit finished, Sword drew up proudly before us and saluted, his horses heaving of flank and dripping of sides, and spoke to Changro…

“Sword he say now Sioux be good Injun—no bother police any more! They know they eat us up quick, but then Great Father send heap soldier eat them up!!”159

From a variety of accounts, these sorts of ritualized, performative sham battles and charges were a regular part of the prelude to the Sun Dance during those years. In each of these two accounts it appears that a deep division among the Lakota is being

158 Bronson, Reminiscences, 229.
159 Ibid., 230-232.
performed within the ritual context. In both cases those Indians friendly to the U.S. government are pitted against those that oppose the oppression. In the Garnett case, the friendly Indians are at a disadvantage—while for the Sword enactment the tide has clearly turned. In another account, from an early Sun Dance at the Spotted Tail agency, offered by Frederick Schwatka, a similar performance turned deadly as one warrior was shot and another was trampled and died.\footnote{Frederick Schwatka, “The Sun-Dance of the Sioux” \textit{Century Magazine} 39 (1889-1890), 754.}

A second characteristic of the Sun Dances from this early reservation era are the staggering number of Sioux in attendance. At the Sun Dance attended by Schwatka, he reports the camp as approximately fifteen thousand.\footnote{Ibid.} Bronson claims twelve thousand\footnote{Bronson, \textit{Reminiscences}, 231.} in his account of the 1881 Sun Dance at Red Cloud, although Bourke puts the number at eight thousand.\footnote{Ostler, \textit{The Plains Sioux}, 170.} The actual number of dancers is a relatively small percentage of those in attendance, but the ritual is in excess of the actual dancing. The tribe took part as a whole in many rituals within the Sun Dance, such as the cutting of the mystery pole. And the broad skeleton provided by the Sun Dance was an opportunity for other personal rituals such as having children’s ears pierced and important give-aways.

Bourke’s diary provides insight into his perception of the 1881 Sun Dance. Almost every person on the Pine Ridge agency was in attendance that year, as well as Sioux from other agencies and a number of non-Indian spectators. There were twenty-seven dancers including one woman, Pretty Enemy (reportedly the daughter of Little Wound). Bourke noted that he and McGillycuddy were given tremendous access and

were even allowed to walk around inside the dance enclosure. The only place where they
were not permitted was the area between the buffalo skull and the tree. Bourke recalled
one man, Bull Man, who danced while pierced to the tree for over an hour, fainted four
times and that six women offered their own flesh so that Bull Man’s suffering would end.
According to historian Jeffrey Ostler, Oglalas worked to explain the Sun Dance to
Bourke. In one exchange from the Bourke journals Red Dog told Bourke during the
piercing, “My friend, this is the way we have been raised. Do not think it strange. All
men are different. Our grandfathers taught us to do this. Write it down on the paper.”
Bourke apparently disagreed calling the event a “bloody drama” and “a glimpse into a
“Red-hot Hell.””

The following year in 1882, the field of non-Native spectators included
ethnographer Alice Fletcher, who came to study the ritual and other Lakota ceremonies.
According to biographer Joan Mark, Fletcher “was mesmerized by the dances” and had
taken a position with Colonel Henry Pratt for the summer to escort the first group of
Carlisle school graduates back to the Rosebud and Pine Ridge agencies as well as recruit
new students for the upcoming year. Staying at the Pine Ridge agency by night she
traveled to the dance each morning. The heat that year was oppressive; each day the
temperatures reached triple digits. Several accounts tell that Fletcher was particularly
keen to try the dog soup, but when she received a cup that included a hairy paw she gave
it to another.

165 Joan Mark, A Stranger in Her Native Land: Alice Fletcher and the American Indians, (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 79.
166 Ibid., 80.
Fletcher was also taken with the man and buffalo rawhide figures that were standard symbols used on the Sun Dance tree. Accounts note that the male figured that year prominently featured an extensive penis and that Fletcher wanted to procure the symbols for the Peabody Museum. The figures played an important role in the ritual as a symbol evoking another round of mock attack. The participants would shoot at the figures until they fell to the ground and there was always a great rush among the people for the items as they were coveted sacred symbols. McGillycuddy reportedly called over the local police chief, Sword, who managed to retrieve the rawhide figures for Fletcher. However, before turning them over to Fletcher, he cut the penis from the male figure. She expressed her dismay at the mutilation of the symbol prompting Sword to produce the missing part. For Fletcher, the iconic image was important as she wrote to a friend, “The festival is certainly phallic as everything shows.”

The tension between McGillycuddy and Red Cloud was also quite apparent to Fletcher. During introductions between Red Cloud and Fletcher, McGillycuddy had taken the opportunity to berate the chief. Fletcher reported Red Cloud’s response:

My friend, I am called Red Cloud because in my youth my young men covered the hillsides like a red cloud. As a boy I lived where the sun rises; now I live where it sets. Once I and my people were strong; now we are melting like snow on the mountains, while the whites are growing like spring grass and wherever they pass they leave them a trail of blood. They promise us many things but they never keep their promises.

167 None of the accounts mention Sword by name, however the majority say that McGillycuddy told the chief of the Indian police to retrieve the symbols for Fletcher and Sword was the chief at the time.
168 Mark, A Stranger, 80.
We do not torture our young men for the love of torture, but to harden them to endurance, to test their ability to defend their families in time of war.\footnote{Ibid., 81.}

While Sun Dances were held yearly from the earliest period on the reservation; the government had also targeted the ritual as a serious detriment to the civilization project. McGillycuddy decided early on to ban the Sun Dance but it took until 1884 for him to accomplish his goal and the agency police were used to enforce his decision. Sword and Young Man Afraid of His Horses cautioned against an approach that would result in an outright ban as they feared it would result in considerable bloodshed. They offered another alternative—threaten to withhold rations for the entire family if anyone from the family participated in the ritual.\footnote{Agonito credits Young Man Afraid of his Horses and Sword with this idea. See Agonito, “Young Man Afraid of his Horses,” 122. Ostler does not mention their role in this plan.} Red Cloud was outraged and reportedly said that “neither by treaty [n]or otherwise have they relinquished their right of participation in the practice.”\footnote{Ostler, The Plains Sioux, 177.}

The threat was supplemented by a series of travel passes authorized by McGillycuddy. Any travel off the reservation required permission from the agent and had been severely limited as authorities strove to bring in all of the non-treaty or hostile Indians. No Flesh, who was a principal leader of the dance, confronted McGillycuddy. At issue was No Flesh’s vow to Sun Dance, which would result in “serious consequences” if left unfulfilled.\footnote{No Flesh was also one of Walker’s informants. There are several accounts of this conversation between McGillycuddy and No Flesh. This one is from Ostler, The Plains Sioux, 178. But also see the Garnett interviews in Ricker, Voices of the American West, Vol. 1. Julia McGillycuddy also mentions the incident, but doesn’t mention No Flesh by name.} McGillycuddy told No Flesh that “the Indians could
go out on the hills and fast and suffer and go into their sweat houses and have their
‘carvers’ do the usual cutting of flesh as a sacrifice to their God.” Ostler persuasively
argues that the Oglala could “interpret McGillycuddy’s concessions as indication of his
willingness to tolerate any religious ceremony that could be conducted in private.”
The joint efforts worked, a public Sun Dance was not held that year.

Closing of an Era

As public Sun Dances were suppressed, the enmity between Red Cloud and
McGillycuddy intensified. In 1882 the Edmunds commission was formed. The purpose
of the commission was to divide the larger Sioux reservation into six separate
reservations, opening millions of acres for settlement. Three-fourths of all adult males
among the Sioux needed to agree to the proposal for its passage. Red Cloud and many
others opposed the plan. Samuel D. Hinman, a missionary who participated in the Fort
Laramie treaty, was selected to obtain the signatures at the Pine Ridge agency. The first
attempt to procure the required number of signatures failed and Hinman returned to the
Pine Ridge agency alone. Ricker offers a summation of Garnett’s recollection of the
effort.

Hinman started in at Medicine Root to get children’s
signatures, names being taken of those ranging in age from
two years up. The younger children who could not sign

175 Agonito, “Young Man Afraid of his Horses,” 122.
176 Note Hinam was dismissed from his position as head of the Episcopal Church at the Santee Sioux
agency in Niobrara and was present during the 1862 Sioux uprising in Minnesota. In 1878, Bishop William
Henry Hare charged Hinman “Of a ‘cool calculating evil’ that included lechery, intoxication and financial
chicanery.” Although the episode threatened to end Hinman’s career; it did not. He later filed libel charges
against Hare, a case that he won. See Anne Beiser Allen, “A Scandal in Niobrara: The Controversial Career
of Rev. Samuel D. Hinman,” *Nebraska History Quarterly*, Vol. 90, No. 3, (Fall 2009),
had their tiny hands held by the parents on the pen holder while the expert Hinman swung the pen with the nonchalance of a forger...He had Captain Sword and other policemen with him to interpret and aid in explaining and persuading...William Garnett saw the little children signing. There were just forty (40) of them whose ages ran from two to eighteen years.177

The Board of Indian Commissioners caught wind of the fraud and sent Herbert Welch to verify the signatures. “William Garnett was interpreting between Welch and Capt. Sword. Welch tried to learn from Sword about the ages of the signers, but Sword insisted there were none under eighteen years.”178 Garnett was interviewed next and he described what he witnessed. “When Garnett had made his statement to Welch in Sword’s presence, Sword then stated that the signatures had been taken in the same way all over the Reservation.”179

The fraud temporarily stalled the plan and strengthened Red Cloud’s position. He moved to have McGillycuddy replaced and was supported in this effort by Dr. Thomas Bland. Bland was a reformer who advocated for self-determination for Indian people, and editor of *The Council Fire*, a journal dedicated to this cause. In 1884 he traveled to Pine Ridge to study the situation, but was promptly ordered from the agency by McGillycuddy, an event that he wrote about in the journal. In March of 1885, Red Cloud received permission to travel to Washington with Bland in order to discuss McGillycuddy. In a meeting with President Grover Cleveland, Red Cloud charged the agent with abuse and theft. “Our agent is a bad man. He steals from us, and abuses us

177 Ricker, *Voices of the American West, Vol. 1*, 90.
178 Ibid., 91.
179 Ricker suggests that perhaps Sword lied because he feared that his position as captain of police might be taken away from him. Ibid., 92.
and he has sent all the good white men out of our country and put bad men in their places. »180

McGillycuddy was called to Washington in April to address the charges. Among the Oglala that McGillycuddy brought on the trip to vouch for his honesty was George Sword.181 By July of that year an investigation was underway on the Pine Ridge agency, headed by General McNeil appointed by Cleveland. At the first meeting, McGillycuddy publically berated Red Cloud, and, accusing him of lying, refused to shake the chief’s hand, which was considered by Red Cloud as a great insult and he walked out of the meeting. One account relates that Red Cloud turned his anger on Sword, “calling him the white man’s slave, the white man’s dog” and predicted that “some day his people would rise up against him and kill him.”182 After numerous investigations and several trials, McGillycuddy finally resigned his post in 1888. Sword retained his position as captain of the Indian police force under the new agent.

A new threat to the Oglala came in the 1887 passage of the Dawes Allotment Act.183 In many ways there was a great deal of similarity between the Dawes Act and the efforts of the Edmunds commission. Both efforts sought to reduce the holding of the Sioux and divided the great reservation into six separate reservations, yet Dawes was opposed to the Edmunds effort. Perhaps the opposition was merely philosophical in that the motivation for Dawes was a plan to civilize the Indian through the cultivation of

180 Larson, Red Cloud: Warrior-Statesman, 244.
181 Ibid., 245.
182 McGillycuddy, McGillycuddy, 229.
183 The Dawes Allotment Act was sponsored by Senator Henry Dawes of Massachusetts.
farming, not a concern of the Edmunds commission.  The Dawes Act provided for allotments of 160-acre plots, which would be given to each adult male member of the tribe. Through ownership of private property, the reformers supporting the Act argued that the Indian would acquire the skills necessary to enter their place within the American system. An added benefit was that the breakdown of the reservation into individual plots would free nine million acres of land for further settlement; meaning a large profit for the government.

Twenty years of tension and deep divide provided fertile ground for the Ghost Dance movement that swept the Sioux. Not only was there considerable stress between the tribes and the U.S. government, there were profound splits internal to each group. A prominent account of the Ghost Dance comes from Sword who, using the method he would later employ with Walker, wrote the account for Emma S. Sickels, a schoolteacher at the agency. Written in Lakota, the text was translated for Sickels and was published in The Folk-Lorist in 1892. In the article Sword noted that it was 1889 when the Oglala first heard about Wovoka from the Shoshone and Arapahoe. Wovoka was considered “the Son of God,” on earth, who had come first to the whites who had rejected and killed him. Five people left the agency “without permission” to visit “the Messiah.” Upon their return they called a council together on the reservation and Sword’s Indian police

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184 Three different approaches to the “Indian problem” are apparent. The Edmunds Commission did not express concern for the Indian; the Dawes Act sought Indian reform and to help the Indian; and Bland sought Indian self determination.

185 Utley, The Last Days, 44.

186 This article was published under Sword’s name became a primary source for James Mooney’s later work on the ritual. No information is available regarding the translator. George Sword, “The Story of the Ghost Dance: Written in the Indian tongue by Major George Sword, an Ogallala Sioux, Captain of Indian Police,” The Folk-Lorist: Journal of the Chicago Folk-lore Society, Vol. 1, No. 1 (July 1892).
promptly confined the travelers to the prison. Sword recounted that none of the members would definitely testify that they had seen “the Son of God.” “They were confined in the prison for two days, and upon their promising not to hold councils about their visit, they were released.”

The matter however was not laid to rest as the next spring Kicking Bear, from Cheyenne River agency went to visit the Arapahoe and his stories about the Ghost Dance there circulated throughout the reservation. Sword went on to dispassionately describe the dance, the ritual regalia, as well as sharing a song from the ritual. It was against this backdrop that the Ghost Dance movement took hold among the people of the Pine Ridge and Rosebud reservations and gained momentum.

Dakota Charles Eastman arrived at the Pine Ridge agency in November of 1890 during the height of intensity of the Ghost Dance movement. One of the first Native peoples to receive a degree in medicine, his first assignment made him “something of a novelty” as “a ‘white doctor’ who was also an Indian.” One of Eastman’s first visitors was Captain Sword. In his autobiography Eastman writes that Sword, “the dignified and intelligent head of the Indian police force, was very friendly, and soon found time to give me a great deal of information about the place and the people.”

The only topic discussed by Sword that Eastman related in his memoir was Sword’s concern over the tensions between the Ghost Dance and the government’s opposition to the movement.

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188 On an interesting note, Sword must have been quite a singer, with an ability to “catch” (a term used by Lakota in the contemporary era meaning “to memorize”) a song. There is no indication that Sword participated in the Ghost Dance. Sword also provides songs to Walker and Ricker notes that Sword sang hymns while he was writing out his notes. For the Ghost Dance songs related by Sword, see Sword “The Story of the Ghost Dance, 32-33.
190 Ibid., 50.
“The agent says that the Great Father at Washington wishes it stopped. I fear the people will not stop. I fear trouble, kola [friend].” 191 Sword continued to approach Eastman, updating him regarding the most recent events surrounding the situation. The reservation agent called for all government employees with families to come into the agency and threatened to send for soldiers to stop the dance. 192

By mid-December the situation was ready to explode. During one episode, the police were overpowered as they moved to arrest a man who was guilty of a minor offense, creating a mob scene. American Horse stepped in to quell the situation, but his efforts put his life at risk. That evening Sword brought him and his wife to Eastman seeking refuge. The reservation agent sought advice from Eastman, Sword, and American Horse all of whom cautioned against calling in military troops. They thought the issue was settled, but according to Eastman, “As a matter of fact, the agent had telegraphed to Fort Robinson and they were already on their way to Pine Ridge.” 193

Adding to the tension, news arrived that Sitting Bull had been killed at the Standing Rock agency. Many members of his band fled and met up with Big Foot’s band from the Cheyenne River agency; they were heading in the direction of Pine Ridge. According to Eastman the situation was further incensed by the press, who reported an eminent “Indian uprising.”

191 Ibid., 51.
192 Two items of note here: First, Eastman must have seemed very unusual to Sword. He presented an opportunity for Sword in that it was the first person connected with the government, who was Native and could speak the language. Second, Eastman was clearly getting information from Sword before he was hearing the same information from the agent in charge.
193 Ibid., 58.
On December 28th the U.S. military intercepted the group consisting of Big Foot’s band and the refugees from Sittings Bull’s band who were heading for the Pine Ridge agency to surrender. The following afternoon a melee broke out as soldiers worked to disarm the bands. There are numerous, conflicting reports about what transpired next, but in the end the Sioux were massacred. Eastman described the fear and chaos at the agency, where he had remained. The Indian police force had stayed as well in order to protect the agency employees and “friendly” Indians. A blizzard began and it was three days before Eastman and others were able to reach the scene.

Fully three miles from the scene of the massacred we found the body of a woman completely covered with a blanket of snow, and from this point on we found them scattered along as they had been relentlessly hunted down and slaughtered while fleeing for their lives…When we reached the spot where the Indian camp had stood, among the fragments of burned tents and other belongings we saw the frozen bodies lying close together or piled one upon another. I counted eighty bodies of men who had been in the council and who were almost as helpless as the women and babes when the deadly fire began, for nearly all their guns had been taken from them. A reckless and desperate young Indian fired the first shot when the search for weapons was well under way, and immediately the troops opened fire from all sides, killing not only unarmed men, women, and children, but their own comrades who stood opposite them, for the camp was entirely surrounded.

It took all of my nerve to keep my composure in the face of this spectacle…”

Three young children reportedly survived the massacre. One baby was adopted by an army officer. Another young girl was reportedly adopted by Sword. The days

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194 Ibid., 65.
that followed were filled with chaos as General Miles arrived on the scene and some bands fled the Pine Ridge agency. It was more than two weeks before these groups surrendered. Miles had very strong opinions about how to calm the situation, which included honoring previous promises, returning rations to adequate levels, reconsidering the plan to turn the Sioux into farmers, and institute permanent military command over the agency. Congress hastily passed measures to address the first two issues, but not the last two; within six months the agencies were under private control. In March 1891, Miles arranged for a group of Oglala representatives to come to Washington to discuss issues with the president. Sword was among the group, along with American Horse, Young Man Afraid of his Horses, and others. The chiefs were ignored and the meetings did not go well.

James R. Walker, George Sword, and The Sun Dance

On July 15, 1896, Dr. James R. Walker received a new assignment. For nineteen years he served as agency physician at various Indian agencies—amongst the Chippewa at Leech Lake, at Colville in Washington, and at Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania. The new assignment took him to the Pine Ridge agency in South Dakota where his path crossed that of George Sword beginning a relationship that spanned fourteen years until Sword’s death in 1910. The two men were approximately the same age—Sword was forty-nine and Walker was forty-seven—and both men’s life experiences were shaped by dramatic events and a radically shifting American dynamic. Walker had lived through

195 There is a Jessie Sword who appears on the census record in Sword’s household. In the earlier records she is identified as Sword’s step-daughter and in later records as the daughter of Sword. Her age suggests that she was likely the child survivor adopted by Sword. Ricker, Voices of the American West, Vol. 1, 327.
the Civil War, Sword the Indian Wars. Both men were government employees and it is likely that they met soon after Walker’s arrival.

The association between the two men began early; only six weeks after coming to Pine Ridge Walker had already conducted his first interview with Sword. DeMallie and Jahner write, “The medical needs at Pine Ridge Reservation motivated Walker’s efforts to learn the ways of the traditional holy men.” In a letter dated in 1906 Walker described the rise of tuberculosis on the reservation and that the Oglala were still likely to turn to medicine man for treatment of the disease rather than someone like himself trained in western medicine. He decided that enlisting the aid of the medicine men rather than an outright suppression of their practices would be a more productive route. “I then studied their methods of treating the sick, and the results. I found that they have little knowledge of disease, that the most of their medicines are inert, and that their practices consist mostly of mysticism and trickery. But I also learned that the Indians have faith in the power of medicine men to relieve suffering, and that most of the medicine men have a sincere confidence in their power to do so.” Walker went on to explain that the double confidence, on the part of the sick in the medicine men’s powers and on the part of the medicine men, did in some minor cases, result in “real and permanent” relief. He wrote,

> These facts I could neither refute nor ignore, so therefore I determined to enlist the cooperation of the medicine men in getting a control of the sick, trusting to circumstances to do

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196 Walker’s first interview with Sword took place on September 5, 1896 and Bill Means was the interpreter. Walker, *Lakota Belief and Ritual*, 74-80.
197 Ibid., 9.
198 Ibid., 10.
199 Ibid.
away with their conjuring. I cultivated amicable relations with them to gain their friendship, praising the good they did, supplying them with simple remedies and instructing them in their uses. But privately I charged them with their trickery and persuaded them to abandon such methods.\textsuperscript{200}

The first of the dated interviews conducted by Walker was with Little Wound, a progressive chief.\textsuperscript{201} Two days later he interviewed Sword. Sword began in conventional Lakota oral traditional storytelling mode, first substantiating his “authority” for the knowledge he would share.\textsuperscript{202}

I know the old customs of the Lakotas, and all their ceremonies, for I was a \textit{wicasa wakan} (holy man, or shaman), and I have conducted all the ceremonies. I have conducted the Sun Dance, which is the greatest ceremony of the Lakotas. The scars on my body show that I have danced the Sun Dance and no Lakota will dispute my word. I was also a \textit{pejuta wicasa} (medicine man), and belonged with the Bear medicine people. The Bear medicine men have all the medicine ceremonies that other kinds of medicine men have and much more. So I can tell all the medicine ceremonies.

Sword’s claims have been accepted and circulated widely. For example, in a biographical entry in the \textit{Encyclopedia of North American Indians}, Harvey Markowitz notes that “Sword achieved great renown as a \textit{wicasa wakan} (holy man, or shaman) and \textit{pejuta wicasa} (medicine man).”\textsuperscript{203} Jahner, relying on the same interview notes that as a result Sword “was remarkably well qualified for his role as Walker’s primary teacher and

\textsuperscript{200} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{201} Little Wound had a long running antagonistic relationship with Red Cloud, who reportedly killed Little Wound’s father. Emma Sickel provides a detail of this enmity in an article published by \textit{The New York Times}, (July 19, 1893) entitled “Red Cloud and Little Wound: Emma C. Sickels on the Careers of the Rival Chiefs.” This interview was conducted September 3, 1896, Antoine Herman translator. Walker, \textit{Lakota Belief and Ritual}, 67-68.
\textsuperscript{202} Walker, \textit{Lakota Belief and Ritual}, 65.
as overseer of the immense task of preserving the holy men’s teachings in writing.”\textsuperscript{204}

No one has ever questioned the veracity of Sword’s claims made for the first time at the age of fifty.\textsuperscript{205} The historical record does not support this claim as it does for some of Walker’s other informants such as Little Wound or No-Flesh.\textsuperscript{206} In fact, during the era when these men were still actively involved with the Sun Dance, Sword was clearly challenging the practice and conspired with officials to have it discontinued. Sword’s early strong allegiance to the U.S. government would suggest that if Sword’s account were true he would have reached this pinnacle (as a medicine man and holy man) and turned his back on the role before he was thirty years old.\textsuperscript{207}

Further, there is a striking omission in Sword’s narrative. Jahner and DeMallie rightly locate Sword’s biography as following the conventions of Lakota oral tradition. Jahner writes,

Its primary structure and content clearly follow the traditional Lakota conventions guiding formal, public oral presentations of personal experiences, and it has to be judged first in relation to these conventions. Of all the formalized modes of Sioux narrative, the recounting of one’s accomplishments was perhaps the most central—it

\textsuperscript{204} Sword’s claims that he was a medicine man are accepted as fact and they are circulated widely. See for example, James Walker, \textit{Lakota Myth}, ed. Elaine Jahner, (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 43 and Lindsay Jones, “White Myths About American Indian Mythology: Reflections on the Lakota Story of “When the People Laughed at Hanwi, the Moon,” \textit{Area Studies Tsukuba}, Vol. 17, (1999), 131.

\textsuperscript{205} In Sword’s other activities as a key informant he does not make this claim, but he does repeat his claims regarding his activities as a warrior and magistrate. See for example his interview with Ricker, \textit{Voices of the American West}, Vol. 1, 326-330.

\textsuperscript{206} For example we read that Little Wound’s daughter was the only woman dancer in the Sun Dance held in 1881 and we read about No-Flesh’s role as a medicine man at a Sun Dance and how he challenged McGillycuddy’s ban on the Sun Dance.

\textsuperscript{207} If Sword was indeed one of the representatives during the Washington, D. C. trip in 1870 he would have been twenty-three years old when deciding to make his break with Lakota tradition. In either case, he would have fulfilled the role of medicine or holy man at a very young age. It is not unheard of, but unlikely.
was the narrative performance for which all other types were prelude and preparation.  

Yet, in the case of those claiming to be medicine or holy men, conventions regarding the account traditionally included some account of the speaker’s vision or dream, which provide their authority to speak about or conduct the rituals.  

Little Wound offered this presentation in his interview.  “In my boy vision, the Buffalo came to me and when I sought the shaman’s vision, the Wind spoke to me.”  

This vital element is missing from Sword’s account.  

By the end of September in 1896 Sword had already agreed to write for Walker and a group of informants including Little Wound, American Horse and Lone Star agreed to tell Walker “of the ceremonies of the Oglala” if he would “provide a feast.”  

Sword is credited with persuading the others to participate.  DeMallie and Jahner suggest that this feast began the instruction of “Walker as a Medicine Man.”  Just as Sword’s claim of being a medicine and holy man requires critical attention, so too, should Walker’s claims that he was initiated as a shaman, which has been accepted at face value by scholars.  In the introduction to his work on the Sun Dance, Walker writes about himself, “He cultivated the friendship of the shamans, and became a shaman, thus receiving

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208 Jahner, “Transitional Narratives,” 158.
209 We can still observe this convention today, see chapter 5 of this dissertation.
210 Walker, Lakota Belief and Ritual, 67.
211 Not to belabor the point, I also draw attention to a photograph taken of Sword in 1909 at the Crow agency in Montana.  It is interesting that Sword joined the group of Oglala who traveled that year to take part in Wanamaker’s “Last Great Indian Council,” the purpose of which was to conduct interviews with those who were at the Battle of Little Big Horn, as he always claimed he was not at the battle.  The picture is the only one that I’ve seen that shows Sword bare-chested.  Clearly the photograph is old and a headdress covers some of his chest, but the requisite Sun Dance scars are not visible (although they may be on the back).  See Walker, Lakota Belief and Ritual, picture #5 in insert between pages 66-67.
212 Ibid., 68.
information that it was impossible to get otherwise.”

Walker claimed that the knowledge of the Shaman was secret and could only be shared with “one who was to become a Shaman.” Further, he had agreed not to relate this knowledge until all of his informants were dead. The narrative of Walker’s initiation as a shaman is circulated widely. For example, Jones writes, “so close were his dealing with these Oglala elders, in fact, that he was eventually initiated into their secret Buffalo Society (composed at that point of perhaps as few as five members), which provided him access to an esoteric body of knowledge known to only a few (male) Lakotas.” DeMallie and Jahner note, “Through his work and developing knowledge of the sacred, Walker in effect became a holy man himself.”

Another narrative offered by a contemporary of Sword’s, also living on the Pine Ridge reservation at the time provides insight regarding the training of a “shaman.” Nicholas Black Elk’s biography, Black Elk Speaks is another important and well-known text on Lakota ritual and belief. In this narrative we read that although Black Elk learned from other able medicine men, the requisite of his designation as a medicine man came not from this training, but from the spirits and was given through visions. Like the situation with those requiring Walker to provide a feast, Black Elk makes a similar requirement of John Neihardt who interviewed Black Elk and wrote the book. We see another Lakota convention at work, sacred knowledge can only be shared within a ritual

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213 Walker, The Sun Dance, 55.
214 Ibid., 56.
215 Walker, Lakota Belief and Ritual, xx.
217 Walker, Lakota Belief and Ritual, xxxii.
context. Thus, an alternative reading of the occasion of the feast and the sharing of sacred knowledge is suggested.

**Questions about Walker’s Methodology**

Walker’s work with the Oglala informants began long before the 1902 visit of anthropologist Clark Wissler. Wissler, of the American Museum of Natural History, traveled to Pine Ridge looking for “specimens” and to decide whether this reservation might be a potential site for extended fieldwork. Wissler’s method entailed finding literate Natives and non-Natives who might be interested in carrying out extensive investigations, which they would send to him for editing and future publishing. DeMallie notes that Wissler’s “[m]ethod and probably the plan originated with” Boas who had achieved a great deal of success utilizing this approach in his work in the Northwest. During his visit, Wissler identified Walker and the Nine brothers, owners of the trading post, as potential collaborators. He proposed this role to Walker, who immediately accepted. As a result, a lengthy exchange ensued, which can be traced in the correspondence between the two men that lasted for twenty-four years.

From the beginning there were numerous methodological issues that raise questions about Walker’s work. As already discussed one issue emerges regarding Walker’s claims to having been accepted into and trained as a shaman himself. Walker did not mention this “fact” to Wissler until a letter dated February 25, 1916. At the time he had already left his position as a physician at Pine Ridge and was devoting his efforts

218 We observe this convention among the medicine men in chapter 4 and by Running in chapter 5.
toward the completion of his monograph of the Sun Dance. Almost as an aside Walker wrote, “By the way, I became a Shaman before leaving the reservation and was instructed in much of the esoteric lore of the shamans. I was saluted by the older Oglala as the Holy Man. Before this I was Wasicu Wakan [“holy white man”] and I became Wicasa Wakan [“holy man”].

There is no indication of what Wissler thought of the claim or the fact that Walker never actually saw a Sun Dance.

Wissler worked to provide advice and guidance, efforts that were frequently disregarded by Walker, who was never trained as an ethnographer. For example, Wissler suggested that Walker familiarize himself with previous scholarship on Lakota religion. In response Walker wrote, “In looking over authoritative descriptions of the sun-dance I have observed the same discrepancies that occur in the descriptions given me by Indians.”

The issue for Walker was that there was no coherence to the information that he was gathering. DeMallie notes that Walker was influenced by the work of evolutionary theorists, apparent in his attitude toward language. He believed “that the Lakotas were evolving from a primitive to a civilized state, and that their language was similarly evolving… [suggesting] that uncivilized people were incapable of the same levels of abstract thought and precise expression as civilized people.”

This belief caused Walker to insist on bringing some sort of organization and systematic structure to the knowledge he had gathered from his informants. Walker noted in the Sun Dance, that “[w]hile the Shamans recognized a scheme…they had never formulated them into a

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220 Ibid., 38.
221 Ibid., 24.
222 Ibid., 21.
Walker saw his contribution as gathering the information and presenting it in a formulaic rendering, a coherent whole. Wissler strongly recommended that Walker not synthesize the material and to allow room for the multiple views of his informants. Both recommendations were rejected.

Four inter-related methodological challenges faced by Walker emerged in the correspondence between the two men, which deserve special attention: translation, qualifications of the informants, validity of information, and disagreement among the informants. First, Walker expressed extreme anxiety regarding issues of translation. He felt that his translators were liberally interpreting the information given by the informants. In 1909 he wrote Wissler, “Another serious difficulty I have encountered is to get a correct interpretation of the narrations of the older Indians, for interpreters give their ideas instead of translating what the Indians say.” Walker relied on translators for his interactions with informants, although it is likely that he had some understanding of the language. Likewise, the informants relied on translators to convey their information. DeMallie suggests that Walker’s understandings about the Lakota language came from Sword. Much has been written about Sword’s inability to speak English even though he was literate in the Lakota language. This was an issue that Sword addressed in their very first formal interview.

I cannot speak English, but I understand it so that I know when it is interpreted wrong. I have learned to write in Lakota, but I write as the old Lakota spoke when they talked in a formal manner. The young Oglalas do not

225 Ibid., 20.
understand a formal talk by an old Lakota, because the white people have changed the Lakota language, and the young people speak it as the white people have written it. I will write of the old customs and ceremonies for you.226

Two important insights can be gathered from this discussion. First, Sword was quite confident that he understood English well enough to determine when his words were being misrepresented. Second, as he situated himself as the authority on the “old Lakota language,” this not only rationalized his offer to write about the customs, but effectively removed others from the process. Yet, the Lakota texts written by Sword also required translation, toward which Walker turned his attention around the time of Sword’s death. Walker was dissatisfied by the efforts of the translators, perhaps swayed by Sword’s opinion that they did not correctly understand the old language. He wrote to Wissler that he employed Clarence Three Stars to translate the Sword manuscripts but was unhappy with the results.

… his work is not at all satisfactory to me for he has given so liberal a translation that it has destroyed the ethnological value of the work.

He first rewrote the work adding what he thought Sword had left out, and then he gave in his translation what he thought Sword should have said.

Thus the original spirit and meaning was not only lost, but perverted….

To me the manuscripts appear to be of ethnic value and that this value is all destroyed by Clarence’s faulty translation.227

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226 Ibid., 75.
227 Ibid., 23.
The next year Walker turned to Charles Nines to translate another of Sword’s texts. In this case, Nines was unhappy with the project. Nines “completed the work, as well as a translation of Sword’s text on the sun dance, but he did so under protest. He found the work very difficult, although he continued to help Walker with it from time to time.”

That Walker privileged the information from Sword provides segue into the second methodological challenge he faced. Who was a qualified informant? Walker himself sheds doubt on his informants. In his introduction, Walkers noted that, “[t]he principal informants were old Lakota who professed to have participated in the ceremony, some whom were Shamans who claimed to have conducted the sun dance ceremony in its fullest form.” [emphasis mine] In another instance, Walker wrote Wissler about his request that Sword make the requisite regalia for various societies. “I have tried to have Sword prepare the regalia of the societies but so far have succeeded in getting that of only one. He seems reluctant to make them, whether because he does not know how, or whether there was no specific regalia, I cannot determine.”

This chapter has raised numerous questions about Sword in particular in regards to his motivations, loyalties, and allegiances. Similar questions could be raised about many of Walker’s other informants. Most were well-situated within the reservation system, some as employees of the government, and many were well-known as progressive

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228 Ibid., 23.
229 Ibid., 24.
or treaty Indians, those who advocated that their people accept the new way of life.\textsuperscript{230}

This raises questions about the methodological challenge faced by Walker regarding the validity of the information that he collected, questions which arose in Walker’s mind. For example, in a letter to Wissler in 1905 he wrote that he had recorded some Indian music, but later learned that the singers misrepresented the song.

I will try and learn just what the music is that I have already gotten, and will send it to you, if you think this is best.

Some of it is quite good and typical Indian music, but after it was recorded I learned that it was not exactly what the persons who sang it claimed that it was.

These Indians are very apt to do this sort of thing, just to get the pay, and because they think that the white people will not know the difference.\textsuperscript{231}

DeMallie, who writes that “Walker’s expression of distrust in this letter must be understood in the context of the times,” offers an interesting take on this conundrum.\textsuperscript{232} DeMallie notes that at the time there was, and had long been, an influx of visitors to the reservations seeking ethnographic information and examples of material culture. These researchers did not develop trust and long-term relations with their informants, who were often ill-chosen. “Frequently these contacts degenerated to a mere exchange of money for artifacts and information,

\textsuperscript{230} A road not taken here is an exploration of the effects of Christianization. Sword certainly had fully converted; he was an Episcopalian deacon. A close reading of his texts on Lakota belief and ritual would provide a strong argument that the worldview is much more influenced by Christianity than Lakota religious thought.
\textsuperscript{231} Walker, \textit{Lakota Belief and Ritual}, 17.
\textsuperscript{232} Ibid.
and the whites were sometimes duped by being told false or only partially correct information.”

For DeMallie, these issues were not as problematic for Walker who was aware that they existed and had developed a long-term relationship with his informants.

The final methodological issue faced by Walker was that his informants did not always agree with each other. He felt “that there should be a single consensus account reconstructible for all aspects of culture.” Wissler cautioned against this sort of approach, “I do not favor the presentation of what may be called an ideal sun dance.” Although Walker had no problem obtaining descriptions of the dance there were issues and conflicting reports regarding the meanings of the symbols and the ritual, which Walker thought was because the knowledge was already being lost. “I have found almost insurmountable difficulty in getting the underlying principles that governed the forms and rites, for there are few now alive who understood them; and these few have almost forgotten their former customs and beliefs.”

**Sword on the Sun Dance**

Sword’s written description of the Sun Dance ritual was translated by Dakota ethnographer and linguist Ella Deloria and published in *The Journal of American Folklore* in 1929. Sword’s description was originally written in Lakota and Deloria provided a word-for-word translation as well as a version in narrative

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233 Ibid.
234 Ibid., 26.
235 Ibid., 26.
236 Ibid., 27.
form, or what she referred to as a “free translation.”

There are two observations before turning to Sword’s account of the Sun Dance. First, Sword placed great importance on the written word. Not only did he learn to read and write in the Lakota language and was a prolific writer about Lakota culture, he also engaged in letter writing with people he met throughout his life, such as McGillycuddy, Bronson, as well as the commissioner of Indian Affairs.

Further, he maintained files of written documentation about himself that he shared during his interview with Eli Ricker.

Among the letters kept by Sword were several testimonies about his relationship with the Episcopal Church, which relate to the second observation—Sword’s conversion to Christianity. One letter from Bishop W.H. Hare certified that Sword had taken a leadership role in the church by the early 1890s, although his conversion likely came much earlier. The influence of Christian conversion has been the object of study and debate in regards to other Lakota, most notably Nicholas Black Elk. In Sword’s case, he embraced Christianity in the same way with which he embraced other aspects of dominant culture. “In war with the white people I found their Wakan Tanka the Superior, I then took the name of Sword and have served Wakan Tanka according the white people’s manner with all my power…I joined the church and am a deacon in it and shall be until I die. I

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238 See Appendix to Bronson where reproductions of some of his correspondence are available. Bronson, *Reminiscences*, 361-368.
have done all I was able to do to persuade my people to live according to the teachings of the Christian ministers.”

Sword’s work on the Sun Dance focuses on description from an observer’s point of view; one might say he offers a “thick description” of a Sun Dance providing in some cases minute details about various aspects such as the dress of the participants. He is attentive to the many rituals that are part of the event, including the way that dancers approached a holy person to ask for instruction; the movement of the camp to the dance location; the selection, cutting, and preparation of the Sun Dance pole (tree); mock battles, give-aways; ear-piercings; and the actual dance phase. For Sword, the reason for the Sun Dance was the fulfillment of a commitment made during a time of extreme danger. In his account when faced with danger, someone might ask for help from the spiritual realm and commit to dance in exchange. According to Sword, the commitment must be fulfilled whether or not the requested help was received. From Sword there is the sense that the Sun Dance is all about the warrior. The tree and the rawhide cut-out of a man that is placed in the tree were symbolic of an enemy.

Although Sword’s emphasis is on the pledge of the individual warrior, numerous times throughout his description he notes that the dancer’s pleas also contain an appeal that implies the community is also an important aspect of the ritual. There are frequent references to “my people” and explanatory statements

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to the effect that the Sun Dance is so “the people” may live. This is part of a broader petition, asking for pity and help, which appear as formulaic prayer rhetoric. In none of these cases is Sword speaking from a participant’s viewpoint, these are quotes that he is crediting to the participants; not himself.

One detail that is interesting is the way that Sword describes the piercing aspect of the Sun Dance. “Holding the flesh stretched out far, the piercer pierces the chest down to the quick through the muscle under the skin, and runs a sharpened stick through the poles like a pin.” This is one of the very few Native accounts that claim piercing took place through the muscle. Prior to the piercing and throughout the process, Sword claims the dancer is crying. “Then the sundancer is helped to his feet, and instantly he stops crying.” Sword suggests that the emotional expression is performative, something he does in regards to other expressions throughout the dance. He notes that “[s]ome of the dancers will at times lie as if dead from thirst. To all appearances they are dead. But actually, they are not. They are merely tired. It is called exhaustion.” This is very different from accounts, such as those we read about Sitting Bull’s Sun Dance, that these moments were ones during which the participant is receiving a vision and communication from the spiritual realm.

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241 See for example Deloria, “The Sun Dance of the Oglala Sioux,” 393.
242 A century later this petition is commonly heard from participants in the Sun Dance.
244 See a discussion of this aspect in chapter 5.
246 Ibid., 406.
Concluding Thoughts

Following Sword as a point of entry provides insight into the processes of governmentality during early colonization. From continual encroachment to containment, the Lakota were forced to give up a semi-nomadic lifestyle and submit to reservation living. Early leaders such as Red Cloud assumed that the Lakota would maintain their way of life in spite of the containment. However, the colonial project sought more as the cultural values, beliefs, and practices of the people came under repression. Regimes of power—military, religious, political, education—forced submission through various processes: violence, paternalistic governance, intense surveillance, economics, and forced assimilation. In the public imaginary the representation of the Indian as savage was produced and recirculated via a variety of media such as the news and the Wild West shows.

George Sword presents us with a rather dramatic and extreme approach to colonialist interactions in the contact zone. Early in his life he made a commitment to follow as best as he could “the white people’s manner with all my power.”247 He was further determined to insure that his people, the Lakota, would submit as well and it is clear that his efforts were toward this end. The role that Sword assumed as mediator between dominant culture and the Lakota has disturbing implications. Was he trying to force the Lakota to submit to the dominant power structure for their own good? Or, were his efforts self-serving?

247 Walker, The Sun Dance, 159.
As an interpreter, Sword’s role was one of explaining Indian culture to members of dominant society. Not only was he an informant for Walker, he functioned in this capacity for others such as Ricker and Sickels. He was one of the earliest Indian performers to work for Bill Cody, another venue for interpretation. In none of his work is there any indication that he had an affective attachment to the Sun Dance specifically or for that matter other Lakota cultural practices. Nor is there any indication that Sword’s intention was to record cultural knowledge for future generations of Lakota.

There are layers of concealment that emerge from Sword’s story. Sword himself blurred the details of his early life; he emerges from the ghost of his brother. There are serious questions about whether or not Sword was really a ritual specialist in his pre-contact life. On another level, Sword’s contribution to Walker’s seminal work on the Sun Dance was rendered marginal. Walker’s approach, which entailed creating a composite portrait of the Sun Dance, blurred individual Native contributions. And for seventy years, Sword faded into obscurity. Today’s recuperation of Sword produces another stratum of concealment.

The majority of contemporary scholars accept Sword’s claims uncritically and many tend to either romanticize the man or consider him privy to some sort of “special” knowledge about Lakota religion. But the questions raised here suggest the productivity of critically examining his life, choices, and by extension his
claims about his own participation in the Sun Dance and the knowledge he produced about the ritual. In the next chapter, the focus on Ella Deloria raises even more questions about Sword and the circulation of knowledge that he co-produced about the Sun Dance.
CHAPTER 3:
ELLA C. DELORIA: “I HAVE A MISSION”

Strategies of Cultural Interpretation and Mediation

In December, 1952, Dakota intellectual Ella Cara Deloria wrote to potential financial supporter, H.E. Beebe: “This may sound a little naïve…but I actually feel that I have a mission: To make the Dakota people understandable, as human beings, to the white people who have to deal with them.”248 At the time Deloria was seeking financial support for the publication of her work, *The Dakota Way of Life*249, a synthesis of decades of ethnographic and archival research on Dakota/Lakota/Nakota culture, which she had collected, transcribed, and translated during her long association with the “father of American anthropology,” Franz Boas. Under Boas’s direction (and that of his student Ruth Benedict), Deloria compiled a Sioux-English dictionary that detailed Sioux grammar and translated numerous texts from earlier Siouan informants such as George Sword, George Bushotter, and Jack Frazier. According to anthropologist, Raymond DeMallie the culmination of her contribution is unparalleled, “A written record of such magnitude and diversity does not exist for any other Plains Indian language.”250

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249 Raymond DeMallie notes that Deloria frequently referred to the text as *Camp Circle Society*, as well as *The Dakota Way of Life*. “Afterword,” 236.
250 Ibid.
The Dakota Way of Life was not the only unpublished manuscript in Deloria’s possession at the time. Also lacking the necessary financial support for publication was Waterlily, a fictional account of Dakota life. Although a different genre of textual representation targeting a different reading public, Waterlily was also as effort to synthesize her years of research, in this case to bring to light the role and experience of Dakota women prior to contact. Ultimately, Deloria’s appeal to Beebe was unsuccessful and she was never able to generate the funds or find a publisher to complete the two projects during her lifetime. Both texts would however be published posthumously, Waterlily, seventeen years after her passing in 1988 and The Dakota Way of Life (2007), twenty-six years after her death.251

There are three points of interest to the quote to which I draw attention in the opening of this chapter. First, Deloria was quite clear regarding what she understood as her life’s work. This was not a new epiphany for Deloria; rather she was writing about the mission she had actively pursued for many decades at the time of this correspondence, that of a cultural interpreter of Siouan culture and cultural mediator between dominant culture and Native, in particular Siouan, people. Deloria was not the first Native person to engage in such activities. We can locate Deloria within a rich history of what Native scholar Robert Warrior calls an American Indian intellectual tradition.252 For Warrior, engaging in “the social, political, economic, cultural and

251 The typewritten notes are available at Ella Deloria Archive thanks to the work of Raymond DeMallie at the American Indian Studies Research Institute at Indiana University for the Dakota Indian Foundation (Chamberlain, SD: Dakota Indian Foundation: Ella Deloria Archive, accessed 15 September, 2008), archive is on-line at http://zia.aisri.indiana.edu/deloria_archive/index.php .
252 Warrior Tribal Secrets.
spiritual struggle for an American Indian future\textsuperscript{253} is the overarching characteristic of American Indian intellectual tradition. For Deloria, one important aspect of the struggle for an American Indian was to make the “Indian” understandable to dominant culture. As this chapter demonstrates, she engaged multiple strategies and practices that worked to interpret Indian culture and belief, to humanize Indian people, for dominant white society.

Native philosopher, David Martínez, carries Warrior’s argument one step further to assert that there is a specifically “Dakota/Lakota/Nakota intellectual tradition.” Martínez provides a lengthy inventory of examples including George Sword, Charles Eastman, and Nicholas Black Elk, but Ella Deloria is strangely absent from his list.\textsuperscript{254} Why is Deloria invisible to Martínez? This brings us to the second aspect of the opening quote as Deloria’s appeal raises questions about her inability to secure financial support for her work. Deloria was in fact, well-known at the time due, in part, to her long-time association with Boas and Benedict. As a result of these relationships there were several academic works that had already been published: “The Sun Dance of the Oglala Sioux” in \textit{Journal of American Folklore} (1929),\textsuperscript{255} \textit{Dakota Texts} (1932), and \textit{Dakota Grammar}, written with Boas (1941). Another, non-academic text, \textit{Speaking of Indians}, was published in 1944. Why did \textit{Waterlily} and \textit{The Dakota Way of Life} remain unpublished for so long?

\textsuperscript{253} Warrior, \textit{Tribal Secrets}, xvi.
\textsuperscript{254} Martínez leaves us wondering just what a Dakota/Lakota/Nakota intellectual tradition might entail. What are the characteristics of such an intellectual tradition? How might a Dakota/Lakota/Nakota intellectual tradition differ from Warrior’s American Indian intellectual tradition? See Martínez, \textit{Dakota Philosopher}, 4.
\textsuperscript{255} For example Ruth Benedict was the editor of the \textit{Journal of American Folklore} when the Sun Dance article was accepted for publication.
One contribution of current efforts in various fields such as ethnic, feminists, post-colonial, and border studies has been the recovery and publication of works that had heretofore remained invisible and the recent publications of Waterlily and The Dakota Way of Life are a result of this labor. Further, in the contemporary era, Deloria’s life and work have been taken up by a number of scholars, particularly in regards to the history and practice of ethnography. These engagements focus on her as exemplary of a shifting paradigm in American anthropology credited to Boas during an era that anthropologist Margaret Mead referred to as American anthropology’s “Golden Age.”

Four significant changes are attributed to the Boasian approach to anthropology: the professionalization of the field of anthropology, a shift away from biological determinism to cultural relativism, making specialized knowledge accessible to citizens of modern society, and a focus on the particular rather than the general.\textsuperscript{256} Mead argued that the growth of a particular American engagement with anthropology was critically linked to the salvage of American Indian customs and practices, marking American anthropology as unique. She wrote, “Had there been no American Indian, anthropology would have been taught and perhaps elaborated in the U.S. on the basis of European models.”\textsuperscript{257} To this end Boas was concerned with the specific, the particular, in regards to Indian culture and language, thus his extensive use of Native language speakers to

\textsuperscript{256} See for example Richard Handler, “Boasian Anthropology and the Critique of Modern Culture” American Quarterly, Vol. 42 No. 2 (June 1990), 252-273 or Herbert S. Lewis, “The Passion of Franz Boas” American Anthropology Vol. 103, No. 2 (June 2001), 447-467. Both articles also point out that the Boasian approach has come under considerable criticism, first in the 1950s when a scientific backlash began criticizing Boas and again in the contemporary era.

work as interpreters and collectors of field data. Deloria’s role in this capacity has been of particular interest to contemporary scholars.

Yet Deloria’s role also provides insight into the power dynamics of such a relationship. The “powerful asymmetries”\(^2\) of collaborative efforts, such as the one between Deloria and Boas, lend themselves to a contemporary trend of meta-analysis that problematizes ethnographic method and product. Contemporary scholars have drawn particularly from Deloria’s correspondence and biography to think about ethnopoetics, resistance, feminisms, and anthroperformance.\(^3\) Yet, there is little direct engagement with Deloria in regards to the intellectual contribution and insights of her work, which are particularly rich in regards to two aspects of Siouan culture of concern in this project: Siouan notions of kinship and the Sun Dance. Her granddaughter Joyzelle Godfrey,\(^4\) professor of Lakota Studies at the Lower Brulé community college, observes that “[h]er work has been ignored.”\(^5\) Perhaps this is due in part to the way Deloria’s appeal to dominant culture reads as assimilationist. Janet Finn, one contemporary analyst of


\(^3\) According to Faye Harrison this is a pedagogical approach that seeks to communicate social and cultural processes and she sometimes uses the term anthroperformance and at other times uses ethnoperformance. Numerous scholars have identified this genre, but I was introduced to this particular nuance (practice as pedagogy) via Finn quoting Harrison. See Finn, “Ella Cara Deloria,” 147. Also, Faye Harrison, “Three women, One Struggle: Anthropology, Performance and Pedagogy,” *Transforming Anthropology,* Vol. 1, No. 1 (1990), 2-3. Or for a more recent treatment see Faye Harrison, *Resisting Racism and Xenophobia: Global Perspectives on Race, Gender, and Human Rights.* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2005).

\(^4\) Godfrey identifies herself as granddaughter from in the sense of Dakota kinship structure, not biological.

Deloria’s work writes, “I found myself uncomfortable at times with the conciliatory tone Deloria uses to engage a white readership.”

In this chapter, I examine many different examples of the ways that Deloria, always envisioning and struggling for an American Indian future, served in the capacity of cultural interpreter and cultural mediator, in particular for Siouan people. Thus I locate her as an American Indian intellectual. The struggle for an American Indian future cannot be addressed outside of the historical context of colonialism. Neither can Deloria and the production of her work. As such her texts must be read as a reflection of their time-bound circumstances. In her own messy and complicated way she exhibited characteristics that could be located as exemplary of the “progressive effects” of colonial assimilation. Yet she deployed a number of strategies of resistance as she engaged in her struggle for an American Indian future. The insistence on the American Indian as human and distinct from dominant culture was a decolonizing act.

Folklorist Elaine Jahner argues that it important to observe the dynamics between textual productions within and across specific historical contexts. This necessitates attentiveness to “multiple texts interacting in the same context, all of them adding a dimension of significance to the others, each dimension attesting to the historical status of ideas at work in a particular place.” In this chapter I examine three interrelated textual communities: 1) the textual community of dominant culture in regards to the “Indian problem” (Deloria’s present), 2) the contemporary textual community engaging the work

262 Finn, “Ella Cara Deloria,” 141.
of Deloria (Deloria’s future), and 3) the Siouan textual community that Deloria engaged in her work (Deloria’s past).

In the first section of this chapter, I situate the primary years of productivity for Deloria within a broader American context that spans two World Wars, the interwar years, the Great Depression and New Deals (the Indian Reorganization Act included), which shaped both the production and reception of Deloria work. In “Deloria’s Present: ‘The Indian Problem,’” I examine particular hegemonic discourses that shaped engagements with American Indians, which helps, in part, to understand both Deloria’s approach and her inability to find the necessary funding for publication of either *The Dakota Way of Life* or *Waterlily*. I juxtapose this with Native accounts from the same era that tell a very different story.

In the second section, “Deloria’s Presence: A Transitional Life,” I take a biographical approach in order to think about the ways that these larger processes shaped the personal life and expressive work of Deloria in order to reveal the complexities embodied and expressed by Deloria. As part of this section I engage Deloria’s *Speaking of Indians* to examine the continuities between this text and the textual productions about the “Indian problem,” which illuminates hegemonic ideologies of the time.

In the third section of this chapter, “Deloria’s Future: Four Themes from Contemporary Academic Communities,” I focus on four recurring themes that emerge from the contemporary textual community’s engagement with Deloria: literary/poetics, cultural critique, feminisms, and anthroperformance as they highlight a “history of
changing interpretations.‖ These themes not only reflect contemporary concerns and interventions regarding the history and practice of ethnography, they reveal the strategies of cultural interpretation and mediation deployed by Deloria in her struggle for an American Indian future.

In the fourth section of this chapter, “Deloria’s Past: Sun Dance,” I examine Deloria’s engagement with a Siouan textual community that preceded her and became an object of focus in her work. A close reading of her engagement with the work of other Siouan intellectual productions, such as those offered by George Sword and Bushotter is informative. I draw on Deloria’s work to focus on one theme in particular: the Sun Dance.

Deloria’s Present: “The Indian Problem”

Arguably the most important change for Indian people during the interwar years resulted from the June 18, 1934 passage of the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA), better known as the Indian New Deal. According to the web-site operated by the Rosebud Sioux Tribe (RST), there were four major benefits of the IRA: it “stopped the allotment system, provided for home rule government, provided an economic package, [and] upgraded education.” According to the web-site the IRA divided the people of the RST, particularly in regards to how the tribe would be governed. One faction referred to as the “Old Dealers,” advocated a form of self-governance based on a “traditional” model formerly used by the tribe. The other faction, the “New Dealers,” advocated the

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265 The IRA is also known as the Howard-Wheeler Act.
approach proposed by the U.S. government and the Office of Indian Affairs (OIA), which included a constitution and community plan modeled on that of the U.S. The web-site states, “[T]he New [D]ealers were younger generation who accepted changes offered by the non-Indians quickly.”\textsuperscript{267} In 1935, the New Dealers’ approach narrowly won the referendum vote and a constitution was adopted; elections were held in 1936 and Antoine Roubideaux was elected as tribal president and Homer Whirlwind Soldier, was vice-president.\textsuperscript{268}

At the time, the IRA was only the most recent effort, in a series of approaches, by the U.S. government to deal with what was considered the “Indian problem.” At contact, the “Indian problem” was simply that there were Indians whose presence was perceived as an impediment to the sweeping advance of the nation-state. But, Native peoples had been contained on reservations since the late nineteenth century, when the “Indian problem” became reconfigured as Indian people’s seeming inability to assimilate to dominant culture. Anthropologist, Joseph Jorgensen recalled the sentiments of non-Native peoples toward American Indians during his youth in his classic \textit{The Sun Dance Religion: Power for the Powerless}.

Sometimes they commented about Indians with pity, wondering what could possibly be done with “them.” For instance, local whites frequently asserted that Indians had been given tax-free reservations, food, and other annuities by the federal government, but that Indians would not work, pull themselves up, as it were. Whites frequently generalized that they could not get Indians to work in the hay or the grain for more than a day or two; that Indians were not dependable; that they could not understand how to

\textsuperscript{267} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{268} Ibid.
operate a tractor, and so on…It is critical to point out that local whites were rebuking Indians for not being like whites…First and foremost, however, local whites expected the Indians in Utah to observe the Protestant ethic, to compete, to be industrious, and to sever their special ties with the federal government.269

Jorgensen’s recollection provides several insights. Indian people were perceived by the general population as recipients of special entitlements, which prevented them from assimilating to dominant culture. They were lazy and undependable. The solution was to create a situation whereby Indian people would be forced to pull themselves up by their bootstraps,270 namely, to take away their special entitlements.271

The Meriam Commission: The Current State of Indian Affairs

The IRA was a direct response to the Meriam Commission’s272 report submitted to Secretary of the Interior, Hubert Work in February 1928. Entitled, The Problem of Indian Administration, the report was commissioned by the secretary eighteen months earlier in June 1926. The Institute of Government Research, which later became known as the Brookings Institute, was the agency selected to carry out the study of the current state of Indian affairs and statistician Lewis Meriam was selected to oversee the project. Along with nine other professionals,273 Meriam spent seven months in the field and

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269 Jorgensen’s work is on the Ute-Shoshone Sun Dance. In his analysis the purpose of the contemporary practice of the Sun Dance has to do with “power for the powerless” in that the practice brought a sense of relief from the suffering of the early reservation era. See Joseph G. Jorgensen, The Sun Dance Religion: Power for the Powerless, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 2-3.

270 Jorgenson links the characteristics to Max Weber’s description of the Protestant work ethic.

271 This is an example of one of the specific stereotypes addressed by Deloria in Speaking of Indians.

272 Throughout this chapter I interchange the formal group name, The Institute of Government Research and the official title of the document, The Problem of Indian Administration with their colloquial equivalents, respectively the Meriam Commission and the Meriam Report.

273 I want to note that two of the “experts” selected for the task had close ties with The Ohio State University (OSU). Fayette Avery McKenzie had played a key role in the organizing efforts of the first national Indian organization, the Society for American Indians (SAI). At the time he was a sociology
another seven months writing up the report. The project was funded in part by the U.S. Government and the remainder of expenses was covered by a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation.

The massive undertaking required a tour and study of conditions at prominent Indian schools and reservations throughout the west. In all, ninety-five different locations were visited by the team. The final text, *The Problem of Indian Administration*, was 847 pages in length and divided into eight sections pertaining to the following issues: 1) general policy for Indian Affairs, 2) health, 3) education, 4) economic conditions, 5) family, community and women, 6) migrated Indians, 7) legal aspects, and 8) missionary activities. Historian Donald L. Parman, who edited Meriam’s personal correspondence from the fieldwork period, notes that the study “was a response to several controversies over the conduct of Indian affairs.”

One such controversy involved the Pueblo in New Mexico and legislation proposed in 1921 and 1922, via the Bursum Bill, which sought “to divest the Pueblos…of large sections of their land along the Rio Grande in New Mexico in favor of twelve thousand squatters who had settled there.” Another controversy came in the form of Circular 1665, which mandated that reservation agents suppress Native cultural

professor at OSU, where the first meeting of the SAI was held in October 1911. In the 1920s McKenzie took a position as president of Fisk University. In the mid-1920s he was forced to resign from this position after a student protest resulting from charges of racism against McKenzie. The other “expert,” Mary Louise Mark, was a professor at OSU at the time of her involvement with the commission.

275 Ibid.
276 Ibid.
practices. Organized resistance to these acts was attributed to a social worker, who had a close affinity for the Pueblo, John Collier, who organized the American Indian Defense Association, which worked to stop the measures. One strategy deployed by Collier was to bring public attention to the Pueblo situation. The resulting public pressure brought to bear succeeded and as a result, the practices and approaches of the Office of Indian Affairs (OIA) and indirectly the Department of the Interior came under critical scrutiny.

The Meriam Commission’s Report was not the first effort to study whether or not federal Indian policy had been successful in its aim to assimilate Indian people. Only three years earlier a group called the Committee of One Hundred reviewed federal policy. Among the individuals who made up the committee were notables such as Collier, anthropologist Clark Wissler, and Native Americans such as Charles Eastman and Arthur Parker. Their findings, published in 1924 as The Indian Problem, blamed the failure of the American Indian assimilation effort on government agencies. Work was asked by the Board of Indian Commissioners to follow up this review with a study conducted by an outside research firm that would not be subject to accusations of bias that were leveled against the Committee of One Hundred.

The Meriam Commission was a positivist effort and reflects the importance and reliance on scientific methods and knowledge at the time. Strictly scientific efforts were seen as unencumbered by biases and partiality. Composing a team of “experts” was a challenge. Parman notes that “Meriam encountered difficulties in finding qualified

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279 The policy to prohibit Native cultural practices was legislated in 1904, but it was not always enforced on reservations. This legislation required that the prohibition be enforced, not unlike recent Arizona legislation that mandates enforcement of federal immigration laws (2010).
280 Fayette Avery McKenzie was part of this commission as well.
personnel. Several prospective workers could not be released from their posts, and anthropologists were excluded from the survey because they might have preconceived ideas.\(^\text{281}\) The wording of the “Letter of Transmittal” of the Meriam Report to Secretary Work reflects the emphasis on science as it details the committee’s process for determining their approach to the study.

The goal of the project, they determined, was to measure the progress of the Indian. This would require a comparative analysis, but what was the standard to be used to measure this progress against?

One alternative is to compare conditions existing to-day with conditions existing when the various activities undertaken in behalf of the Indians were first begun. The other is to compare the activities as at present conducted with the work of other agencies, both public and private, engaged in comparable activities for the general population or for other special groups. This second method, in other words, may be described as comparing present conditions with the practicable ideal.\(^\text{282}\)

Both methods were rejected. The committee instead agreed upon an approach to the study that looked toward the future, “to indicate what remains to be done to adjust the Indians to the prevailing civilization so that they may maintain themselves in the presence of that civilization according at least to a minimum standard of health and decency.”\(^\text{283}\) The report became a series of statistics about the current unsatisfactory living situation of Native peoples along with recommendations about how the effort to

\(^{282}\) Institute for Government Research, The Problem, viii.
\(^{283}\) Ibid.
assimilate Indian people to the “minimum standard of health and decency” could be improved.

Chapter three of the Meriam report outlined the details of the committee’s methods. First they studied the existing archives available, the records and statistics of the Indian Office. In the field, the first line of conferrals was with the government appointed superintendents and professionals located at each site, such as teachers, principals, doctors, and nurses. Among the committee members was an “Indian expert,” Winnebego Henry Roe Cloud, the first American Indian to graduate from the prestigious Yale University. Roe Cloud’s role, in the view of the committee, was to legitimize the presence of an otherwise all white staff of professionals. “In all announcements of the arrival of the survey staff at a jurisdiction the fact was featured that the staff included one Indian. What is commonly termed the Indian ‘grape vine telegraph’ also worked. Added to these aids was the fact that Mr. Cloud has a wide acquaintanceship among the Indians of the United States…” ²⁸⁴ Roe Cloud’s presence provided entrée into Indian communities.

It is clear from the report that they spent considerable time “listening” to Indian people at various locations. At many locations “Indian Councils” were held “[w]henever any group of Indians expressed a desire to hold council with representatives of the survey staff.”²⁸⁵ However this was not a priority for the group. Although they made note of what they considered “indicative of at least one Indian point of view,” they “made no effort to verify and substantiate every complaint and grievance which was presented or to consider

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 72.
²⁸⁵ Ibid.

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the merits of every claim regarding boundaries and treaty rights that was brought forward” [emphasis mine]. Their charge was not to interfere or intervene on an individual basis; rather they were to observe and report in an unbiased manner. Besides which, the Indians did not understand “the actions of the government in respect to matters of vital concern to them and did not understand the motives and purposes that underlay them.”

Parman argues that Meriam “epitomized the Progressive faith in scientific administration.” The connection to progressive ideals and reform is interesting; the Progressive Movement is generally associated with the pre-World War I era. This was due in part to the success of reform legislation prior to the war and the prosperity enjoyed in the United States post World War I. And perhaps it was the stark contrast of Native living conditions against the backdrop of American prosperity that evoked such a strong response to the Meriam Commission’s Report.

The report began: “The Conditions Among the Indians. An overwhelming majority of the Indians are poor, even extremely poor, and they are not adjusted to the economic and social system of the dominant white civilization.” One review of the report (1929) noted that the report debunked the popular perception that Native Americans were wealthy. Scientific method had uncovered the “truth.” There were

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286 Ibid., 73-74.
287 Ibid., 74.
“semi-starved children in boarding schools,”\textsuperscript{291} “the labor of children… in the Indian boarding schools… constitute[d] a violation of child labor laws in most states;”\textsuperscript{292} the situation was “evil”\textsuperscript{293} and urgent.\textsuperscript{294} Another review (1928) noted, “The report is not pleasant reading to an American, particularly to an American educator, health officer, or social worker.”\textsuperscript{295} This review offered a litany of issues revealed by the scientific study: poverty, health issues, unsanitary facilities, poorly trained and low paid health care professionals, too few health care professionals, inadequate funding, and overcrowded conditions. Several observations can be made about the public response to the Meriam report. First, science provided the report with an aura of authority, legitimacy and truth, which also signified that it was unbiased and impartial. The report \textit{proved} that the conditions for Native Americans were deplorable. Second, the issue of blame was unimportant. Instead the focus was on how to rectify the problems. This would entail an injection of financial investment into the situation. Further it was emphasized that the problem could be ameliorated if the staff was professionally trained and their numbers were increased. Tighter oversight and further surveillance were in order.

It is important to note that the underlying assumptions driving projects both before and after the Meriam Commission’s report were unchanged. The Native American needed to assimilate to dominant culture. The only issue at hand was how to approach the project of assimilation. Prior to the report, the primary approach was one of forced assimilation, which entailed practices such as removing Native children from their

\textsuperscript{292}Ibid., 219.
\textsuperscript{293}Ibid., 218.
\textsuperscript{294}Ibid., 217.
families and communities in order to place them in boarding schools. S.P. Breckinridge noted one of the shocking findings of the report. “Social workers will be interested and shocked to find that the whole basis of the Indian program is founded on the theory that family and community ties should be weakened or destroyed.”

As reflected in the first sentence, “they are not adjusted to the economic and social system of the dominant white civilization,” the report did not challenge the notion that American Indians must assimilate, just that the theories shaping the approach to the civilizing project were outdated and outmoded.

According to the report, another case in point where theories were outdated regarded missionary activities, which heretofore were viewed as ineffectual. The committee argued that attempts to eradicate Indian culture and religions were ill-advised. There was some good in “native Indian religions and ethics and even the forms of worship,” and missionary activities should focus on these positive aspects and build upon them. The commission recommended that Missionary efforts should “cooperate” with governmental approaches and efforts should be coordinated as the government possessed the necessary professional expertise to oversee assimilation efforts. It was already proven that “[s]uperstition gives way before scientific knowledge.” Thus, missionaries should be prepared with a secular (read scientific) understanding. In doing so the

296 Ibid.
297 Institute for Government Research, The Problem, 816.
298 Ibid., 812-813.
299 Ibid., 836.
missions “might render an incomparable service to the nation as well as to the Indians.”

The issue at stake was that Indian people remained unable “to adjust themselves to an industrial world.” As such, “[t]he primary duty of the government in dealing with its Indian wards is to aid them in adjusting themselves to white civilization.” Indians continued to exhibit little concern for the future, a primitive characteristic, which was encouraged by the government’s paternal approach that kept Native peoples as wards of the government. There was one exception however, those Indian people who had migrated to the cities. The report found that Native peoples living in urban areas such as Minneapolis had indeed successfully assimilated to the mainstream. Yet, in spite of this success “great insistence was put upon the right to be designated ‘Indian,’” even in the cases where the “Indian blood is so diluted that its presence would never be guessed from their personal appearance.” The commission found that “urban Indians socialized mainly with other Indians.” They organized clubs and councils that functioned in social, political, and cultural domains. No matter how assimilated the Indian, more frequently than not, they persevered in their assertion of a distinct Indian identity.

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300 Ibid., 815.
302 Institute for Government Research, The Problem, 673.
303 Ibid.
304 This finding would become the basis for post-World War II relocation programs.
Native Recollections of the Interwar years and the IRA

The Meriam Commission’s report focused on the abysmal living conditions of American Indians. In economics, health, education, the lived material realities of Native people in the early reservation period were perceived as filled with “misery and oppression.” However, personal narratives from Native peoples such as Frank Fools Crow provide a different perspective. In his “as-told-to-autobiography,” Fools Crow noted, “I enjoyed most of the early years of my life, and in particular the twenty-year period between 1908 and 1928.” Certainly given the choice he would have preferred living in the “prewhite days” (pre-reservation times), but in his opinion the early reservation years were much better than what would follow after the passage of the IRA. “[T]here was a period of comparative happiness, and then later on the tragic times came.”

Fools Crow’s recollection is instructive. He certainly acknowledged oppression under the colonial rule of the Office of Indian Affairs.

Of course, there were problems, and some very painful ones, that resulted from agency rules. It was especially hard to have the children sent away to school, and that was resisted, as was the order to cut our hair short. People were also unhappy about relatives being moved to reservations some distance away. And we were not pleased about the interference in our religious ceremonies.

However, according to Fools Crow, the repression was not totally stifling. The people incorporated pow-wow into ration days and Fourth of July celebrations gave cause for

308 Ibid.
309 Ibid., 67.
310 Ibid.
ceremonies, feeds, and social dances.\textsuperscript{311} Families were successfully growing food and according to Fools Crow this era “brought a new kind of unity to our people.”\textsuperscript{312} He was also quite proud of the Indian police who “were actually very good men, and very helpful,” except in regards to the Sun Dance.\textsuperscript{313}

It is clear that the prohibition against Native religious practices was never entirely enforced or effective.\textsuperscript{314} There are multiple accounts of private, semipublic and public Sun Dances that occurred. According to Fools Crow there were a number of secret or private Sun Dances held in remote locations in order to avoid the scrutiny of the reservation police.\textsuperscript{315} As early as 1910, a semipublic Sun Dance was held on the Rosebud Reservation. Pictures from photographer John Anderson, who lived on the reservation for over forty years, document a Sun Dance held in 1910 six miles from the agency seat.\textsuperscript{316} By 1928, Sun Dances were being held with permission of the government as they were incorporated into the annual Rosebud Fair, a public gathering, featuring Native dance and song, rodeos, and carnival activities—a practice that occurred on the Pine Ridge reservation as well.\textsuperscript{317}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{311} Ibid., 70, 72.
\bibitem{312} Ibid., 67.
\bibitem{313} Ibid., 70-71.
\bibitem{314} This project provides numerous examples, in particular see chapter 4.
\bibitem{315} Thomas E. Mails, \textit{Fools Crow}, 43.
\bibitem{317} Fools Crow describes his role as a leader of the Fair Sun Dances at both Pine Ridge and Rosebud. It is interesting that Deloria attended this “demonstration.” See the final section of this chapter. For Fools Crow’s account see Thomas E. Mails, \textit{Fools Crow}, 43.
\end{thebibliography}
Originally the fairs were organized by reservation agents who framed them as a more civilized outlet for Native cultural practices because the activities of the participants could be controlled. They were labeled exhibitions, thus not the actual or “real” practice as they were perceived as vehicles to promote tourism on the reservations during the heyday of the very popular Buffalo Bill Wild West stylized shows. Although the fairs may have incorporated the Sun Dance earlier, my research shows it was part of the fair during the 1927 visit of President Calvin Coolidge (an ironic event). The practice of the dance at the fairs however was constrained in numerous ways. Sun Dancing was limited to the morning hours, rather than throughout the entire day, observers were charged an admittance fee, the dancers were fenced off from the crowd, and piercing was not allowed.

During the early fair era, agents sought a leader who could lend an air of “authenticity” to the exhibition. Fools Crow assumed this leadership role. In 1929 he began a long tenure as Sun Dance chief, first at Pine Ridge and later at the Rosebud Fair. It is clear from Fools Crow’s narratives, and those of others who danced with him, that they always believed that they were still engaged with the spiritual side of the dance in spite of the commercialized atmosphere. In other words, they were not performing a ritual of the past for spectators; they were engaged in a contemporary meaningful practice.

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318 Coolidge’s presence on the Rosebud reservation was part of a summer vacation trip to South Dakota, the purpose of which was to take part in the groundbreaking ceremonies at Mt. Rushmore.
319 Pictures taken of the 1910 Sun Dance show dancers with ropes tied under their arms in order to simulate the piercing aspect.
In Fools Crow’s assessment all of this changed with the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) in 1934.\textsuperscript{320} In his book, \textit{The Indian Reorganization Act: Congresses and Bills}, Vine Deloria, Jr. traces the history of John Collier’s involvement in Indian reform. As already seen, the Meriam Commission’s survey of the conditions of Indian was in large part prompted by criticisms voiced by Collier and his associated organizations regarding the failures of the Office of Indian Affairs. In 1933, Collier was finally in a position to implement the changes for which he had been advocating nearly a decade, when President Franklin Roosevelt named him as Indian Commissioner, a position he held for nearly twelve years. Collier immediately went to work outlining and promoting a reform package against protests from both Congress and Indian people. Although the IRA successfully passed in Congress in 1934 and numerous reservations, such as those at Pine Ridge and Rosebud, formally accepted the program of reorganization outlined by the bill, it was frequently by a very slim margin. Historian Akim D. Reinhardt notes that “Of 97,000 eligible Indian voters on reservations across the United States, barely one-third (38,000) actually voted to reorganize. A similar number (35,000) never showed up at the polls, and 24,000 voted to reject it.”\textsuperscript{321}

Debates around the IRA were contentious, revealed divisions, and perhaps further divided Indian communities such as those on the Rosebud and Pine Ridge reservations. Reinhardt argues that this was “a longstanding political dispute with cultural overtones”\textsuperscript{322} between those advocating for “traditional forms of government” and

\textsuperscript{320} Thomas E. Mails, \textit{Fools Crow}, 71.
\textsuperscript{322} Ibid.
“progressives” known “for their tendency to refute pre-conquest Lakota culture and embrace American ways.”

The “old-dealers” who opposed the IRA were referred to as “traditionalists,” “full-bloods,” or “treaty Indians.” While the “new-dealers,” who promoted the reorganization were referred to as “progressives” or “mixed-bloods.” And it was the latter group who eventually won by a narrow margin and took the helm of the new tribal government.

Several important observations can be made regarding the IRA. As a close reading of the Meriam Commission’s report reveals, the government did not intend to turn full home-rule over to Native peoples. Commissioner Collier still firmly believed that the government had a guardian/ward duty to American Indians. The underlying intent remained one of assimilation, only the approach was being changed. Reinhold details the intense oversight, surveillance, and micromanagement exerted by the OIA on the Pine Ridge Reservation during the first decade of home rule, a period he refers to as one characterized by “indirect colonialism.” The ideal aspired to was that the tribal council, under the guidance of the OIA, would eventually learn American leadership qualities and be able to self-govern. Two important interrelated changes occurred as a result of the passage of the IRA. First, the strategies that the Lakota had developed to deal directly with government agents were no longer viable; there was another layer of governmentality in place. Second, those in power with whom they now had to deal were their own people. The “old-dealers/new-dealers” paradigm blurs the complexity that the

323 Ibid.
324 Ibid.
325 See Reinhardt’s chapter about the era with this as the title. Reinhardt, Ruling Pine Ridge, 19–42.
situation presented for a people whose very society was based on very particular notions about the responsibilities of kinship. It is against this backdrop I turn now to the life of Ella Deloria.

**Deloria’s Presence: A Transitional Life**

Ella Deloria’s personal life story spans the most profound transitional moment between American modernity and American Indian history. First I take a biographical approach that attends to Deloria’s personal story within this broad historical context. This also serves to reflect the status of Indians at the time. As Creek writer Craig Womack argues, life stories, as well as literary ideas are useful for a study of Native thought.\(^{326}\) Second, I look at the Deloria material as a reflection of its time-bound circumstances by focusing on the intersections between Deloria’s *Speaking of Indians* and dominant culture’s expressions from the same era with attention to the ways in which she appealed to scientific, progressive and Christian thought, which dominated intellectual projects of her time.

**Anpetu Waste Wi, Good Day Woman**

Ella Cara Deloria, Anpetu Waste Wi (Good Day Woman) was born on the Yankton Sioux Indian reservation in south-central South Dakota on January 31, 1889\(^{327}\) during a time of turbulent transition for all of the Plains Indian tribes. During the forty

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\(^{326}\) Craig S. Womack, *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism*, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 3.

\(^{327}\) The biographical material here is compiled from three sources: Agnes Picotte’s, “Biographical Sketch of the Author.” *Waterlily*, (229-231); Vine Deloria, Jr., “Introduction,” *Speaking of Indians* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1944, 1998), ix-xix; and DeMallie, “Afterward,” *Waterlily*, 233-244. Although the factual data is consistent among these three sources and I do not cite one in particular, the tone of the various authors is not as consistent. When this is the case, I cite the particular author’s lens from which I am borrowing.
years preceding her birth, numerous treaties had been signed and broken, leaving the Yankton Sioux on a continuously shrinking land mass.  

By 1889, the Great Sioux reservation was reduced by half, with the remainder divided into five separated tracts. The environmental impact of the settlers included the slaughter of the buffalo to the extent that “[t]he whole country stank from the rotting flesh, and soon the prairie was littered with bones.” The two years before Deloria’s birth had seen the worst droughts in recorded history, successive cuts in beef rations, and numerous epidemics such as measles. The toll on human life can be read in the story of Deloria’s family. Her father, Philip, had lost two wives and two sons to the various epidemics before marrying Deloria’s mother, Mary. Each brought two daughters to the union, and Ella Deloria was their first child together.

American Indian scholar, Vine Deloria, Jr., (Deloria’s nephew) provides a biographical narrative of Ella Deloria’s life from the family’s oral tradition. He begins the narrative with the story of his great-grandfather, Deloria’s grandfather, Saswe, whom he describes as a medicine man and leader of his people. Saswe is given a powerful vision of the future, which Deloria, Jr. writes “determined the course of our family for the

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328 Historians such as Angie Debo note the succession of events: the first Ft. Laramie Treaty (1851), in 1858 the Yanktons give up a large portion of their land through a separate treaty, the Dakota Wars (1862), the second Ft. Laramie Treaty (1866), the beginning of the Sioux Wars—with the Battle of Little Big Horn 1876 and the ending of Indian wars with the Massacre at Wounded Knee (1890). See chapter 2 of this project, which also presents these events. Angie Debo, A History of the Indians of the United States, (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970).

329 Ibid., 290.

330 Ibid., 214.


332 The story of Saswe is taken up by Vine Deloria, Jr. on several different occasions in his later works. See Singing for a Spirit: A Portrait of the Dakota Sioux, (Santa Fee: Clear Light Publishers, 1999) for a dedicated work to the story of Saswe. Philip Deloria also writes about his father’s deep interest in Saswe in the “Introduction” in The World We Used to Live In, (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Press, 2006).
next four generations.” Among the many messages of the vision, one foresaw the invasion of Amer-European settlers and Saswe felt that the only way to survive was to accommodate to the new ways. The vision pointed to four successive generations of sons, each of whom had a certain role and responsibilities during this transition.

Saswe’s son, Philip (Deloria’s father), took his father’s position as chief of the band, converted to Christianity and attended two boarding schools in order to receive an education so that he would be able to help mediate the transition. However, by 1890, his optimism had been severely dampened as a result of the devastation he saw around him and had personally experienced. In 1890, recently married for a third time, a father of five young daughters, he received a transfer to the Standing Rock reservation, arriving on the eve of the watershed events that culminated in the Wounded Knee massacre. In *Indians in unexpected places*, Philip Deloria notes the significance of 1890 as it marked a new modern era. While Frederick Jackson Turner had declared the closing of the frontier, “the final killings of the Indian wars” at Wounded Knee shaped what would become “a familiar expectation.” Indian people had been subdued and would remain in the past, opening the way for a new modern America.\(^\text{334}\)

Deloria, Jr. suggests that not fulfilling Saswe’s vision weighed on Philip, who struggled with depression throughout his life.\(^\text{335}\) Without a son to whom he could transmit the family and tribal traditions, Ella Deloria became the repository of this knowledge, caretaker of her family, and mediator of the transition. Deloria, Jr. recalls his


\(^{335}\) Deloria, Jr., “Introduction,” *Speaking*, x.
father, Vine, and his aunt, Susan, telling him that what they knew about the old traditions were taught to them by Ella Deloria, not their father Philip.

Deloria received her early education on the Standing Rock reservation and later attended the All Saints boarding school in Sioux Falls, graduating in 1910. She received support from the church to attend the University of Chicago, Oberlin College, and she eventually graduated with a B. S. from Columbia Teachers College in 1915. Shortly after graduation her mother Mary died and her younger sister Susan was diagnosed as having severe health problems (which would leave her unable to care for herself for the remainder of her life). She returned to South Dakota to teach at the All Saints boarding school from 1915-1919 in order to be near her father and assume responsibility for Susan. Her youngest brother, Vine (Deloria, Jr.’s father), was sent away to boarding school. She later received a number of short-term appointments with the YWCA as the health education secretary. Deloria developed a number of physical education programs for Indian students including one for the Haskell Indian School in Lawrence, Kansas (1923-1927). This period, which continued to be heavily influenced by progressive thought, was characterized by the sentiment that the uplift of the unfortunate through education and assimilation was the means of progress. It is not surprising that the theme of progress recurs throughout Deloria’s writing.

It was during her time at Haskell that her connection with Franz Boas was renewed. She had worked briefly with him during one summer while at Columbia. According to DeMallie, her first interaction with Boas occurred when he employed her to work with him on some of the George Bushotter manuscripts, preparing them for
publication. DeMallie observes that this was her first real paying job and that her correspondence expresses her excitement at receiving $18 per month. After Deloria left Columbia, the two lost touch until Boas tracked her down at Haskell. This working relationship began a career of research and publication for Deloria. She also worked on two projects unrelated to the Sioux people: one involved a study of Navajos 1938-1939 and the other, in 1940, involved the Lumbee Indians of North Carolina. In 1943, she won the prestigious Indian Achievement Award. Deloria, Jr. points out that none of these achievements ever translated into academic or popular success, nor was she ever materially secure. He remembers her as always engaged in short-term jobs and living hand to mouth. During the 1950s, she took a job as director of the All Saints School and in the 1960s she worked for a time at the University of South Dakota. Deloria passed away February 12, 1971.

**Appeals to Scientific, Progressive and Christian Approaches**

They were a people beginning—

With beliefs, Ornament, language, fables, love of children (You will find that spoken in all the books.) And a scheme of life that worked.  

--Stephen Vincent Benét

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336 Bushotter, a Lakota, was a graduate of the Hampton Institute and wrote lengthy accounts of the Lakota religion in the Lakota language. DeMallie questions the reliability of these accounts because Bushotter was removed early in life from the reservation to attend boarding school. Walker, *Lakota Belief and Ritual*, 54.  
340 Deloria noted that this excerpt from *Western Star* (Farrar and Rinehard, Inc., 1943) was used by permission. Twenty six years later, the identical excerpt is used by Angie Debo to open her monumental historiography, *The History of the Indians of the United States*.  

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There is both irony and wisdom when Ella Deloria opens her 1944 text, *Speaking of Indians*, with a quote from Stephen Vincent Benét’s epic narrative poem about American history, titled *Western Star*. It is ironic in that the very characteristic American ideals that Benét seeks to valorize, the frontier spirit, individualism, and westward expansion, were the same ideals that precipitated the radical changes in Dakota life that Deloria documents in her work. Yet, the choice of this excerpt as a point of departure reflects wisdom and acute sense of audience. Benét was a popular and widely read author. This poem, published posthumously, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize. That Benét was locating the Native as a human being and challenging prevailing stereotypes of the time, was just the entrée upon which Deloria wanted to draw. And, Benét’s quote, “a scheme of life that worked,” became her prominent message.

This vignette only begins to point to the complexity and richness to be found in this particular text. Deloria’s work in *Speaking of Indians* reflects appeals to scientific, progressive and Christian approaches to assimilation promoted by dominant culture during this era. Her acknowledgements at the beginning of *Speaking of Indians* identify the specific audience she targets as she thanks the YWCA secretary and the Missionary Education Movement “for giving me this chance to speak out freely from the Indian’s point of view.” Deloria, Jr. points out that the text is published by the Friendship Press, affiliated with the National Council of Churches, a group of whites who continued to hold stereotypes about Indian life and savages. This group believed that conversion to
Christianity was necessary in order for Indian people to achieve full assimilation into dominant society.\textsuperscript{341}

Deloria’s first chapter, “This Man Called Indian,” clearly appeals to the prevalent attitudes of her time. The chapter begins with science, “Science tells us that the Native Americans came from northern Asia…”\textsuperscript{342} The gesture toward science is an important one made by Deloria and the primacy that she gives science as entry into her work attests to the significance and value placed on knowledge produced by science in the dominant culture. While it is clear that Deloria understood the theoretical underpinnings of much scientific knowledge, as discussed later in this chapter, there was one important fact gleaned from science that is foundational for her—that science had demonstrated that all of mankind had a common biological origin.\textsuperscript{343} Like the Benét quote and as seen as a foundational assumptions for Collier, the Meriam Commission, and Boas, the idea that all human beings originate from the same source reflected a critical shift in thinking. This meant that race had no bearing on one’s capacity and potential for “progress.” Deloria wrote, “Scientists say that the Native Americans differ in no essential particular from the rest of mankind. And it is now well established that all human beings in the world are biologically one family.”\textsuperscript{344} This was important in that the argument could then be made that all peoples were endowed with the same human traits. For Deloria, the innate

\textsuperscript{342} Ella Deloria, \textit{Speaking of Indians}, (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1944, 1998), 2.
\textsuperscript{343} Ibid., 2.
\textsuperscript{344} Ibid., 8.
capacities that make one a human being included intelligence, imagination, inventiveness and “their ability to communicate their thoughts through the medium of speech.”

While these statements point to a shift in thinking away from notions of biological determinism, the underlying assumption that Western society was more “civilized” remained unchallenged. As George Stocking has persuasively argued, “Boas never abandoned entirely a 19th century liberal belief in a singular human progress in ‘civilization’ that was based on the culmination of rational knowledge.” Science was called on to account for why other races, such as Native peoples, had yet “to progress” to the same level of civilization as their (human) Western counterparts. For Deloria, the science to explain was to be found in anthropology. She drew on Boas’ theory about cultural contact, as articulated in *The Mind of Primitive Man*, to supply the answer. “All progress depends on contacts and the resulting exchange of new ideas.” Native peoples had crossed the Bering Strait and in doing so had essentially cut themselves off. They had isolated themselves from the inventions and progress of Western society.

[…] for they were walking deliberately into a trap. With each step they were cutting themselves off for thousands of years from the rest of mankind.

Until they left home, no doubt their chances of progress were about even with those of other peoples. All human progress was slow at the beginning, but at least it was cumulative as long as peoples could occasionally get in touch with each other. But now, upon reaching the New World, the Indians began to lag behind, although it must be said to their credit that they never stood still. But why did they have to lag at all? The answer is easy, and happily it

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345 Ibid., 9, 13.  
346 George Stocking is quoted in Handler, “Boasian Anthropology,” 258 and 271 n17.  
casts no reflection on their potentialities. They lagged because they were isolate. All progress depends on contacts the resulting exchange of new ideas.\footnote{Ibid.}

Deloria’s use of the word “progress” is indicative of an underlying assumption that Western society, civilization, was more advanced than their Native counterparts. While biological determinism had been discredited through the work of science, social Darwinism retained a strong foundational hold on the minds of the scientific community and general public.

Like the approach settled on by the Meriam Commission, Deloria’s sights were set on the future rather than the past. It was not so important how the current state of affairs came to be, rather it was imperative to focus on the future. “The vital concern is not where a people came from …but where they are going.”\footnote{Ibid., 2.} Released in 1944, \textit{Speaking of Indians} came sixteen years after the findings and recommendations of the Meriam Commission were published and a decade after the reforms of the IRA. Yet, Deloria speaks to the same sorts of problems on the reservation as revealed in the report. There was still considerable poverty and the climate appeared unchanged in spite of the reorganization provided by the IRA and Native engagement in both the first and second world wars. She notes, “Visitors, students of sociology, evaluators and surveyors of the reservation situation come away depressed by the shabbiness and drabness of existence surrounding many families and the general apathy and passivity that pervade the whole picture.”\footnote{Ibid., 137.}
For Deloria, three key changes needed to take place. First was in the realm of education. Deloria felt on that on the whole Native peoples had to date received a substandard education. In her assessment the education received to date only minimally prepared Indian students to return to the reservation. She advocated, “But in future a course of study that corresponds in all essentials to the requirements of the various state boards of education might be safer—and fairer to the Indians in the long run.” Further, education must be available to the adult as well as the child. The second change had to do with attitude, “these many decades of paternalism and protection and gratuity have left their mark.” For Deloria, this state of “perpetual guardianship” left the Native ill-prepared for engagements with the outside world. And she chided delicately, “It presupposes a static mind on racial lines.” The third area where change was needed was in the Christian approach, which to date in Deloria’s opinion, had not taken into consideration the values embedded in Dakota culture or the intelligence of Dakota people. These changes echo almost exactly the results illuminated by the Meriam Report. And one reading of Deloria would suggest that she did indeed value and hold the same assumptions that underpinned the report. However, contemporary analyses prompt readings of Deloria that complicate this reading.

**Deloria’s Future: Four Themes from Contemporary Academic Communities**

As Jahner persuasively argues, putting various textual communities in conversation is productive for thinking about both the continuity and changes in the

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351 Ibid., 143.
352 Ibid., 152.
353 Ibid., 158.
history of thought. Today numerous scholars have taken up Deloria to various ends and there are four recurring themes that emerge from the contemporary textual community’s engagement with Deloria. These themes illuminate the ways that Deloria continued to advocate and struggle for a Native American future. In the first section I take James Clifford’s famous argument about the literary; the poetics involved with ethnographic writing to argue that Deloria’s approach was expressive in multiple registers in this regard. Not only were her textual productions in multiple genres in keeping with the literary efforts of her contemporaries in anthropology, her extended work with textual representations from Siouan storytellers, as well as being raised in strong storytelling tradition of the Dakota/Lakota/Nakota, shaped her as a poetic storyteller. In the second section I examine how, in spite of her seeming acquiescence and conciliatory tone, she offered a strong cultural critique as she subtly wrote “against the grain” of dominant thought. In the third section, I examine contemporary claims that locate Deloria’s work as a feminist rendering. Not only was she working during an era in American history where women were repressed in the workplace, her focus on a Dakota female perspective might also be considered a feminist effort. But, this must be read within the context of Deloria’s understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the kinship system, for her the crucial aspects that defined one as Sioux. In the last section, I look at the way that Deloria not only produced work in multiple literary genres; she also turned to anthroperformance as another vehicle to portray the present and future Indian.

354 This is the sub-title of the article. See Finn, “Ella Cara Deloria.”
The Literary Turn: Deloria—The Poetic Storyteller

In his 1986 introduction to *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, James Clifford famously identifies what he viewed as an emergent trend. The “transparency of representation” claimed by ethnographic practices, such as “keeping good field notes, making accurate maps, [and] ‘writing up’ results” was mere illusion.\(^{355}\) The “literariness of anthropology” was now recognized.\(^{356}\) Clifford is clear that there is a lengthy history where “the boundary separating art from science” was blurred.\(^{357}\) He points to Deloria’s contemporaries Margaret Mead, Edward Sapir, and Ruth Benedict as examples of ethnographers who saw themselves as both anthropologists and literary artists.\(^{358}\) While Clifford’s history is brief, one might read this dual interest as anomaly, the exception rather than the rule. Philip Deloria\(^{359}\) argues that “it might be more instructive to think about events in terms of their frequency (rare, occasional, frequent).”\(^{360}\) And it was with great frequency that anthropologists, who were contemporaries of Deloria, undertook fictional writing as a way to represent culture.

DeMallie cites Elsie Clews Parsons as a primary example of an anthropologist who experimented with literature as a vehicle to portray Indian cultures for the general population.\(^{361}\) One contribution of the approach, according to DeMallie, was that it drew “attention to the psychological dimensions of common human experience that were so


\(^{356}\) Ibid., 4.

\(^{357}\) Ibid., 3.

\(^{358}\) Ibid.

\(^{359}\) Ella was Philip’s great-aunt.


\(^{361}\) Although I don’t identify each anthropologist engaged in literary pursuits during Deloria’s lifetime, several other of note include Zora Neale Hurston and Jovita González.
notably lacking from professional anthropological monographs.” While Clifford suggests that Mead, Sapir, and Benedict kept their literary efforts hidden from their mentor Franz Boas, Clews Parsons’ 1922 publication *American Indian Life* suggests otherwise. The collection of fictional short stories, edited by Clews Parsons, included entries by not only noted anthropologists such as A.L. Kroeber, Robert Lowie, Clark Wissler, Paul Radin, John Swanton, Leslie Spier, and Clews Parsons, but also Boas himself. The impulse to engage in literary representations of Native peoples was outlined by Clews Parsons. Heretofore popular knowledge about Indian peoples had come from *truly* fictional accounts that had no connection to the “real.” She cited the work of James Fenimore Cooper as exemplary of accounts of Indian people that were not based on fact. However, these texts reached a readership that would not have an interest in the anthropological monograph. She wrote in the preface to *American Indian Life*, “In this book the white man’s traditions about Indians have been disregarded.”

Certainly an important factor shaping the impulse to engage in ethnographic fiction was audience, but Clews Parsons was clearly attuned to the “literariness of anthropology” even in these early years of American anthropology. Clifford suggests that the two forms, the anthropological monograph and the literary, were distinct in the minds of these authors, but Clews Parsons suggests that these distinctions were blurrier. She astutely observes that the ethnographic monograph was as much a reflection of the observer/writer as it was a representation of the culture being studied.

364 Ibid., 2.
Try as we may, and it must be confessed that many of us do not try very hard, few, if any of us, succeed, in describing another culture, of ridding ourselves of our own cultural bias or habits of mind. Much of our anthropological work, to quote from a letter from Spinden, “is not so much definitive science as it is a cultural trait of ourselves.”

While Clews Parsons reminds that the understanding that ethnography was a literary effort was already part of the intellectual climate earlier than Clifford proposes, Deloria’s written efforts in multiple genres provide specific examples of the poetic as she geared her literary efforts toward multiple and often specific readerships. For example, *Dakota Grammar, Dakota Texts*, and “The Sun Dance of the Oglala Sioux” (*Journal of American Folklore*) follow the anthropological conventions of her time and are geared toward an academic readership. *Speaking of Indians* was written for a Christian readership, while the fictional account of pre-contact Dakota life from a woman’s perspective, *Waterlily*, targeted the general public. That each of these works reflects different styles attests to Deloria’s savvy discernment of her audience and the literariness of her written work.

While Deloria’s written expression marks her “as a gifted storyteller,” it is important to remember that the object of her study was stories. Literary critic Julian Rice makes two important observations. First, he suggests that the hundreds of Dakota/Lakota/Nakota oral stories transcribed and translated, from the likes of George Bushotter and George Sword, “imbued” Deloria “with the narrative tradition.” Rice is correct to draw attention to Deloria’s repeated exposure to Dakota/Lakota storytelling.

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365 Ibid.
367 Ibid.
technique through the written works of these Lakota men. Second, he notes the many stories she heard during her fieldwork, which he argues profoundly shaped her literary efforts. DeMallie concurs; in his introduction to *Dakota Texts* he observes Deloria’s “distinctive literary style,” which he argues accurately reflects the tone of the original, uniquely Lakota storytelling efforts.  

*Dakota Texts*, originally published in 1932, offered a series of Lakota/Dakota stories arranged, according to Deloria, by “Dakota categories.” In other words, the storytelling genres were “collective knowledge” among the members of the community, rather than externally imposed academic categories. Deloria collected stories, oral literature, during fieldwork conducted primarily on the Rosebud, Standing Rock, and Pine Ridge Indian reservations from 1927-1931. The stories included traditional myths, referred to as *ohukaka*, which were part of the Dakota/Lakota mythic repertoire, part of the collective knowledge of the tribe. They included a variation of the *ohukaka*, the “novelistic,” which included mythic elements, but also contained elements specific to the orator; these stories were not universally known. They also included tales and legends that were considered historical, true, and factual by the Sioux. Some of these stories were considered to have occurred in the distant past, in the time of the storyteller’s grandparents or great-grandparents, while others occurred in more recent times. Deloria was quite fascinated with the rich array of Dakota/Lakota oral tradition and in

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particular how the storyteller marked the story in a way that conveyed to the emic listener how to “hear” the story.\textsuperscript{373}

Another, perhaps an all too obvious consideration, is the significance of the fact that Deloria approached her work \textit{as} a Dakota woman. Or as Godfrey reminds, “She really knew what the culture was \textit{before} she came in contact with “Papa Franz.”\textsuperscript{374} Vine Deloria, Jr. suggests that Deloria took on the role of family historian/storyteller fulfilling her ancestor, Saswe’s vision, which was passed down from her father. She listened to other storytellers as well, Ella Deloria recalled, “I often listened with fascination as a child to war stories told around the camp fire, where the old men unstintingly praised all deeds of outstanding valor…Also I heard them scorn the coward, for cowardice in any man was unforgivable.”\textsuperscript{375} By all accounts Deloria was a consummate storyteller in the oral tradition as well. Godfrey recalls that as a child “I just loved her [Deloria] because she had wonderful stories!”\textsuperscript{376} In other words, Deloria was raised with a strong sensibility of Dakota/Lakota culture and in particular, for the art of Dakota/Lakota storytelling.

In an effort to promote Deloria’s manuscript for \textit{The Dakota Way of Life} to the American Philosophical Society for publication, Margaret Mead wrote:\textsuperscript{377} “Miss Deloria, the daughter of parents who thought of themselves as Yankton Dakotas…has kept in close and intimate touch with her own people, speaking their language and following

\begin{footnotesize}
\item[373] This is a recurring observation/argument throughout Deloria’s work.
\item[377] Margaret Mead wrote an introductory letter for Deloria as well as an introduction to the text. They are not dated, but took place sometime after Ruth Benedict’s death in 1948.
\end{footnotesize}
According to Mead, the “unique circumstances of her [Deloria’s] birth and experience” combined with her “literary abilities unfortunately only too rare among ethnographers” had jelled to produce a “manuscript…written with a very rare feeling for Dakota life and style.” Rice suggests that she “should be viewed as a literary creator rather than a scrupulous recorder” in regards to both her ethnographic methods and her written production.

*Cultural Critique: Deloria--“Writing Against the Grain”*

Clifford’s work illuminates two important considerations regarding the ethnographic project. The focus thus far has been about the issue of cultural representation, “extinguishing any remaining sparks of the presumption that ethnographers were transparent mirrors of culture.” But “Introduction: Partial Truths” also makes another important contribution in its attentiveness to relations of power. “Ethnographic work has indeed been enmeshed in a world of enduring and changing power inequalities, and it continues to be implicated. It enacts power relations. But its function within these relations is complex, often ambivalent, and potentially counter-hegemonic.” While Clifford’s focus is on authority and power relations in the

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379 Ibid., 1.
380 Ibid., 3.
381 Ibid., 1.
382 Rice, *Ella Deloria’s The Buffalo People*, 4.
ethnographic process and product, Deloria’s life circumstances and role as an
“indigenous ethnographer” remind that the ethnographer is also determined.385

Within the context of dominant culture at the time, Deloria as a Dakota woman
growing up during the early reservation years was well-acquainted with hegemonic
power relations. She witnessed her father’s deepening depression as assimilation effort
after assimilation effort was forced on the Dakota/Lakota people. Deloria, Jr. noted that
his grandfather’s (Deloria’s father) “faith in the religion he had so energetically tried to
follow” was shaken.386 Ambiguous at best, the constraints imposed—shaped by an
ideology that the Indian must be assimilated in tension with the notion that the primitive
Indian was not capable—produced a paternalistic climate where the best to be expected
was that the Indian might be brought into the mainstream, but only at the “minimum
standards of health and decency.”387 Deloria and her father were both products of one of
the primary assimilation vehicles, the boarding school, and each excelled beyond the
minimum expectations, which might locate them as products of successful assimilation
programs. But the underlying sentiment that Indian people were indeed primitive
continued to shape their interactions and roles. That Deloria was aware of this
predicament is clear in her closing in Speaking of Indians.

There is an undeniable choice here. Which picture shall it be? The picture of despair or the picture of hope?

385 Clifford argues that ethnography is determined in six ways: contextually, rhetorically, institutionally,
386 Deloria, Speaking, xiii.
387 Institute for Government Research, The Problem, viii.
There is no alternative. Now that the people know what they need and want, they are going to be disillusioned, forever this time, if they cannot have it.  

As such, it is not surprising that one of Deloria’s primary objectives was “writing against the grain of dominant representations of Native Americans.”\textsuperscript{389} In a letter to Boas in 1938 she noted that she had been reviewing manuscripts about Indian people for a publisher. She wrote, “It is amazing what people write about Indians. I have criticized both [manuscripts] quite unfavorably; but I had to they were so trashy; I should not like to be thought to pass on them.”\textsuperscript{390}

Two primary issues of concern can be gleaned from Deloria’s writings. First, Deloria wanted to emphasize the difference among Native tribes rather than follow the mainstream’s propensity to lump all Indian people together. In \textit{Speaking of Indians} she wrote,  

\begin{quote}
We in America must be realizing by now that too often all tribes, just because they are native Americans, are lumped together with blithe disregard of tribal differences…By what precedent…are all Indian tribes—speaking different languages and living different lives—expected to have the same ideas and problems? And to respond to exactly the same approach?\textsuperscript{391}
\end{quote}

She wrote against the grain by focusing on a specific group, utilizing a local approach rather than a universal one. “Instead of trying to cover the whole Indian scene…I shall

\textsuperscript{388} Deloria, \textit{Speaking}, 162.  
\textsuperscript{389} Finn, “Ella Cara Deloria,” 132.  
\textsuperscript{390} Ella Deloria quoted in Roseanne Hoefel, “Different by Degree: Ella Cara Deloria, Zora Neale Hurston, and Franz Boas Contend with Race and Ethnicity,” \textit{American Indian Quarterly}, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Spring 2001), 181.  
\textsuperscript{391} Deloria, \textit{Speaking}, 21.
concentrate on the one people that I know intimately and whose language is mine.”\textsuperscript{392} She was an insider; her perspective was emic,\textsuperscript{393} and she had successfully negotiated dominant culture’s educational system. This constellation of factors served to imbue the text with authority and credibility. DeMallie notes that “[n]ot only was she a meticulous and knowledgeable researcher; she had a deep and heartfelt understanding of—a true kinship with—those whose culture she both studied and shared”\textsuperscript{394} Not only did she speak the language, she was writing about “my people” and “my tribe.”\textsuperscript{395}

The second concern for Deloria was to represent the Dakota/Lakota people as human beings who had developed a workable social system prior to contact, which, however different it might have been from that of dominant culture’s, was “a scheme of life that worked.”\textsuperscript{396} In \textit{Speaking of Indians} she opined,

\begin{quote}
All peoples who live communally must first find some way to get along together harmoniously and with a measure of decency and order. This is a universal problem. Each people, even the most primitive, has solved it in its own way. And that way, by whatever rules and controls it is achieved, is, for any people, the scheme of life that works.\textsuperscript{397}
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{392} While the majority of Deloria’s work was specifically about the Dakota/Lakota it is important to note that she took the same local approach in her work with the Lumbee. Ibid, 20
\textsuperscript{393} Maria Cotera argues that Deloria’s positionality as an insider was not always a comfortable one for her. This is one of the recurring themes throughout her work on Native speakers. A special thanks to Cotera for sharing portions of her manuscript with me prior to publication. Maria Cotera, \textit{Native Speakers: Ella Deloria, Zora Neale Hurston, Jovita Gonzalez, and the Poetics of Culture}, (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2010).
\textsuperscript{394} Deloria, \textit{Waterlily}, 231.
\textsuperscript{395} Deloria, \textit{Speaking}, 21-22.
\textsuperscript{396} A chapter title from Deloria, \textit{Speaking of Indians}.
\textsuperscript{397} Ibid., 24.
\end{flushright}
For Deloria, the alternative cultural logics developed by the Sioux, the scheme of life that worked, centered on a kinship structure that attested to the humanity of the Dakota/Lakota.

Before going further, I can safely say that the ultimate aim of Dakota life, stripped of accessories, was quite simple: One must obey kinship rules; one must be a good relative. No Dakota who has participated in that life will dispute that. In the last analysis every other consideration was secondary—property, personal ambition, glory, good times, life itself. Without that aim and the constant struggle to attain it, the people would no longer be Dakotas in truth. They would no longer even be human. To be a good Dakota, then, was to be humanized, civilized. And to be civilized was to keep the rules imposed by kinship for achieving civility, good manners, and a sense of responsibility toward every individual dealt with. Thus only was it possible to live communally with success; that is to say, with a minimum of friction and a maximum of good will.398

While Deloria was writing against the grain of public opinion about Indian people, she was also writing against the grain of academia. Deloria indeed was an educated woman, having received her degree in education from Columbia, but she lacked the necessary credentials to be considered an anthropologist in spite to the training she received from Boas personally. She was in a liminal position, vulnerable on three fronts: as a Native person, as a woman (which will be explored more in the following section), and as a non-credentialed ethnographer. The latter in particular shaped Deloria’s style as she wrote for various audiences and had profound consequences for Deloria’s publishing efforts.

398 Ibid., 25.
"Dakota Grammar, Dakota Texts, and “The Sun Dance of the Oglala Sioux” (Journal of American Folklore), the works published during Deloria’s lifetime, illustrate the vexed position of Deloria’s scholarship and belie her positionality within the anthropological academic community. For example, “The Sun Dance of the Oglala Sioux” is a transcription and translation of an account of the Sun Dance, written by George Sword, an informant for J.R. Walker’s canonical work about the ritual. While the linguistic component of the article offers significant contribution, the article is devoid of analysis. Primarily, the article was a word-for-word, verbatim translation of the Dakota text written by Sword. This locates Deloria within Boas’ understanding of the Native informant, one whose contribution lay in her ability to speak the language native to the culture being studied, and as such could contribute by providing entrée to the culture being studied, as well as performing multiple roles as translator and data collector.

In the article Deloria challenged and extended the method imposed by Boas; the second half offered a free translation of the Sword text. She was particularly strong in her opinion that the nuances of cultural communication were lost in verbatim translation and she advocated a free-style translation of texts as well. Vine Deloria, Jr. recalls,

Ella did not like this kind of translation, which suggested that words and ideas could be easily matched across complex linguistic traditions. She felt a better rendering of the nuances of the Sioux language could be achieved by translating whole phrases and speeches in a free form. Sometimes when she and Susan would visit us she would

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399 Although this is also a criticism made of Boas, see Lewis for an excellent survey of the multiple critiques of Boas. Lewis, “The Passion of Franz Boas,” 449-450.
get to talking about how certain things that had been translated word for word missed the point altogether.\footnote{Deloria, Speaking, xiv.}

The free translation of Sword’s text was an act of writing against the grain of an academy that particularly valued the “scientific” method proposed by Boas for data collection and translation.\footnote{Bauman and Briggs, “The Foundation of All Future Researches,” 479-528.}

In spite of the missing analytical component to Deloria’s academic writings, it is clear that she was not only well-versed regarding the prevalent “scientific” theories of her time, but that she possessed her own analytic capabilities as well. However, it was outside the genre of academic writing that she demonstrated her proficiency and articulated her analysis. For example, in Speaking of Indians she surveys anthropological theories of the origin of the Indian and against the grain, she questions the truth value of this sort of scientific knowledge. As reviewer Paula Wagoner observes Deloria viewed science “as speculative at best.”\footnote{Paula Wagoner, “Review,” American Indian Quarterly, Vol. 23, No. 3-4, 187.} After explicating the current theoretical construct, that Indian people had originated in Asia and migrated across the Bering Strait, she problematizes this theory. “Of course, every bit of this is speculative; one guess is nearly as good as another, for we can never be sure of what actually took place.”\footnote{Deloria, Speaking, i-2.} She writes in terms of “the best scientific opinion”\footnote{Ibid., 5.} and observes accepted scientific truths (such as this one) only provided “the best answer possible with the evidence now in hand.”\footnote{Ibid., 2.}
understood that the knowledge gleaned from science was, to coin Clifford’s famous phrase, “a partial truth.”

**Feminisms and Kinship**

One powerful response to Clifford’s collection of essays, *Writing Culture*, came in the form of feminists’ critiques in regards to two issues. First, the collection included only one essay authored by a woman (Mary Louise Pratt). Second, and perhaps more importantly, Clifford had rationalized the exclusion not only of women authors, but the dearth of women academics whose textual representations are not included in the anthropological canon. Describing the response, anthropologist Ruth Behar writes,

> *Writing Culture*, not surprisingly, both saddened and infuriated many women anthropologists. No two pages in the history of anthropological writing have ever created as much anguish among feminist readers as did James Clifford’s uneasy statements justifying the absence of women anthropologists from the project of *Writing Culture*. Pushed to account for this gap by the criticism of a feminist reader who reviewed the book in manuscript, Clifford made the now infamous claim that women anthropologists were excluded because their writings failed to fit the requirement of being feminist and textually innovative.

The collection of essays, *Women Writing Culture*, edited by Behar, provided numerous examples of anthropological writings by women that were both feminist and textually innovative. Deloria became one such example, in particular in regards to *Waterlily*,

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407 This is the title of Clifford’s introduction, Clifford, “Introduction: Partial Truths,” 1.
which was cited as exemplary of textual innovation (ethnographic fiction)\textsuperscript{409} and feminist
in content as the storyline focuses on the lived experience of Dakota women.\textsuperscript{410}

A survey of engagements with Deloria and her work reveals complex, tense, and
often contradictory readings of Deloria. Some, such as Paula Gunn Allen, take a
maternalist feminist approach to Deloria pointing to her role as a reproducer of culture.\textsuperscript{411}
According to Gunn Allen, Deloria exemplified “the tradition of the American Indian
woman as repository and purveyor of culture.”\textsuperscript{412} This lens privileges women’s roles as
the transmitters of culture. Godfrey argues that Deloria’s papers reveal Deloria held
similar views. As evidence of this claim she refers to a letter Deloria wrote to Boas in
1940 regarding her work with the Lumbee.

There is no trace of language among [the Indians of
Robeson Co.] except English. Isn’t that quite
extraordinary? They want to be Indians so much; but can’t
produce a single bit of folklore or tradition or a word of
Indian speech. Might [it] be due to some time in their
history when all the mothers were non-Indian? I notice that
in the Sioux country, children of white men and Indian
mothers are steeped in folklore and language, but children
of white mothers and Indian fathers are often completely
cut off from the tribal folk-ways. If every Dakota woman
disappeared today, and all the men took white wives, then
the language and customs would die, but otherwise I do not
see how they would.\textsuperscript{413}

\textsuperscript{409} Beatrice Medicine disagreed and wrote that Deloria dissuaded her from reading Waterlily, which she
claimed was not ethnography. Quoted in Susan Gardner, “Introduction to the Bison Books Edition,”
\textsuperscript{410} See for example, Gardner, “Speaking of Ella Deloria,” 461.
\textsuperscript{411} This “feminist” perspective has been critiqued because of the correlation between women as cultural
reproducers and women as reproducers of the children. Thanks to Rita Trimble for bringing this to my
attention. For a detailed survey see Sue Morgan, “Introduction: Writing Feminist History: Theoretical
Debates and Critical Practices,” The Feminist History Reader, ed. Sue Morgan, (London and New York:
\textsuperscript{412} Hoefel, “Different by Degree,” 6.
\textsuperscript{413} Gardner, “Speaking of Ella Deloria,” 481, n. 19.
Cotera draws on the identical quote to make the argument that “at the heart of Deloria’s political-aesthetic project was the belief that the continuance of Dakota life ways…was dependent on recovering and sustaining the pedagogical role that women played in Dakota society.”

Vine Deloria, Jr.’s famous telling of the Deloria family vision offers a perspective that complicates this understanding. Deloria’s grandfather, Saswe had a vision regarding four generations of his male descendants and their family responsibility. In this case the family history and cultural knowledge was to be transmitted from father to son. Deloria’s father “despaired of fulfilling Saswe’s vision…So Ella, during her formative years, became the inheritor of the traditions of the family and was treated as if she were the son to whom Philip could pass down the stories.”

Although Deloria (a woman) did receive this knowledge from her father, this was due to family circumstances, uncharacteristic for the culture. Further it is important to remember that the majority of stories and descriptions that she worked with came from texts produced by Siouan men, such as Bushhotter and Sword. Although she interviewed men and women, we more frequently hear accounts from men and in both cases the majority of the interviews were meant to either confirm or extend a baseline of stories told by men.

It is difficult to determine whether or not Deloria would appreciate being “drawn into the feminist fold.” Deloria’s text, Waterlily is often taken as demonstrating her feminist leanings because of its woman-centered storyline. DeMallie argues that

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415 Deloria, Jr., “Introduction” to Speaking, x-xi.
“Deloria surely did not intend the book to be construed as a feminist statement” and that “she wrote from the heart in the only culturally appropriate way—as a Sioux woman.”

Maria Cotera concurs to a point, “True enough, in Waterlily Deloria does not engage in the prototypical emancipating narrative strategies that we have come to associate with “feminist” writing.” But Cotera argues for the importance of focusing on “the decolonizing effects of her re-presentation of traditional Dakota life in a women-centered narrative.” This trend focuses on the way that Waterlily served to make women visible in an era when the large majority of texts and ethnographic work focused men and their experiences.

Deloria’s personal correspondence and discussion of Waterlily reveal a more complicated reading of the book is in order. In a letter to Margaret Mead she describes that the novel is

about a girl who lived a century ago, in a remote camp-circle of the Teton Dakotas: Only my characters are imaginary; the things that happen are what the many old women informants have told me as having been their own or their mothers’ or other relatives’ experiences. I can claim as original only the method of fitting these events and ceremonies into the tale. . . . [I]t reads convincingly to any who understand Dakota life. . . . And it is purely the woman’s point of view, her problems, aspirations, ideals, etc.

418 Cotera, “All My Relatives Are Noble,” 55.
419 Ibid., 55.
Medicine however recalls that in 1970, Deloria told her, “I have written a novel. It is not an ethnography so I don’t want you to read it. I don’t want it published.”\textsuperscript{421} Medicine goes on to note, “It is ironic that although she did not want it published it has superseded her ethnographic contributions. It is now on bibliographies of courses on Native women and Indian literature and is read like an ethnographic text—which would have displeased her, I am sure.”\textsuperscript{422} Medicine does however think the novel offers an important contribution to understanding the kinship structure of the Sioux, “it nonetheless is important in delineating the kinship dimension in dyadic interaction between members of the tiospaye [extended family unit]. Morality, ethical behavior, and the unifying theme of reciprocity are manifested from a feminine perspective. The articulation of male and female relationships is significant.”\textsuperscript{423}

Kinship is the foundational Dakota cultural value and practice addressed in every piece of work written by Deloria. As Cotera observes, “In fact, the importance of kinship to Dakota people seems a veritable leitmotif in Deloria’s body of work.”\textsuperscript{424} In Speaking of Indians, Deloria works to explain the kinship network to her readership, which “is complex at best.”\textsuperscript{425} A dizzying array of blood and social relationships, each relationship carried its own distinctive parameters and conventions of engagement outlining individual roles and responsibilities within a system of “reciprocal obligations.”\textsuperscript{426}

\textsuperscript{421} Beatrice Medicine, Learning to be an Anthropologist & Remaining “Native”: Selected Writings, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 281.
\textsuperscript{422} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{423} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{424} Cotera, “All My Relatives Are Noble,” 56.
\textsuperscript{425} Deloria, Speaking, 25.
\textsuperscript{426} Ibid., 26.
included “term, attitude, behavior, in the correct combinations, were what every member of society must learn and observe undeviatingly.”

An examination of Deloria’s work must be attentive to her multiple positionality within the context of kinship. I am persuaded by anthropologist, Kirin Narayan’s argument against the fixity of distinction between “native” and “non-native” anthropologists. Instead of the paradigm emphasizing a dichotomy between outsider/insider or observer/observed, I propose that we might more profitably view each anthropologist in terms of shifting identifications amid a field of interpenetrating communities and power relations. The loci along which we are aligned with or set apart from those whom we study are multiple and in flux.

Thus Narayan argues for an approach attentive to “multiplex identity,” which is fruitful for considering Deloria within the context of Siouan kinship. Much has been written about Deloria’s relationship with Boas and her references to him as “Papa Franz,” locating their relationship within the conventions of kinship. Although many of Boas’ students addressed him similarly, without a doubt Deloria’s address held a certain expectation regarding the reciprocal obligations between them. As can be seen in the relationship between her and her biological father and sister, this included caretaking obligations when necessary. Deloria, Jr. notes that “Ella was trapped with family responsibilities at the very time she should have been embarking on a professional

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427 Ibid., 30.
429 Ibid., 673.
Godfrey provides a different reading of the situation arguing that Deloria did not feel trapped by the family responsibilities, but embraced them willingly. This was not a sacrifice as it was what was expected of Deloria. “I don’t think that she viewed it in those terms; she just viewed it as fulfilling her kinship responsibility.”

Kinship relationships offered Deloria tremendous entrée. Godfrey notes that Deloria established a kin relationship to everyone she met. Cotera astutely argues that kinship was an ethnographic method for Deloria and locates Deloria’s work as “kinship ethnography.” But, it was also constraining. For example in correspondence with Benedict, Deloria draws attention to her vexed position within the Dakota community:

I found I can’t possibly say everything frankly, knowing it could get out to Dakota country. I know it must sound silly; but it won’t to you. Ruth, I am a virgin; as such, I am not supposed to talk frankly on things I must, to be really helpful. The place I have with the Dakotas is important to me; I can not afford to jeopardize it by what would certainly leave me open to suspicion and you can’t know what that would mean. I could hardly go back out there.

Deloria goes on to write that she wished there was a way that she could write only for an academic audience that would not get out to her Dakota relations, implying that there was much more she could contribute, were that the case. Being an unmarried woman in the Dakota culture was a suspect position and outside the expected conventional roles for a woman. Although there were allowances made, the label “perpetual virgin” required strict adherence to social conventions. In other words, a “perpetual virgin” would not

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432 Ibid.
433 Cotera, Native Speakers, 211, 215.
434 Ibid., 13-14.
have the knowledge of sexual relationships, childbirth, and roles of a wife. Having knowledge of these sorts of cultural roles and exchanges would make Deloria suspect in her community.

**Anthro-performance**

Most contemporary engagements with Deloria note at least one way in which she performed Indianness. As already seen, Deloria was appreciated for her storytelling skills both orally and textually. Godfrey recalls, “And when she came into a room, she filled the room up; she couldn’t come into any place and not be the presence.”

Discursively, she produced in multiple domains from academic productions, to fiction, public appeals, and even pageantry writing.

Anthropologist, Faye Harrison has coined the term, anthro-performance, “enthnographically informed performance,” which involves modes of creative expression that assume varied forms: spoken word, dance and other kinds of creative productions.” According to Harrison, anthropologically informed performative practices are strategies for reaching a wider audience and raising critical consciousness. As Cotera notes Deloria deployed “performance as a strategy for cultural affirmation.” The wide variety of venues that Deloria engaged suggests that the critical consciousness being raised occurred on multiple fronts, personal, for the general public, and for Indian people.

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437 Ibid.  
438 Cotera, *Native Speakers.*
Speaking of Indians was not Deloria’s first attempt to translate Indian for white audiences, nor was writing her only venue. At Columbia, she began to take on frequent public engagements for a wide range of white audiences in schools, churches, and the YMCA, a strategy that she continued throughout her life. She lectured, dressed in Native regalia, and gave presentations of song and dance to the audiences in order to earn money and to promote an understanding of Indian people among the public.\textsuperscript{439} Deloria certainly engaged in anthro-performance throughout her life and this was a common practice of Native American intellectuals until contemporary times.

In Playing Indian, Philip Deloria describes her work with Carrie Eastburn and the Camp Fire Girl programs. During the late 1920s through the early 1930s, Eastburn enlisted Deloria “to teach her Camp Fire Indians native songs, dances, and philosophies.”\textsuperscript{440} Deloria (Philip) locates these performances as an act of writing against the grain of dominant representations. He notes many of her contemporaries engaged in similar practices. “And, like her, they …chose youth development programs as arenas in which they might construct and exercise Indian cultural authority.” These practices served to “reshape popular conceptions of Indianness.”\textsuperscript{441}

In addition to wearing regalia when she spoke publically and teaching song and dance to a mostly non-Native contingency in her work with the Camp Fire Girls programs, Deloria was also involved with pageantry making. Most notable of her

\textsuperscript{439} However, I have not found any account of Deloria dressing in her regalia for Dakota events or for a Dakota public. DeMallie, “Afterword,” 238-239.
\textsuperscript{440} Deloria, Playing Indian, 122.
\textsuperscript{441} Ibid.
pageants was her work with the Lumbee Indians. In 1940 Deloria was sent by the Farm Security Administration to Robeson County, North Carolina to study, write and produce a pageant for the Lumbee Indians in the area. The pageant, *The Life-Story of a People*, was performed in 1940 and again in 1941 “with very favorable and enthusiastic response and lots of local and regional press coverage.” Deloria seemed very perplexed by the Lumbee as seen in her correspondence to Boas regarding “The Indians of Robeson County.” She was astonished that they did not possess “a single bit of folklore or tradition or a word of Indian speech,” “[t]hey want to be Indians so much.” None of the generally accepted cultural markers applied to the Lumbee, yet they had maintained a distinct group identity as an Indian people for centuries in the same location.

Anthropologist Karen Blu suggests that Deloria’s pageant served to heal a division amongst the Lumbee, who were split into two factions regarding whether or not to align the tribe as Siouan or Cherokee in order to receive federal recognition. In this sense pageantry was a way to reinvigorate tribal identity and group cohesion. And it is clear that the impact of *The Life-Story of a People* remained with the tribe for decades. It was co-opted as evidence in the group’s appeals to the U.S. government for full federal recognition.

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442 This was not her only foray into pageantry making. She also wrote and directed pageants while working at Haskell.
444 See quote in Feminism and Kinship section of this chapter.
446 The Lumbee, the fifth largest Indian tribe in the U.S., has engaged in a struggle with the U.S. government for recognition since the eighteenth century. The tribe received state recognition in the 1880s
The Life-Story of a People was first presented on December 5, 6, and 7, 1940 at the College Gymnasium in Pembroke, North Carolina. The following year the second annual presentation, “The Life Story Of A People” was presented on December 5, 8, and 10, 1941. The pageant was written and directed by Deloria and included a cast of approximately one hundred and fifty Indians of Robeson County. The program from the second year describes the pageant as “showing the development of the Indians of Robeson Country from earliest times until now.”

Insight into the use of pageantry at the time can be gleaned from a book about the topic written in 1912 by Esther Willard Bates entitled Pageants and Pageantry. Bates locates pageantry as an educational tool, “The teaching experience of the author has shown her that as a means of instruction, of inculcating literary appreciation, and of production the historic sense, dramatic work has no equal.” She goes on to describe three sub-genres of pageantry: the parade, out-of-door performances, and “indoor entertainments made up of scenes so related as to possess unity.” As to the latter, “Some theme, such as the growth of national spirit, the struggle of a people for liberty, the progress of science or education, may be used as the keynote.” Folklorists such as Tim Lloyd have demonstrated the connection between folklore, pageantry and the progressive era. One of the first historical pageants was produced in order “to

and in the 1950s received partial status for recognition. Blu provides a history of this struggle, but for a more up-to-date version see the Lumbee tribe web-site at http://www.lumbeetribe.com/.


Ibid., 4-5.

Ibid., 5.
demonstrate whether or not the pageant may be used successfully as an agent in social advancement.\textsuperscript{452}

Pageantry, as self-consciously designed vehicles for education and reform, was a popular tool for evoking nationalism during Deloria’s time and she was apparently quite fond of the genre. In addition to the pageant for the Lumbee, the archive of her work housed at the Dakota Indian Foundation contains scripts for three additional pageants written and directed by Deloria: “The Wohpe Festival” performed for the Schools and Summer Camps (1928), “A Pageant: Indian Progress” performed at Haskell (1927), and “Oicimani Hanska Kin: The Fifty Years Trail” performed at Santee, Nebraska for the Episcopal Church’s fifty year commemoration for work with the Dakota (1920).

In 1943, one year before the publication of \textit{Speaking of Indians}, Deloria received the Indian Achievement Medal, joining the ranks of many distinguished American Indians who had made outstanding contributions to the understanding of Indians. The award was given by the Indian Council Fire of Chicago, an Indian club engaged in public relations and Indian culture. The group maintained an Indian speaker’s bureau, a listing of Native peoples who were considered knowledgeable and possessed the requisite understanding of the culture. The majority of these speakers dressed in regalia as they delivered talks to a non-Native audience as suggested by the club. Representation of Indian culture by Indian people was a critical goal.\textsuperscript{453} The club was also engaged in

\textsuperscript{452} Timothy Lloyd, “Whole Work, Whole Play, Whole People: Folklore and Social Therapeutics in the 1920s and 1930s” \textit{The Journal of American Folklore}, Vol. 110, No 437 (Summer, 1997), 239.
activism to this end. For example in 1936 they sponsored a bill in congress that would impose a fine and/or imprisonment for false representations of Indian people.\textsuperscript{454}

During this era, the approach of the Indian Council Fire of Chicago was not uncommon. As seen in the Meriam Commission’s report, in many of the urban areas where Indian people relocated, urban Indian centers and clubs emerged. As the report demonstrated, even though urban Indians were more assimilated and not unlike their non-Indian neighbors in most respects, they still adamantly asserted a distinct Indian identity. Historian Nancy Shomaker’s work on the urban Indian experience in Minneapolis prior to 1950 is instructive. She notes the emergence of organizations that served both political and cultural agendas. Like the Indian Council Fire of Chicago, two groups in particular, The American Indian Association and Tepee Order, placed most of their “effort toward achieving public recognition of the Indians’ contributions to American life.” They maintained a speaker’s bureau as well. Sometimes, urban clubs joined together in an effort toward the goal of recognizing the contributions of Indian people. In 1923, clubs in Minneapolis, Chicago, and Denver supported the Society of American Indian’s promotion of an American Indian day. The resulting effort entailed “an accumulation of events including Indian speakers, music, and education activities.”\textsuperscript{455}


\textsuperscript{455} Shoemaker, “Urban Indians and Ethnic Choices, 436.
Deloria’s Past: Sun Dance

In all, Deloria engaged an amazing array of domains, both textual and performative, in order to advocate for a Native American future. But, what sort of Native American future did she envision? For Deloria, the critical category of culture was the spiritual. “We may know about a people, but we cannot truly know them until we can get within their minds, to some degree at least, and see life from their peculiar point of view. To do that we must learn what goes on in their “spiritual culture area.” According to Deloria the spiritual culture area provided the frame for values, morals, and ethics and was closely linked to the language. The climax of the most important religious ritual of the Sioux, the Sun Dance, “was an unspeakably holy moment, the holiest in the life of these people.” In this section I examine two aspects of Deloria’s work on the Sun Dance: her complicated personal relationship with the ritual, and her work to verify the Sword material about the Sun Dance and related myths.

Deloria, by all accounts, self-identified as a Christian woman. Her father’s role in the Episcopalian Church as an ordained priest significantly shaped her and there are no accounts which might suggest that she ever questioned this aspect of her life. Historian, Philip Deloria notes that Deloria’s father (also Philip) and her brother, Vine, Sr. “were native clergymen who between them brought thousands of Sioux Indians into the Episcopal Church.” The majority of Dakota that Deloria engaged were according to her, also Christian. In Speaking of Indians she notes, “Personally, I have never had a

456 Deloria, Speaking, 18.
457 Ibid., 19.
458 Ibid., 57.
chance to question any but Christian Dakotas, except for one man who, though baptized, preferred to practice his religion in the pagan manner—meaning pagan as the opposite of the Christian and without any derogatory overtones." For Deloria, ceremonials such as the Sun Dance were a thing of the past, something to remember with a "tender reverence." As such, it is not surprising that when she attended a Sun Dance as part of the Rosebud Fair in either 1928 or 1929, she recorded it as a demonstration. It is clear from the voice of participants such as Frank Fools Crow that the Sun Dance held at the Rosebud Fair was the ritual, not a demonstration, in spite of the constraints. Deloria’s very brief description of the event that year occurs as a footnote to her translation of George Sword’s account given to J. R. Walker that was published as an article for *The Journal of American Folklore*.

Last summer, at the fair on the Rosebud, the old dancers asked for a clear day. The next morning, it was not warm and there were swift-moving clouds in the sky, and it looked as though before long a rain might follow. An old crier went around the circle, denouncing the evil ways of the young people and their disregard of the tribal beliefs, saying that on their account everything was changing, and the request for a blue day was denied. The demonstration was therefore postponed till the next day when the sky was perfect.

Were the event considered only a demonstration by the participants, it is unlikely that rain clouds would have given cause for the postponement. It is difficult to ascertain whether or not Deloria recognized the meaning of participation for those taking part in the “demonstration.” She certainly conducted interviews with many Lakota and Dakota

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460 Deloria, *Speaking*, 50.
461 Ibid., 50.
people. Was her sphere of interaction limited only to “Christian Indians?” Was she aware of what was going on and chose to withhold this information? Did her own identification as a Christian shape her interpretation? Whatever the case, it is clear that she had sustained engagement with information about the ritual as a result of her work for Boas.

When Franz Boas located Deloria at Haskell Indian College in 1927, his goal was to hire her to translate, verify the accuracy and edit the George Bushotter material and Stephen Rigg’s dictionary. 463 This project set the tone and parameters of a working relationship between the two that lasted until Boas’ death in 1942. Boas oversaw her work “showing her exactly what he wanted done by way of revision, rewriting, and translation of the texts.” 464 DeMallie frames their relationship as positive, noting it as “close” and quoting her as saying, “Next to my own father, you are the most truly Christian man I ever met.” 465 Deloria, Jr., however, attends to the power dynamics of the relationship. He notes that Deloria was always strapped for money as Boas provided no steady salary or security. She was reduced to selling her trust land in order to support her sister Susan, because the monies received from Boas were never enough on which to survive. 466 Contemporary scholar, Philip Deloria (Deloria Jr.’s son) remembers his great-aunts Ella and Susan living in their car. 467

The dynamics between the Deloria and Boas became strained over the tension that emerged as a result of their work on the James Walker collection of Lakota folklore

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465 Ibid., 234.
467 Deloria, Indians, 154.
gathered while he was a physician at the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation from 1896-1914. As seen in chapter two (2), during Walker’s work as a physician his path crossed with Lakota medicine men, to whom the Indian patients were more likely to turn. DeMallie notes it was “a desire to become a more effective physician” that motivated Walker to learn and record the traditional religion and culminated in the canonical text, *The Sun Dance and Other Ceremonies of the Oglala Division of the Teton Dakota.*

Deloria’s earliest work with the Walker collection involved her translation of the George Sword materials which had contributed significantly to the study. Her efforts in this regard were published in 1929 in *The Journal of American Folklore*. In 1937, Boas asked Deloria to verify the accuracy of the Walker material by conducting interviews with elders on the Pine Ridge and Rosebud reservations. It is clear that Boas was certain that Deloria *would* be able to confirm the authenticity of the stories and was quite dismayed when she could not. According to historian of religion, Lindsay Jones, “Despite continued checking, however, and despite the fact that many elements…did resonate with Indian audiences, Deloria most of all confirmed her initial suspicions that Walker’s ‘myths’ were loaded with features that appeared either twisted or completely unfamiliar to her indigenous contemporaries.” In correspondence between the two Deloria wrote to Boas, "I have tried my hardest to validate what Walker writes! And there's no Indian out here that will say it's true!" Boas responded, "It's there, you're not looking hard

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468 His work was published as *The Sun Dance and Other Ceremonies of the Oglala Division of the Teton Dakota*. Anthropological Papers of The American Museum of Natural History (Vol. XVI, Part II) in 1917.
enough, you're not looking hard enough.” 471 By 1938 Boas had become frustrated with Deloria’s inability to corroborate the information, “I do not know how serious an effort you have made to get the material I want… [O]n the whole I confess I am not well satisfied with what you got for me during the last few months.” 472

Many contemporary scholars include some reference to this exchange. Some argue that this remained a source of tension between the two throughout the remainder of their association. Others such as Godfrey relate the narrative to draw attention to the power differential in the Boas—Deloria relationship. 473 Cotera brings us to perhaps one of the most important aspects of the exchange as she examines “Deloria’s excitement over her findings” 474 when she initially reported to Boas her findings. “Deloria believed that she had uncovered information that would once and for all set the record straight as to the religious practices and mythology of the Sioux.” 475 Today scholars continue to obscure Deloria’s findings and neglect to ask what it might mean that the Sword materials “have often been presented as constituent elements of pre-colonial (‘purely’ indigenous and non-Christian) …Sioux oral tradition.” 476 In spite of Deloria’s work, today’s leading academics on the Sioux point to the materials as exemplary of Lakota thought and belief. 477 DeMallie and Jahner, who have contributed significantly to our understanding of the Walker text with their detailed attention to the original records, continue to attest to the work as valuable testaments of Lakota worldview. For DeMallie,

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472 Ella Deloria quoted in Hoefel, “Different by Degree, 7.
474 Cotera, Native Speakers, 222.
475 Ibid., 222.
Deloria’s inability to corroborate the material is evidence that the knowledge had indeed disappeared in only one generation. And Jahner has strongly argued that because the Lakota conventions of story-telling are apparent in the stories, they remain of considerable value as accurate reflections of Lakota belief.

Deloria’s work on the Sword material about the Sun Dance, published in The Journal of American Folklore, predated her fieldwork for Boas conducted beginning in 1937. It would perhaps provide a point of comparison with her other work that addressed the Sun Dance written after her fieldwork to corroborate the information. Yet, the article simply provides verbatim and free translation of the Sword materials. In other words, this is an example of what Larry Evers and Barre Toelken refer to as “that all-too-familiar division of labor: ‘you perform—we interpret’” characteristic of the Boasians.

Concluding Thoughts

Ella Deloria is representative of the first generation of Native peoples to be born on the reservation and she was a product of early assimilation projects—education and Christianity. In many ways Deloria was an assimilation success story. She was well-educated, worked with the leading academics of her time, and received public acclaims. But her life story demonstrates that she was still marginalized in many respects, in spite of her accomplishments.

In the contact zone, with the containment of Indian people achieved, there remained an “Indian problem,” as Indian people still were not adjusted and assimilated to

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478 Walker, Lakota Belief, 44.
479 This is the subject of an article by Elaine Jahner, “Transitional Narrative and Cultural Continuity,” boundary 2, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Autumn 1992), 148-179.
dominant culture in spite of intense efforts on the part of the government. The Meriam Commission represented a shift in governmentality. Shaped by a broader American positivist intellectual movement that privileged science and professionalization, new approaches were identified. The intent of the new approaches was to bring Indian people to a minimum standard of health and decency. Due in large part to the findings of the Meriam Commission, new legislation, the IRA, was introduced by John Collier.

The IRA stopped land allotments and provided a model for home rule on the reservation. But it was opposed on many fronts, in particular by many Indian people who proposed a return to traditional governance practices. The IRA was also problematic because it perpetuated the guardianship mentality of the U.S. government; the government still felt a ward duty to Indian tribes. In spite of the newly elected tribal government, the government via the Office of Indian Affairs maintained strict vigilance on the reservation through intense oversight, surveillance, and micromanagement. The effect on the Pine Ridge and Rosebud reservations was that a new layer of governmentality was put into place; one that pitted Native against Native.

As seen in the opening of this chapter, Deloria was self-conscious about her mission. She saw herself as a mediator between the general public and Indian people and as an interpreter of Indian culture. She functioned in multiple domains and chose a wide array of expressive forms to convey an Indian point of view. Critical to her endeavor was an effort to portray Indian people as human beings whose pre-contact culture was “a scheme of life that worked.” Not only did pre-contact Dakota culture present a viable, alternative cultural logic, it was clearly a culture that she found quite endearing.
Not only did Deloria work to interpret Dakota culture for the general American public, she also worked to interpret Indian culture for Indian people. Her work with the Lumbee is an example in this regard. Particularly through the use of pageantry, Deloria sought to represent and perform Indian culture in a way that identified and reinforced Lumbee identity.

The inability of Deloria to find a publisher for her two works, *The Dakota Way of Life* and *Waterlily*, is a blatant reminder of the dynamics of concealment at work in the contact zone. Although these texts have been recently recovered and published, the ways that contemporary scholars have engaged her work still render her analyses marginalized as there has yet to be a direct engagement with Deloria, the scholar. Particularly at issue is her work on the Sword materials, which if taken seriously would raise considerable questions about the content of his work. Rather, scholars for the most part have taken up Deloria as a case-in-point to discuss other contemporary issues such as the literary turn and feminism.

In the next chapter, I turn to the Medicine Men’s Association on the Rosebud Reservation, who were quite familiar with Deloria and her work. On one occasion they discuss her contribution to a study of the Lakota/Dakota language. The lives of these men overlapped that of Deloria in both time and place. These men were active, public

481 I own that I have ended up doing the same. As I finish the final editing of this dissertation, I realize that I did not once engage *Waterlily*, and the ways that Deloria represented the Sun Dance in this ethnographic fiction. This is an omission that I intend to rectify in future engagements.

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practitioners of Lakota religion and most were involved with the Sun Dance. This signals the way that Deloria herself marginalized, excluded, and/or misrecognized the continuity of a practice that, while she expressed a strong appreciation for it, she placed it firmly in the past.
Chapter 4:
The Medicine Men’s Association: To Work to a Better Understanding

Strategies of Social, Political, and Religious Activism

On the evening of February 27, 1973, members of the American Indian Movement (AIM) and a group of grassroots reservation activists (Oglala Sioux Civil Rights Organization) met at Calico Hall in Pine Ridge, South Dakota to discuss strategies for bringing change to the volatile political situation on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. This meeting may well have gone unnoticed had it not culminated in the decision to enter and occupy the hamlet at Wounded Knee, site of the infamous massacre that took place eighty-two years earlier. The occupation “received more attention during its first week than the entire previous decade of Indian activism combined,” it “completely penetrated the national consciousness.” Receiving the most national attention, this watershed event represents only one point in a constellation of “Indian” social, political, and religious activist endeavors characteristic of the era.

Two weeks prior to this meeting, one hundred miles away on the neighboring Rosebud Indian reservation, another meeting took place, representing a different approach toward social, political, and religious activism. Recently a group of medicine men had come together to form the Medicine Men’s Association (MMA). These men,

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their wives, and associates met regularly to discuss, with the hope of intervening in, a number of pressing community issues. The group was involved in several activities, not the least of which was a five-year-long dialogue, referred to as the Medicine Men and Pastors Meetings (MMPM). The participants met at least once a month with priests and their associates from the St. Francis Mission. Both groups agreed that the purpose of the dialogues was “to work to a better understanding.”

From the very first meeting it is clear that the priests and medicine men intended something very different when they talked about understanding. While the priests were concerned with understanding how God sent “his” message in different ways to different people, the medicine men were concerned with making the priests understand that their worldviews and practices were valuable.

Father William Stolzman, who chaired the MMPM, opened the very first meeting with the following explanation:

We are gathered here tonight to talk about the things of God. This is a holy assembly, and we want to speak about the holy things, which God has revealed to his people. God has spoken to all peoples throughout the history of the world. He has spoken to them in different ways…by further talk and discussion we will learn more about the truth and things that God has given to us. It is only by talking and sharing, that we really can come to understand the revelations that God has given to us…I would encourage the men tonight to be able to give to us what

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483 Recent work from Marquette University suggests a change in the title of this group from the Medicine Men and Pastors Meeting to the Medicine Men and Clergy Meetings. See Marquette University, “St. Francis Mission Records: Catholic Lakota Dakota Indians South Dakota, Scope and Content” in Special Collections and Archives (www.marquette.edu/library/collections/archives/Mss/SFM/SFMsc-mmcc.html) accessed 2/13/2010.

484 George Eagle Elk, “Transcripts from the Medicine Men and Pastor’s Meeting,” 13 Feb. 1973, T1, 5, Marquette University Archives, Milwaukee, WI.
they understand by the Holy Things of God, which God has given to his Indian people (emphasis added).  

Medicine man Arthur Running Horse seconded Stolzman’s appeal to understanding, but changed the meaning. Ben Black Bear, Jr. interpreted and summarized Running Horse’s speech. “So he expresses the fact that he is happy about this meeting; that from this meeting we can start to understand each other and that we could return with something concrete and significant.” Running Horse is clear; he expects that a “better understanding” will result in changes in the material, or lived reality of the Lakota.

The two meetings held that February in 1973, took place on reservations that were not only in close proximity to one another, but shared multiple familial relationships. They also shared a common history of colonial repression, the excesses of which continued to negatively impact the communities. The impulse to engage in social, political, and religious activism was shaped by a transformational historical moment. Perceptions about American Indians were changing on multiple registers: institutionally, in popular culture, and amongst Indian people. The meetings shared another similarity—they grounded their activist approach in a conceptual frame that located Lakota religious thought and practice at the center. Native theorist, Robert Warrior notes that what made Native political and social activism unique among its contemporaries (minority social movements of the 1970s) was its connection to Indian religion.  

The Sun Dance

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486 Seconding is a rhetorical strategy that affirms the narrator’s comments.
488 Warrior, Tribal Secrets, 39.
specifically was a particularly rich site and symbolic of this link. As a result of the opportunity provided by the moment and a renewed commitment to Native religion, participation in the practice exploded.

The group who met at Pine Ridge chose militant and often violent activism as their strategy. Warrior and Paul Chaat Smith note the “[t]wo faces of the Wounded Knee occupation, the sacred and profane, were present from the first moments of the takeover.” However, the group at Rosebud chose to tell their stories and it is clear that they felt this approach would result in practical and concrete changes within their community. Folklorist Joann Bromberg notes that “By telling personal stories we build our social identity; by exchanging or withholding our stories we manage our social relationships; and through story exchanges we construe and even change, society.” The contemporary emphasis on the activities of AIM obscures a long history of social, political, and religious activism, as well as, the alternative strategies deployed by Lakota people to evoke change.

Relatively little has been written about the MMPM. The transcripts of the dialogues provide a rich resource for examining Lakota religious thought and practice as more than forty different medicine men participated at some point during the five years of meetings. A number of the medicine men were elder and had performed the role of Lakota ritual specialist for many years. That there were this many experienced medicine men on the Rosebud reservation during the early-to-mid 1970s suggests that Lakota

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religious practices had a stronger presence in the Rosebud community than previously thought and that Lakota thought and practice, albeit repressed, had not been lost.

In this chapter I examine the transcripts from the MMPM with attention to the dialogic story-telling exchange between the medicine men and priests in order to reveal different approaches to political, social, and religious activism than those employed by AIM. In the first section, “Transformational Historical Moment,” I contextualize the dialogic strategy of political, social, and religious activism via attention to broad changes in approaches to Native Americans, which shaped the impulse to enter into dialogue. Shifting attitudes regarding Native peoples can be traced institutionally, in popular culture and amongst Indian peoples themselves. In the first sub-section, “Institutional Approaches: The Changing Mission of the Catholic Church,” I examine a paradigm shift in the Catholic mission directive, reflected by the Vatican II council. As a primary institution of colonization, the shifting attitude of the Catholic Church presented an important opening for Lakota activists. The second sub-section, “National Sentiments: History, Text, and Cinematic Portrayal” traces changes in approaches to history and examines the phenomenal popularity of texts about and cinematic portrayals of American Indians that both shaped and reflected a shifting national sentiment that was more sympathetic to American Indians. The third sub-section, “Native Sentiments: National and Local Perspectives” begins with a survey of the renewed sense of Native pride and the value of Native culture as expressed by Native scholars such as N. Scott Momaday and Vine Deloria, Jr. that emerged, in part, in response to the growing awareness about the effects of colonialism on the minds of the repressed. I further examine the ways that
the Native participants in the MMPM understood that many of members of their Lakota community were colonized and the steps that they took to challenge colonized thinking.

In the second half of this chapter I specifically examine the MMPM as a case study to think about the different sorts of political, social, and religious activism reflected by the storytelling exchanges during the dialogues. Transcripts from the meetings provide a rich overview of Lakota thought and practice at this historical moment. I begin with a brief introduction to the primary and notable participants in the MMPM. Then, I focus on the “Challenges of the MMPM Transcripts” where I discuss the messy and complicated aspects of translation, interpretation and transcription in regards to working with the archives from the MMPM. In the last section, “Considering Aspects of Story Exchanges,” I begin by situating the storytelling efforts of the members of the MMA within a Native context. Then I consider three prominent and recurring aspects of storytelling exchanges during the five years of meetings. These include: 1) story-telling as social commentary, 2) resistance expressed in exchanges, and 3) the emphasis on experience.

**Transformational Historical Moment**

Within the context of the civil rights movement, anti-Vietnam war sentiment, and emergent counter-culture issues such as the environment, the public imaginary was reintroduced to the “Indian” and public sentiment was reinvigorated with a more sympathetic regard for American Indians. This change registered in multiple domains, but in this section I’ll focus on examples from three primary sites: institutional, popular culture, and among Native people. One example of changing institutional approaches is
reflected in the policies brought about by Vatican II, which created a climate wherein tensions between the Catholic Church and practitioners of Lakota religion might be resolved and Christian-Indian relations might be reframed. In the domain of the public culture, the success of Native books such as *Black Elk Speaks* and the popularity of films such as *A Man Called Horse* reflected the sudden explosion of interest in Indian culture and peoples. In the third domain, Indian public sentiment was shifting as well. Vine Deloria’s famous call in 1969 for Indian people to return to Indian religion, signaled a reinvigorated pride in Indian identity and cultural practices.\(^492\)

On the local level—at the Pine Ridge and Rosebud reservations—poverty, alcoholism, and violence, were just a few of the material consequences of more than a century of colonial intervention and repression. Political analyst, Frantz Fanon, provides helpful insights into the colonial tactic of creating the “native bourgeoisie,”\(^493\) a process whereby native thought is assimilated to such an extent that the Native continues to carry out the colonial agenda. Medicine men and practitioners of Lakota religion had sustained a challenge to those in power by continuing practices such as the Sun Dance and resisting the constraints on their practice imposed first by the colonial power of the U.S. and later continued by members of their own community. Within a broader climate more sympathetic to Native peoples, an opening for change was beginning to be felt. The medicine men participating in the MMPM were astutely aware of the shifting climate and quite savvy about the possibilities for local change, which was required on two fronts—the colonial oppressor and the colonial oppressed. One site that seemed to hold potential

\(^{492}\) Deloria, Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins*, 119.

for change was in their relationship with Christian ritual leaders, in particular representatives of the Catholic Church.

**Institutional Approaches: Changing Mission of the Catholic Church**

At the time of the first MMPM, the Catholic Church had maintained an active presence on the Rosebud and Pine Ridge Reservations for ninety years. Initial establishment had not been an easy task as Catholic missionaries were banned from the agency under President Grant’s Peace policy in the 1870s. In part, due to the pressure exerted by Sinte Gleska, Chief Spotted Tail, President Rutherford B. Hayes eventually lifted the ban. In an 1877 meeting with the President, Sinte Gleska is reported to have said:

> I would like to say something about a teacher. My children, all of them, would like to learn how to talk English. They would like to learn how to read and write. We have teachers there, but all they teach us is to talk Lakota, and to write Lakota, and that is not necessary. I would like to get Catholic priests. Those who wear black dresses. These men will teach us how to read and write English.

The Peace Policy was repealed in 1882 and by 1885 the first Catholic mission building was constructed. Within a year the St. Francis Mission School was in operation and the Society of Jesuits was involved in the project of “civilizing” Lakota.

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494 Grant’s post-Civil War peace policy was extended to the treatment of Native Americans. The approach differed from previous policies of direct colonialism in that the idea was to convince Native of their dependency on the U.S. government. The paternalistic approach was considered a shift in dealing with the Indian problem. The ban on Catholic presence on the reservation reflected a bias that favored protestant reform. For more on this aspect of the peace policy see, Harvey Markowitz, “The Catholic Mission and the Sioux: A Crisis in the Early Paradigm,” *Sioux Indian Religion*, eds. Raymond DeMallie and Douglas Parks. (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 113-137.

Anthropologist Harvey Markowitz argues that understanding the Catholic mission is critical to any meaningful comprehension of the history of Native and Catholic relations.\textsuperscript{496} The early mission efforts were shaped by a directive to help Indian peoples advance according to a developmental model of social Darwinism. “From the day of their arrival these religious rigorously pressed forward the government’s assimilationist policies. They hoped that by following a stringent regimen the Oglalas and Brules could be advanced from ‘savagery’ to ‘civilization’ in one or two generations\textsuperscript{497} via a process of “cultural replacement.”\textsuperscript{498} Fr. Robert Hilbert, S.J., who first arrived on the Rosebud reservation in 1973 when the first MMPM began, notes that “when Saint Francis Mission was founded, it was common in missionary circles to speak of ‘Christianizing and civilizing’ non-European peoples.”\textsuperscript{499} Lakota belief and practice was viewed as “in opposition to Christianity.”\textsuperscript{500}

The experience of Lakota people, resulting from the mission directive, was told in a number of stories offered by the medicine men during the meetings. Henry Crow Dog recalled that he tried to learn about Catholicism, but was driven away because of his involvement with peyote and the Native American church. One winter evening in 1934 while camped outside of Saint Francis, Crow Dog and another Lakota singer were in camp drumming and singing Lakota songs in an effort to doctor Crow Dog’s two-year-old son, who was sick at the time. Missionaries thought Crow Dog was having a peyote

\textsuperscript{496} Markowitz, “The Catholic Mission and the Sioux,” 121.
\textsuperscript{497} Ibid., 121.
\textsuperscript{498} Ibid., 122.
\textsuperscript{500} Ibid., 143.
meeting and sent the tribal police to arrest him. Driven from town, Crow Dog tried to make it to his allotment. Mary Gertrude, Crow Dog’s wife recalled the night in great detail.

So Henry packed up. He took down the tent that was our home and fixed up the wagon, hitched up his team. He loaded up everything we owned and put us all in the wagon. There was a blizzard. You couldn’t see your hand before your eyes. And it was so cold! So Henry drove the team all the way to our allotment, with the snow and icy wind in his face. It was dark and you couldn’t see. The horses were all iced over. There was hardly any road. It was slow going. And somewhere between Saint Francis and our land, our little boy died.  

To add insult to injury, priests then refused to bury the infant, Earl Edward, in the church cemetery, which “was for ‘good Christians only.’”  

Forty years later, the wound was still fresh for Crow Dog when he spoke at one of the early MMPMs.

I was beginning to go to Holy Communion and pray to the Great Spirit, in Christ in that big church in St. Francis. About that time I was ordered to get off St. Francis grounds because I am a peyote man. At the same time I had [a] sick child and had to go to one of the Catholic houses but the roads were all blocked and so I took my baby home and he died there; after that I quit the Catholic Church and no more.  

Another medicine man recalled an incident from 1929. He joined the church and was an altar boy. He thought he had a good relationship with one priest in particular, Father Gall, and recalled that they had talked and laughed together. One Sunday a group

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502 Ibid.
of people entered the church late and Father Gall motioned to him to get a bench for the group. As the group went to sit they knocked over the bench, which made a loud noise when it hit the ground interrupting the service. “Fr. Gall came up and slapped me across the face and told me that I wasn’t to interrupt him in his worship.” The humiliation of the episode was still felt four decades later and the speaker suggested that the incident resulted in lowered attendance at the church.

To this day I never forget that incident. A holy man, the Father who handles the body of Christ or whatever, slapped me across the face on account of the bench falling down. After that the Holy Family church was closed and nobody went there. It is still closed. That is one experience in my life that I will never forget, when I see a father then I am scared of them. I don’t want nothing to do with them. Now I am getting over it and that is why I am here. [sic]

For some, such as Crow Dog and the unknown speaker above, negative experiences with Catholic ritual specialists caused them to break ties with the church.

At one point during the meetings Stolzman justified the Catholic approach as he remarked that this sort of treatment was directed by God.

At the turn of the century, 75 years ago the Lord directed the Missionaries to be quite stern and quite hard on the people to bring them closer to the Catholic practices…there was a lot of fighting and a lot of turmoil and there are the struggles back and forth, Wounded Knee, Ghost Dance and especially the Sundance, formation of the Yuwipi ceremonies, all of those happened at the end of the last century, the late 1800’s. There was a very dark time.

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This incident occurred in 1929, see Unknown, “Transcripts,” 20 October, 1973, T3, 10.
Ibid.
However, the majority of medicine men, such as Charles Kills Enemy, continued to associate with the church in spite of such episodes and most identified themselves as both Catholic and medicine men. Kills Enemy, who was baptized in both the Episcopal and Catholic churches, frequently told the story of his excommunication from the Catholic Church. As a young man he had married in the church and after that marriage failed, he met and lived with another woman. According to the church this co-habitation amounted to living in sin and Kills Enemy was excommunicated. Twenty-five years later, when his first wife died, he was finally able to marry the women he had been living with for all of those years and was welcomed back into the church.

My belief is that I am a Catholic and I don’t know how good a Catholic I am, but I try to be a good Catholic and I was excommunicated for twenty-five years but still I go to church and stay right there in my church. I didn’t pout or anything and I didn’t go away. I stayed right in my church. Prayed with the pipe and also took peyote. I go [to] that Native American church too … Now today I have a wife, we got married in church by Fr. Jones.”

For most of the Lakota ritual specialists, the Catholic Church and Lakota religion were not in opposition. Rather, the similarities between the two were such that aspects of Catholicism could be incorporated into Lakota ritual practices. Translating for his father, Ben Black Bear, Jr. noted:

The Indians before Christ prayed to God. After the coming of the Christians, the priests; their teachings were accepted into the Lakota religion as evidence into the Sun Dance. The Sun Dance symbolism, for instance they have a cross

508 This is similar to the author’s findings regarding participants of Aztec dance, who focused on the agentive aspect of cultural syncretism under colonialism rather than the victimization. See, Sandra Garner, “Aztec Dance, Transnational Movements: Conquest of a Different Sort,” *Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 122, No. 486, (October 2009), pp. 414-437.
and they put up a sacred pole and the cross. The pole symbolized the cross...he said that he is not comparing one religion against another but rather taking them both. As being true...the peace of the Catholic Church is that they accept it in the Indian way.  

Hilbert recalls that the mission directive of the Catholic Church was undergoing “a major change” during the 1960s and 1970s and cited the MMPM as evidence of this change as priests sought to understand rather than condemn Lakota religious practices. Hilbert observes two aspects of the Church’s changing mission. First there was a growing recognition of the validity of non-Catholic, non-Western religious expressions. Second there were growing concerns regarding issues of social justice. The changing mission was both reflected in and propelled by the recent Vatican II declarations (1962-1965).

Scholar of religion Nancy Ring argues that the Vatican II council represented a “paradigm shift.” This paradigm shift reflected the cultural turn and was attentive to historicity. Ring observes that the documents of the council “are marked by a sense of historicity,” similarly Hilbert notes there was the growing recognition of “the profundity of cultural formation in people.” A focus on understanding the diversity and pluralism of religious experience among various cultural groups situated in particular historical contexts were two important characteristics of Vatican II.

Rings writes that one of the most far-reaching effects of Vatican II was the emergence of liberation theology where concern was not limited to souls, but included

510 Hilbert, “Contemporary Catholic Mission Work Among the Sioux,” 143.
512 Hilbert, “Contemporary Catholic Mission Work Among the Sioux,” 142.
attentiveness to the “material welfare of its members” as well.\textsuperscript{513} According to Hilbert, there was a growing awareness regarding institutional injustice and the role of the church as an institutional structure that had perpetuated injustice. As such there was a greater emphasis on issues of social justice.\textsuperscript{514} This focus prompted a reassessment of the Catholic mission on the Rosebud reservation. What was the sentiment of Indian people toward the church? Had the church been successful in its mission?

During the earlier paradigm, most missionary efforts were considered unsuccessful in their attempts “to replace Sioux cultural and religious traditions with the institutions of Euro-American society and Catholicism.”\textsuperscript{515} Blame for this failure was often attributed to representatives of the U.S. government, who were perceived as hindering the efforts of the Church rather than the Lakota themselves, what Markowitz calls “an irony of monumental proportions.”\textsuperscript{516} Not only were battles waged over mission school funding, but church personnel also perceived the government as “lax in pressing forward the process of cultural replacement.”\textsuperscript{517} Take for example Fr. Digmann’s response regarding the Fourth of July celebrations instituted by Commissioner Morgan during the late 1800s.

In olden times the Indian used to have their sundance with all its cruelties and superstitious practices at the time of the summer solstice. For the non-progressive Indian the order of the Commissioner proved only an invitation to fall back into their old habits. The Omaha war dance, sham battles, the give-away of property on a large scale revived and increased so, that a progressive mixed blood made the

\textsuperscript{513} Ring, “Vatican Councils: Vatican II [Further Considerations],” 9540.
\textsuperscript{514} Hilbert, “Contemporary Catholic Mission Work Among the Sioux,” 142.
\textsuperscript{515} Markowitz, “The Catholic Mission and the Sioux,” 136.
\textsuperscript{516} Ibid., 133.
\textsuperscript{517} Ibid., 135.
remark: “We need only the sundance and we have it all back.”

Nearly one hundred years later, priests perceived the Lakota as “generally indifferent to us and to our apostolic efforts.” When asked by Bishop Harold Dimmerling to articulate how the priests felt they were perceived by Indian people, the priests expressed some of the following opinions. First, the people felt the priests were “incompetent” in regards to bringing meaning to their lives. Second, they felt that they were perceived as “inadequate” to bringing real solutions to the people as their focus had been on acculturation. Third, the people felt they needed a “positive theological ministry based upon their culture.” Basically the priests felt that they were “viewed as somewhat harmless rather than positively helpful or harmful.”

It is clear that the paradigm shift evidenced in Vatican II opened the door and motivated the dialogues that took place in the MMPMs. Stolzman noted the impact of Vatican II in his book, *The Pipe and Christ: A Christian-Sioux Dialogue*. He and other Priests, such as Paul Steinmetz, took advantage of the occasion. Because of the open attitude they participated in numerous Lakota rituals including Sun Dance, sweat lodges, and yuwipi ceremonies and they wrote books that sought to explain the way that the word of God was brought to the Lakota people. The Lakota participants were equally aware of the changing climate. During the second meeting of the group Ben Black Bear, Jr. noted that prior to attending the meeting he had just read the Vatican decree. “I was just

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518 Ibid., 135.
519 Hilbert, “Contemporary Catholic Mission Work Among the Sioux,” 140.
520 Hilbert, “Contemporary Catholic Mission Work Among the Sioux,” 140.
looking at the Vatican decree on Vatican activity and it speaks of us proclaiming the
gospel message to all men. That is good news; the good news of salvation to all men.”
It was within this changing climate that the medicine men and their associates chose to
undertake the series of discussions with the priests at the St. Francis Mission.

*National Sentiments: History, Text, and Cinematic Portrayal*

During the 1960s there was a growing disenchantment with hegemonic U.S.
policy and culture. As counter-culture movements gained momentum in civil rights and
opposition to the Vietnam War gained momentum, concern also began to crystallize
regarding environmental issues and unresolved poverty and violence in U.S. urban
areas. Historians, such as David Edmunds, argue that the “American public expressed
renewed interest in American Indians” as a result of this climate. The early activities
of AIM had drawn attention to the abysmal living conditions of many Indian people, and
parallels were drawn between the imperialistic activities of the U.S. toward Indians and
the situation in Vietnam. Indian people were living predominantly in rural America and
they became a “safe minority” with whom the American public could connect. Indian
relationships to the land and nature made them symbols for environmental activism as
seen in the famous “Keep America Beautiful” public service campaign, which first aired

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523 A number of historians discuss these counter-culture initiatives and how they impacted public
perception of Native Americans. See for example: Dave Edmunds, “Indians in the Mainstream: Indian
American Historical Review*, Vol. 100, No. 3 (June 1995), pp. 723-726; and Donald L. Parman and
Catherine Price, “A ‘Work in Progress’: The Emergences of Indian History as a Professional Field,” *The
525 Ibid., 244.
in 1971 to usher in Earth Day. The principal characteristic of the increased fascination was a new found sympathy for the Indian.

One arena where the interest in American Indians was reflected was in the emergence of American Indian studies programs and in the academic discipline of American Indian history. In a 1995 article, Edmunds observes that the dearth of research in this field can be traced through the publishing history of the journal American Historical Review. During the first ten years of publication there was not a single article published in the journal about American Indian history and from 1920-1960 there were only four articles that referenced Native Americans. Characteristic of approaches at the time, Native peoples were treated as peripheral objects while whites were the primary actors.

A major paradigm shift occurred in the 1950s with the emergence of the newly accepted methodology of ethno-history. Similar to the shifts reflected in Vatican II, ethno-history reflected a shift that was characterized by a concern for the “distinction of culture and the study of it as a part of history.” Ethno-history as a field and methodology worked to synthesize the attention to culture, a domain of anthropology, with the methodological skills employed by historians. Edmunds notes that this change was significant as it was attentive to Native viewpoint, and focused on issues of continuity/resilience and adaptation in Native culture. Opening American history to an

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527 Native historian Don Fixico notes that Native American history was neglected for at least a century. See, Don Fixico “Ethics and Responsibilities in Writing American Indian History,” American Indian Quarterly, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Winter 1996), 30.
“Indian-centered perspective” inspired a flood of revisionist history, which promised to create “a wider basis of truth” for understanding the past of American history. The medicine men participating in the MMPM were well aware of these shifts. In the first meeting Moses Big Crow noted: “I’m in this bilingual—sharing my language, my culture, my religion, and the history what is being revived by historians all over the United States. I have made this stand at Vermillion, that I am willing to share these with any non-Indian so that there be a better understanding amongst us—better relations.”

The new focus, which incorporated Native perspectives, circulated widely in popular culture. Dee Brown’s revisionist history, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, was second on the New York Times nonfiction best sellers list for the entire year of 1971. Reflecting on the era, Hampton Sides writes in his preface to the 2007 illustrated edition of the book: “Then something odd happened, some unforeseen kismet, some magical alignment in the culture. *Bury My Heart* touched a raw nerve and became a surprise national bestseller.” Pointing to the parallels between the Vietnam War and the history of Native and non-Native relations, Sides continues, “The book proved to be nothing less than a publishing phenomenon…It went on to sell nearly five million copies and was translated into more than a dozen languages. But the book’s triumphant stats alone don’t begin to suggest the high-voltage shock it gave—and continues to give—the national

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532 At the time of its release, the book came under harsh academic criticism as being biased toward Indian perspectives and for improper citation, See for example a review of the book from, Francis Paul Prucha, “Review,” *American Historical Review*, Vol. 77 (April 1972), 589-590.

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identity. With this book, Dee Brown threw a switch, and suddenly all the emotional valences of American’s creation story had been reversed.”

*Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* paved the way for the popular success of other texts. *Black Elk Speaks*, whose appeal was an Indian perspective on Native religion, was also hugely popular. First published in 1932, it was 1961 before *Black Elk Speaks* was first republished. From initial publication until 1979 approximately 350,000 copies were sold. However, from 1979 until its republication in 1980 over one million copies were sold. In the transcripts it is clear that the clergy and medicine men are familiar with both the popularity and content of these texts, in particular, *Black Elk Speaks*. Stolzman frequently draws on the text as verification of his interpretation of Lakota religion. And, medicine men, such as Bill Schweigman and John “Fire” Lame Deer, claim to have read the text. Schweigman, who states “I have read the book many times,” used the shared knowledge of the content of *Black Elk Speaks* to clarify a point he makes about “red power.”

Among the surge of texts featuring Native Americans, was the republication of a short story originally published in *Colliers* magazine in 1950. Written by Dorothy Johnson, *A Man Called Horse* was republished in 1968 as part of a collection of short stories titled *Indian Country*. In the story, the protagonist, who is unnamed, is a young man whose life was one of privilege and comfort growing up in New England. Disenchanted and discontent with his life he goes west into the frontier in 1845. Johnson

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534 The point Schweigman makes it that “we all have red blood.” Bill Schweigman, “Transcripts,” 28 September, 1974, T10, 10.
writes, “He had the idea that in Indian country, where there was danger, all white men were kings, and he wanted to be one of them.”

During the adventure while he is bathing in a creek, his party is attacked by Crow warriors. The rest of his party is killed and the young man from Boston is captured. The story is a quest narrative, where captivity is the challenge to be overcome so the young man can mature into the heteronormative ideal. Horse, the name the man gives himself, is a metaphor for the ideal qualities that are upheld. “[A]nger was an emotion …he could not afford.”

The horse was “a docile bearer of burdens, careful and patient.” By the end of the story he has become a man. “He could afford to wait, for he was young. He could afford to be magnanimous, for he knew he was a man.”

The Crow Indians are accouterment to the story and are portrayed unsympathetically. They stank, were easily amused, cruel; Horse calls them heathens and savages.

* A Man Called Horse was the product of an earlier worldview about American Indian people. Johnson’s short story and may have easily fallen into obscurity had it not captured the attention of Hollywood and turned into the motion picture, *A Man Called Horse*. Reconfigured to reflect the current sympathetic popular perception of Native peoples, the film, released in 1970, became a huge box office success. The film was praised on three counts: its authenticity, the use of “real” Indians as actors, and its


536 Ibid.

537 Ibid., 2.

538 Ibid., 6.

539 Ibid., 4.

540 Scholars such as Edmonds point to the success of the film as symbolic and reflective of the shifting public sentiments about Indians.
humanized portrayal of Indian people.\textsuperscript{541} The opening scene of the film announces its legitimacy as authentic by crediting the American Museum of Natural History, the Library of Congress, and the Smithsonian. The rolling words on the screen proclaim that the representations offered in the film are documented in the letters and painting of “George Catlin, Carl Bodner and other eye witnesses of the period.”\textsuperscript{542} Reviewers of the film reinforced the notion of authenticity; Stephen Farber wrote in \textit{Film Quarterly} that the film was “almost an anthropological document.”\textsuperscript{543} John Cole wrote in his review in \textit{American Anthropologist}, that the film was “exceptional in its generally accurate depiction of Plains Indian life.”\textsuperscript{544} He went on to note that the Indian dialogue was actually the real Siouan language rather than “Tonto-pidgin” and that the clothing, material culture, social relationships and rituals were all authentic.\textsuperscript{545}

One of the appeals of the film was the use of Native peoples as actors. Over five hundred Sioux provided the tribal backdrop of the film.\textsuperscript{546} The use of actors from the reservation, who spoke their Native language, was another marker of authenticity. The closing credits name a handful of these actors, twelve to be exact, \textit{all} from the Rosebud Sioux Indian Reservation. While the remaining 488 Lakota are unnamed, it is clear that the significant use of actors from the reservation was well-known among the people on

\textsuperscript{541} Each of these praises is challenged in the contemporary setting. See for example a survey of the critiques, Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, \textit{Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media}, (London, Routledge, 1994), 194-195.
\textsuperscript{542} This is the opening credit of the film. \textit{A Man Called Horse}, dir. Elliot Silverstein, Paramount presents a Cinema Center Film, CA: 1970, video recording.
\textsuperscript{545} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{546} Dan Georgakas, “They Have Not Spoken: American Indians in Film,” \textit{Film Quarterly}, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Spring 1972), 26.
Rosebud and is still referenced today whenever the movie is discussed.\textsuperscript{547} One of the actors mentioned by name is Ben Black Bear, a regular attendee and contributor at the MMPM.

Almost every review from the period notes that the Indian characters in the film are portrayed in a more sympathetic light. Cole noted that, “The result is a view of Indians who are human beings with organized, well-rounded lives and individual personalities, strengths, and weaknesses.”\textsuperscript{548} Ethno-historian John A. Price noted that films such as \textit{A Man Called Horse} were important because “they are breaking down the traditional film stereotypes of Indians” in their sympathetic and authentic portrayal.\textsuperscript{549} He reminds the reader that this function is significant because “hundreds of millions of people the world over have acquired their beliefs about North American Indians through motion pictures.”\textsuperscript{550}

The film version of Johnson’s short story was highly praised and so successful that two sequels quickly followed, \textit{The Return of a Man Called Horse} (1976) and \textit{Triumphs of a Man Called Horse} (1983). At “the dramatic center of the film”\textsuperscript{551} was the vivid portrayal of a sun ritual that was misrepresented as a Sun Dance. “[T]he impressive Sun Dance ceremony is a central plot element,” noted film critic Dan Georgakas.\textsuperscript{552}

Promotional material for the film featured a still shot of the protagonist Horse, hanging

\textsuperscript{547} For example in a phone conversation with Gilly Running, he even remembered the specific scenes where Black Bear was present and the songs that were sung. Gilly Running, interview by author, March 2010, phone conversation.
\textsuperscript{548} Cole, “Reviewed Works: \textit{A Man Called Horse} by Sandy Howard,” 960.
\textsuperscript{550} Ibid., 154.
\textsuperscript{551} Cole, “Reviewed Works: \textit{A Man Called Horse} by Sandy Howard,” 960.
\textsuperscript{552} Georgakas, “They Have Not Spoken,” 26.
approximately four feet off the ground as part of this ritual. Pierced through his chest by eagle claws, bone pegs are inserted, ropes are attached and Horse, played by actor Richard Harris, is pulled up and off the ground. The ritual setting is an enclosed structure creating a darkened space with the exception of a hole in the center of the ceiling. The ritual takes place as the sun reaches its zenith directly overhead. The gruesome promotional poster shows the skin stretched almost to its breaking point and Horse in complete submission, the brilliant sun shining down, illuminating him against the dark background. Evoking a mixed sense of disgust and admiration, the most famous scene from the film was not even a part of the original story by Johnson. Although many reviews noted that the sun vow ceremony was Mandan, not Lakota, the conflation of the two distinct tribes as Siouan, did not detract from claims of authenticity.

Native Sentiments: National and Local Perspectives

While the public imaginary about Native peoples reflected broad intellectual shifts attentive to historicity and cultural relevance, up-and-coming Native voices that appealed to a new emergent sense of Native pride were also circulating widely. One recurring characteristic expressed by these voices was an emphasis on Native religion and cultural practices as central to Native identity and survival. In 1969, Kiowa writer N. Scott Momaday became the first Native American to win the Pulitzer Prize in Fiction for "Iron Eyes" Cody, the actor who plays the medicine man who pierces Harris is the same person who played the famous environmental "crying" Indian. There has been considerable controversy regarding Cody's identity. Famous for playing Indian parts, Cody claimed that he was a Cherokee descendant, but others noted he was an Italian-American. See chapter 5 for a discussion of disgust.

Note that it is not until decades later that detailed critiques such as that offered by Shohat and Stam note the process of "ethnic syncretism" that takes place in the film. Hairstyles come from a variety of tribes, the tipi uses Crow symbology and the Sun vow of the Mandan is quite different from the Sun Dance of the Lakota. See Shohat and Stam, Unthinking Eurocentrism, 194.
his work *House Made of Dawn*, which is often cited as sparking a renaissance in Native literature. Momaday’s contribution is significant not only because he was recipient of this coveted award, but also because the narrative trope he deployed became a model for future Native authors. The story focuses on the protagonist Abel, who returns from World War II traumatized. He is no longer able to feel at home in his community and is eventually jailed for stabbing another man. Upon release from jail Abel travels to Los Angeles where he is also unable to adjust and falls into drunken despair. It is only after he is sung over by his people’s night chant and returns home to care for his dying grandfather, where he returns to his traditional practices, that Abel begins to heal. Since the success of *House Made of Dawn*, the return to Native religious and cultural practices has become a characteristic trope of Native American literature.

A similar sentiment was expressed by Native scholar Vine Deloria, Jr. In his 1969 groundbreaking and seminal work *Custer Died for Your Sins* he wrote, “Indian religion appears to many of us as the only ultimate salvation for the Indian people.” For Deloria, perhaps the most important contribution of the turbulent era of social movements in the 1960s and 1970s was the recuperation of Native traditional religion and customs. While Deloria offered a strong critique of the impacts of colonization, particularly in regards to knowledge production (anthropology) and Christianization, he also offered a critique of Indian peoples who suffered from a colonized mind, referring to the beliefs and practices of assimilated Natives. This was an important concern of the

558 Deloria, Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins*, 119.
medicine men participating in the MMPM. It is clear from the archives that the Lakota participants were not only concerned with changing the attitude of the Catholic clergy, but perhaps more importantly, they were concerned with changing the attitudes of members within their community. They clearly understood the effects of colonialism on their own people, many of whom had assimilated to some extent, were in positions of power, and perpetuated the colonial agenda. They actively challenged this, via their continued practice of Lakota ritual, for decades and the Sun Dance is one site in particular where these challenges took place.

The Work of Colonization

During the MMPM several medicine men, such as Wallace Black Elk and Leonard Crow Dog, made references suggesting that there are several sorts of Indian people on the reservation. At a meeting in 1975 after Black Elk talks about four sorts of Indians, an unknown Native speaker exclaimed, “...like Wallace said, that there are four kinds of Indian, there are full bloods, the half breeds, the surplus Indian, and the bureaucratic Indian. Which one of these kinds of Indians is going to be the one that’s going to show us the Indian way of life?”\(^{559}\) Black Elk understood that many of his people suffered from a colonized mind, although he would not articulate it as such. He noted that, “When they took my people into school at Carlisle, those of my people that went there, they didn’t come out the same way that they went into that school.”\(^ {560}\) During the meetings another speaker, Oren, clearly described the colonized mind as he talked about his experiences growing up.

\(^{559}\) Ibid.

…this is the way my parents brought me up and they are Indian so I was brought the Indian way. The problem here, and again I might be wrong. But take for example my parents, I could say I was brought up by white parents but I could say I was brought up the Indian way. My parents have been conditioned to think the white way, what I call the white way…So, I could say I was brought up in the true Lakota way but I would be wrong because my parents don’t really know how the old Lakotas were…I’m thinking this is kind of a problem that we are experiencing right now, that I’m experiencing right now.  

In his autobiography, John “Fire” Lame Deer offered an astute observation about the work of colonialism. “Some tribal cops are mean half-bloods. They can’t beat the white man, so they beat the Indian, the bottom guy. It makes them feel like somebody.” Fr. Hilbert observed another ramification of colonialism on the minds of the people, the lack of self-esteem. He noted that “the way that they looked down on themselves” pained him very much. He went on to relate an exchange with a six-year-old boy who asked to borrow a book with pictures so he could draw pictures from the book. When Hilbert gave him a book with pictures of Indians, the boy rejected the book saying, “I don’t like that one because Indians are no good.” Hilbert goes on to relate that it took several conversations for the young boy to consider being Indian as a source of pride. For Hilbert this situation reflected a much larger concern. Discussing the notion of invigorating Native pride amongst the Lakota he noted that with high school students it

564 Ibid.
“seemed almost impossible. With the adult people I have talked to it seems very much impossible.”

It is clear from the transcripts and other sources that the medicine men felt caught betwixt and between. Not only had they experienced the constraints and effects of colonialism from dominant institutional structures such as the church, they also felt that they were frequently looked down upon by their own people. George Eagle Elk related one instance at a doctoring ceremony for a young man whose father, a non-believer showed up. “I went there [and] they said he [the father] was talking about these ceremonies, bad things. He was saying that there was nothing such as these things that was sacred. And he said I didn’t have any vision.” On another occasion Moses Big Crow pointed to a specific community, “[in] Parmelee, they do not think much of our Indian religion, they think they are white people…that is why Art never has a ceremony in town. Rudy is there but I do not think he has ceremonies there. George is the only one who does I think…he doesn’t care.”

In his book, Black Elk: The Sacred Ways of the Lakota, Black Elk (Wallace) observed:

So if you go to the Rosebud Reservation today, you’ll find eight thousand of us that look like me. But there are only forty-seven families that are real, are traditional. The others look like Indians, and they call themselves Indians, too…They talk about these powers like they knew all about them, but they never went to a stone-people-lodge. They never went to a vision quest, and they never went to a Chanunpa ceremony. In fact, they really don’t believe

565 Ibid.
about these powers because they are Christians. So they denounced their own language, and they think these powers are devil’s work.\textsuperscript{568}

Because of the effects of colonization on the people, the medicine men expressed a particular distrust of the elected officials of the tribal council and opposed various tribal initiatives. One such issue came to a head in 1974 regarding a council resolution to take over the local college, Sinte Gleska. The MMA had just received notice that the official charter of the organization had been accepted on September 8\textsuperscript{th} and their first order of business was to pass their own resolution opposing the council’s efforts to take over the college. Running Horse met with then tribal president Robert Burnette to express the group’s dissatisfaction and Burnette told him that he was not to blame, but rather it was a tribal committee that made the decision. At the next meeting of the MMPM, Running Horse commented on the situation. “What are these committees that speak for all the people on the Rosebud Reservation? We don’t know what that council is doing down there. First, the only reason most of us know it is because it was in the \textit{Todd County Tribune} [the local newspaper]…this committee must be pretty powerful to think for us people. Here in St. Francis we got four councilmens [sic]. We don’t even know what’s going on.”\textsuperscript{569} Burnette asked Running Horse to get a copy of the resolution to him as soon as possible. Running Horse concluded his tirade with a humorous critique of the chairman and the tribal system. He noted that when he asked him (Burnette) why he was away from the office so much, Burnette responded that his trips brought a lot of money to


\textsuperscript{569} Running Horse, “Transcripts,” 10 February, 1974, T11, 2.

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the tribe. Running Horse quipped, “So maybe we should all quit this meeting and go
down there and ask for some of that money,” drawing laughter from the group.570

The medicine men were equally distrustful of AIM, in spite of AIM’s association
with one of their members, Leonard Crow Dog, and its association with venerated
medicine man Frank Fools Crow. During the early years of the meeting, members such
as Lame Deer referred to the members as being “lost.”571 One issue was the strategy of
violence utilized by AIM. Charlie Kills Enemy noted that the pipe was to be used “for
health happiness and peace. That’s all, no violence. That AIM they’re using it for
violence now. I don’t believe in that.”572 Another related issue articulated by Big Crow
was that the members of AIM did not really understand the Lakota religion and were
misinforming people. “[T]hey are going to our schools and telling them about this peace
pipe—that it is powerful. You don’t have to go to school; you don’t have to obey the
law. The policemen, they are pigs. So I traveled to Marty, Vermillion, Mr. Kills Enemy
and I went to Omaha to explain the peace pipe—what it stands for. That it’s not to be
used in a militant way.”573 In addition to the conversational strategies employed by the
medicine men through their association, they also actively fought against the constraints
imposed by their own people through ritual practice.

Decolonizing the Colonized: Performative Challenges

570 Ibid.
573 Big Crow, “Transcripts,” 13 February 1973, T1, 6. In spite of the medicine men’s vocal opposition to
AIM, they did not turn their backs on their community member Crow Dog, when he was later tried,
convicted, and imprisoned for his role in the Wounded Knee takeover.
The continued practice of Lakota ritual, in spite of the majority sentiment on the 
reservation was one way that the medicine men challenged the constraints imposed by 
their own people. The Sun Dance was a site of particular potency because the public 
version was controlled by a tribal council, who had unquestionably continued the policies 
originally imposed by the U.S. government.\textsuperscript{574} The public Sun Dance had become a part 
of the annual tribal fair and the ritual was constrained in a number of ways. Sun Dancing 
was limited to the morning hours, rather than throughout the entire day, observers were 
charged an admittance fee, the dancers were fenced off from the crowd, and piercing was 
not allowed. For the tribal council, like the reservation agents before them, the Fair Sun 
Dance was a tourist attraction. 

In order to lend an air of authenticity to the performance, Fools Crow, an Oglala 
from the Pine Ridge reservation, was chosen to assume this role of Sun Dance chief, first 
at Pine Ridge and later at the Rosebud Fair. It is clear from Fools Crow’s narratives, and 
those of others who danced with him, that they always believed that they were still 
engaged with the spiritual side of the dance in spite of the commercialized atmosphere. In 
other words, they were not performing a ritual of the past for spectators; they were 
engaged in a contemporary meaningful practice. By the late 1950s, Fools Crow had 
begun challenging specific constraints imposed by the tribal council. The prohibition 
against piercing was the first to be challenged. For Fools Crow it was critical to 
reincorporate this aspect of the ritual and against prohibition he publically performed this 
act at the Pine Ridge Fair on his long-time student, Bill “Eagle Feather” Schweigman

\textsuperscript{574} This is examined more closely in chapter 3.
(most likely in 1959). Schweigman’s breaking from the tree that year symbolically demonstrated a breaking away from constraints imposed by the “new dealers.” It was a first step, but it would take another two decades to fully realize a complete separation.

Rather than punish the transgressors, the tribal council began to promote piercing as a tourist attraction as audiences were “invited to watch the spectacle of self-inflicted pain” deteriorating the Dance into a “flesh carnival.”

Swaying public sentiment among tribal members was an important consideration as Fools Crow and a number of other traditional spiritual leaders, such as Schweigman and Lame Deer, continued to push back against the constraints imposed by the tribal councils. In 1974, at the Pine Ridge Fair, the tribal council attempted to cut the dance.

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575 Schweigman was a regular and vocal participant in the MMPM.
576 “New Dealers” is a term used for Indian people who had assimilated to dominant culture and were in positions of power and authority on the reservation. See chapter 3.
577 Mails, Sundancing at Rosebud and Pine Ridge, 10.
578 It is important to note that Fools Crow aligned himself with AIM and used this alliance as a form of resistance. By the 1971 occupation of Mt. Rushmore by AIM members, Fools Crow and Crow Dog, the up-and-coming spiritual leader from Rosebud reservation, were recognized spiritual advisors to the group. That summer they planned to challenge the authority of the Pine Ridge tribal council by conducting the first publically announced, private Sun Dance near the site of the 1890 Wounded Knee massacre. They focused on the constraints of the Pine Ridge Fair Sun Dance, the commercialization, entrance fees, the fence separating the people from the dancers, and picture taking, by circulating narratives about the negative impact of the fair environment on the practice. Elder traditional people had been turned away from the Sun Dance because they did not have the entrance fee. The flash of a camera had interrupted an important vision. And they continued to remind the community that the Sun Dance was the religion of “the people.” On the first day of the small dance at Wounded Knee, tribal police arrived at the site and told participants that the tribal council demanded that they disband. Crow Dog asked them, “How can you do this? You are Indian, too.” The tribal police left, but returned on the second day arresting first Eagle Feather and later, as the scene turned into a “near killing situation,” everyone was arrested and taken to tribal court. After paying their fines, the participants returned to the site only to find it occupied by the tribal police. Not knowing what to do, the leaders said that they could not just stop a Sun Dance mid-ritual, so they decided to move the dance to Crow Dog’s home on the nearby Rosebud Reservation. The Sun Dance tree was taken down, placed on a trailer, and transported nearly 100 miles. Within a day, dancing resumed. In spite of the turmoil, the Sun Dance was completed, during which time the majority of the dancers pierced in thanksgiving. Two years later in 1973, Fools Crow played a major role in the decision by AIM to occupy Wounded Knee. Certainly Wounded Knee was a potent symbol of distress and anger because of the 1890 massacre, but this sentiment was amplified because of the valence it carried in the minds of the AIM
performance from four to three days. However, unannounced, Fools Crow led the participants into the dance arena on the morning of the fourth day and proceeded to pierce a Lakota veteran of the Vietnam War, defying the tribal council.\textsuperscript{579} By 1975 there were at least five publically announced private Sun Dances held on the Rosebud reservation alone.\textsuperscript{580} And in 1978 as Schweigman began his first publically announced privately held Sun Dance, tribal councils at both Rosebud and Pine Ridge released control and no longer held Sun Dances as part of the fair venue.\textsuperscript{581} Within this local context, the medicine men engaging in the dialogue with the priests at St. Francis Mission were concerned not only with changing the attitudes of the clergy, but also and perhaps more importantly they were concerned with changing the attitudes of the Lakota people on the Rosebud reservation.

\textbf{Aspects of Storytelling Exchange during the MMPM}

Expanding the work of sociologist, Harvey Sacks on conversational analysis, folklorist Joann Bromberg persuasively argues for an approach to the study of social conversation that is attentive to the details of the social exchange taking place among the participants. One aspect of Sacks’ focus was on the “second,” a practice whereby one narrator provides a story similar to that told by another narrator. The “second” works to both affirm and increasing the affective quality of the initial story. This led Bromberg to “consider alternative instances, also commonplace in conversation, when a narrator is

greeted differently, with laughter, with silence, or a move to change topic.” This allows one to look “at story exchange as an ongoing process, with certain exchanges completed and others aborted, one can see how such transactions serve to enable or disable an individual or group effort.” These social exchanges have much to do with identity construction both on an individual and group level.

In the remainder of this chapter, I consider the MMPM as a series of social exchanges. Bromberg’s own work considers social exchange among one group of people. The long history of colonialism and power differential between the medicine men and priests presents an added dimension to the dialogues within the context of the two groups’ intention “to come to a better understanding.” The dialogic exchange between the two groups reveals a number of strategies employed by the medicine men, the purpose of which was to produce social change both in relation to the priests, but also in relation to other Indian people in their community and beyond. Although a number of social exchange themes emerge when examining the transcripts of the meetings, I focus on three that recur with frequency: social commentary, resistance, and the emphasis on experience. I begin by introducing the primary and notable participants and the general tone of the meetings. Then I move to discuss the challenges of working with the transcripts from the meetings before moving to the three recurring aspects of social exchange employed by the medicine men.

583 Bromberg uses this approach in two of her studies of storytelling efforts. One is a study of a women’s consciousness raising group and the other a group of townspeople (Beaux Arts), who came together to exchange stories about life in the town.
Primary and Notable Participants in the MMPM

In *The Pipe and the Christ*, Stolzman takes credit for initiating the MMPM and refers to himself as the Chairman of the meetings. He never wavers in his accounts regarding his understanding about the intention for the exchanges. He felt that the conversations would “help everyone better understand and appreciate the Lakota and Christian religions and their relationship to one another.” It is not clear whether Stolzman already had in mind to write the book that he would publish eight years after the MMPM had disbanded, but he was certainly considering the project by the second year of meetings. During the second year, Stolzman began offering his own written interpretation of the theological worldview of the Lakota, the basis of his future book. As we’ll see later in this chapter, the Lakota offered strong resistance to Stolzman’s written elucidation of their worldview and to the fact that he was writing a book expressing his understanding.

Stolzman suggests that the priests were more resistant about participating in the meetings than were the Lakota, as they (the priests) feared that the public would take their participation as a sign of approval. He does not consider that some of the Lakota may have approached the situation with some reservation. Nor does he mention the opposition expressed by the medicine men regarding his interpretation.

Rosebud Reservation was Stolzman’s first assignment after ordination into the Society of Jesus. Born in 1938, he was thirty-five years old at the time. Several years earlier he had spent a summer working on the Pine Ridge reservation where he was

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introduced to Lakota religious practices. The experience had a profound effect on him and he cites it as a causal factor in his decision to tailor his “theology program to anthropology and the Indians.”

His assignment on the reservation was to conduct a religious-sociological study of the community. Stolzman felt a “calling” to participate in Lakota rituals, in particular the vision quest, which he did. In all, Stolzman was only on the reservation during the years of the MMPM. He left around the same time the meetings disbanded and soon after, he left the Society of Jesus. Today he is a priest of the Archdioceses of Saint Paul and Minneapolis.

It is clear that Stolzman held Moses Big Crow, primary translator for the MMPM, in high regard. In his acknowledgements, he offers a “statement of appreciation” to Big Crow that is second only to that he offers God. Big Crow played a principal role in both the MMA and the MMPM, serving as the vice-chairman of the latter. Born around 1917, Big Crow was the grandson of two medicine men on the Rosebud Reservation, but he did not profess to be a medicine man himself. He was a well-known ceremonial singer on the reservation, singing for many different medicine men. And, he conducted a few Lakota rituals, such as the sweat lodge. Big Crow traveled extensively throughout the U.S. both assisting medicine men as a singer and ritual helper, but also solely, as a

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585 Ibid., 8.
586 This short biography is drawn from both the Index to Notable Authors and Photographers among the Jesuits and Sisters of St. Francis and The Pipe and Christ.
587 Stolzman, The Pipe and Christ, iii.
588 Ibid.
589 In phone conversation, Gilly Running (March 2009) remembers going to sweat with Big Crow, hearing him sing at ceremonies run by a variety of medicine men, and traveling to listen to him speak because his knowledge of Lakota culture was so extensive.
lecturer on Lakota culture. He worked as a language consultant for the University of South Dakota.

When the MMPM began, Big Crow was in his mid fifties, two decades older than Stolzman. He was also completely blind and in ill health. He was a strong and vocal proponent of sharing knowledge. He had a vision of the medicine men coming together to unite, which he believed would make the people stronger. And he often functioned as a mediator in the meeting both between the priests and the medicine men and amongst the medicine men themselves. In 1977, by the time the meetings had been going on for several years, serious divisions had emerged amongst the medicine men. At one meeting Big Crow offers a strong and lengthy statement. “I’ve always told our medicine men to work together to unite and to not be criticizing each other or underestimating each other. I have said this to their faces not behind their backs. It seems like every time I say this well; they are at each other’s throat. This is why we the Indian people are weak. The day that they unite and practice their vision the way they are supposed to then there will be less sickness.” Big Crow then goes on to encourage the medicine men to work with the priests, he asks them, “So my relatives what shall we do to be friends?” He scolds the medicine men exclaiming, “I am the only traditional here; a man that has a vision.” Big Crow clearly thought that his vision was one given by the spirits. “If a spirit did not

590 Big Crow, 21 February 1977, T51, 39.
591 Ibid., 40.
592 Ibid.
come and I will be trying to do these things, I will be forgetting; trying to do something empty."

Ben Black Bear, Jr. also served extensively as translator during the meetings, which he often attended with his father Ben Black Bear, Sr. and his mother, Iva. Born in 1946, Black Bear, Jr. was twenty-seven when the meetings began and during the meetings, in 1976, he became a Native Permanent Deacon in St. Francis, a position he still holds today. Black Bear, Jr. was clearly well-educated and during the early years of the meetings was studying to become a permanent deacon. At various times during the meetings he brought his knowledge about Catholicism to bear on the proceedings. For example, at one point he describes the impact of Vatican II to the medicine men and he frequently worked to interpret Catholic theological concepts to them as well. Of the many participants in the MMPM, only Black Bear, Jr., Crow Dog (Leonard), and Stolzman are alive today.

Several other participants who contributed significantly during the meetings, such as Arthur Running Horse, Frank Picket Pin, Bill Schweigman, John Fire Lame Deer, Leonard and Henry Crow Dog, and Wallace Black Elk also deserve mention. Running Horse, born around 1910, was a well-known medicine man at the time. He conducted four vision quests for Stolzman. Running Horse was quite contrary and frequently criticized the priests for their exclusion of representatives from other Christian denominations at the MMPM. He was also one of the strongest proponents of the

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593 It is important to note that Big Crow goes on to compare a vision not supported or perpetuated by the Spirits as similar to the case of the tribal chairman and councilman, implying that is the reason their work does not succeed. See Big Crow, 21 February 1977, T51, 41.
594 Ben Black Bear, Sr. was a principal actor and singer in the film, A Man Called Horse.
opinion that the meetings should result in changes in the lived reality of the Lakota people.

Picket Pin was born around 1900 and was one of the oldest medicine men in attendance. Stolzman notes that Picket Pin was one of the earliest catechists on the reservation and enjoyed a close relationship with one of the Jesuit Superiors, Father Digmann, during the 1920s. Schweigman was born around 1915 and as we’ve seen previously worked closely with Fools Crow and was very involved conducting and challenging the constraints imposed by the tribal council at the fair Sun Dances on the Rosebud Reservation and Pine Ridge.

Lame Deer traveled 130 miles round trip to attend the meetings during the early years until his death in 1977. According to his autobiography, *Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions*, Lame Deer was born sometime around 1903. He was also involved, along with Fools Crow and Schweigman, with running the Sun Dances at the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Fairs. During the meetings attended by Lame Deer, he frequently dominated the conversation and was rarely interrupted by the other medicine men, a sign of

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596 Elmer Running, discussed in chapter 4, also took part for a short time. During this period he was just beginning to accept the vision to become a medicine man, which was given to him by the spirits. During his first visit to MMCM, he told his vision and was laughed at by some in the audience; the reason he quit attending. The relationship between Running and medicine man Arthur Running Horse was quite close and there is a familial relationship there as well. Running Horse was married to Nellie Running, a close relative of Running’s. Running Horse also conducted the vision quest whereby Running received his altar. Running’s son, Gilly, remembers frequently attending ceremonies conducted by Running Horse when he was a young boy.  
598 Ibid.  
599 Ibid., iv.  
600 Lame Deer does not appear in the Indian Census, his mother Sallie Red Blanket appears once, but his grandparents Good Fox and Plenty White Buffalo appear numerous times.  
601 There are many accounts of Lame Deer’s association with Fools Crow and Schweigman, as well as many pictures of him assisting at the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Fairs. See for example: Mails, *Sundancing at Rosebud and Pine Ridge*, and McGaa, *Mother Earth Spirituality*.  
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Lame Deer passed away during the later years of the MMPM and the meeting on December 19, 1977 was a memorial service for him. Stolzman started the evening with a dedication, “At this time we would like to say a prayer for the repose of the soul of Mr. Lame Deer who was with us here at these meetings and shared many of his insights and his humor as well. John always says, ‘Don’t take me too seriously, but once in a while you should.’ He was kind of special in many ways.”

That evening a Memorial Cake is shown and distributed to the participants and Schweigman offered a lengthy prayer for Lame Deer.

Of the remainder of the participants that I draw attention to, Leonard Crow Dog and his father Henry attended infrequently. During the early years, an entire meeting is dedicated to Henry’s description of the Native American church. Leonard Crow Dog was occupied with his association with AIM and the takeover of Wounded Knee; an activity for which he was later sentenced to prison, where he spent most of the years of meetings. In spite of negative sentiments toward the activities of AIM, the medicine men rallied around Leonard when he was imprisoned. They came together to formulate a letter on his behalf and each signed the letter. When Leonard was released he returned to Rosebud and attended the meetings on occasion. Stolzman recalled that Leonard gave a buffalo robe, which he had used in ceremonies, to the MMPM, a sign of honor. Wallace Black Elk also attended sporadically. His book with William Lyon, *Black Elk: The Sacred*

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602 Lame Deer was clearly respected by the other medicine men, but he apparently got on Stolzman’s nerves. There are at least two separate incidents where Stolzman tries to cut off Lame Deer during his speeches.
604 A cultural practice among the Lakota is the Celebratory or Memorial Cake. The cake is taken around so everyone in attendance can see the design on the cake, before it is cut and distributed.
Ways of a Lakota, came under harsh criticism later in his life because of his association with Sun Bear and the Bear Tribe. 606

**Challenges of the MMPM Transcripts**

Eighty-five sessions occurred during the five years that the MMPM took place. Each meeting was recorded and the archive, currently held in the Special Collections and Archives at Marquette University, contains eight open-reel recordings and 233 audio cassettes. 607 Of the eighty-five sessions, the first seventy-eight were transcribed and eventually indexed. My work with the records has been with the approximately 1,000 pages of transcripts available from the first seventy-eight sessions. 608 Working with the transcripts presents unique challenges in terms of translation, interpretation and transcription. The messy and complex ways these processes took place raise a number of important questions.

The large majority of the participants in the dialogues were indeed bilingual (Lakota and English). This is certainly true for the medicine men, although for most their primary and preferred language was Lakota. It is clear that a small number of the priests spoke only English, but many understood Lakota as well. The conversations began with a process that was continued throughout. A bilingual Lakota speaker was present at each meeting in order to translate what was being said. The majority of the time this task fell to Moses Big Crow, who played a leadership role during the meetings, but frequently Ben Black Bear, Jr. also attended and assisted with the translation.

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606 Sun Bear and Bear Tribe considered primary examples of New Age Shamanism, see chapter 5.
607 I first heard about this archive from The Buechel Memorial Lakota Museum (St. Francis, SD) web-site. As part of my research I traveled there to conduct research in the archives only to find they had been sent to Marquette University.
608 A future project would entail comparing the audio tapes to the transcripts with a Native Lakota speaker.
Some, such as Lame Deer spoke primarily in English. Others, such as Running Horse spoke primarily in Lakota. However, the transcripts reveal that the medicine men frequently shifted back and forth between the two languages as some of the dialogue in English is credited to the speaker, while at other times it is clearly noted that the dialogue is in Lakota and that the text/transcript being recorded is the translation offered by the Lakota translator. It is also clear that the sort of translation that took place during the meetings was interpretive. In other words the translator summarized the conversation offered and/or offered the key points, rather than a word for word translation.

In the Lakota context, the perils of the translation process has received a great deal of critical attention and raised a number of questions. For example, Raymond DeMallie has offered analyses of the translation challenges that shaped the seminal text on the Lakota Sun Dance, *The Sun Dance and Other Ceremonies of the Oglala Division of the Teton Dakota* by J.R. Walker, as well as the issues surrounding the dialogue between John Neihardt and Nicholas Black Elk, which resulted in the classic, *Black Elk Speaks*. Similar arguments are made in relation to texts produced in the “as-told-to-autobiography.” In all of these examples the primary critique revolves around issues of power and inequitable relationships as non-Native speakers take the lead in translation and the various processes of textualization. In the case of the MMPM, Lakota conduct all of the translation both of the Lakota into English as well as English into Lakota. This unique relationship demonstrates the agentive role they assumed in the process.

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610 See chapter 5.
The transcripts offer additional challenges. The process of transcription was handled by Big Crow and Stolzman, but it appears that Big Crow took the lead (again pointing to the agentive role assumed by the Lakota). At one point Big Crow was quite ill and in the hospital. The transcriptions note that Stolzman is the only one transcribing and the tone gleaned from the written word is very different from the transcripts of other meetings. In the transcripts none of the Lakota dialogue has been transcribed, although some Lakota terms are recorded in the text. And, it further appears that Big Crow may well have provided additional summarization (beyond translation at the time of the meeting) during the transcription process of the original statements, conversations, and exchanges that took place. In many ways the process employed by Big Crow negates the reason for transcription, which is meant to provide a textual representation that can be systematically analyzed.\textsuperscript{611}

The transcripts do not reveal any instance in which a Lakota speaker challenges or corrects the translated summary given by Big Crow or Black Bear, Jr. It is of course possible that challenges to the summarized translations took place outside of the meetings, Stolzman intimates as much. In \textit{The Pipe and the Christ}, he wrote, “Some participants raised questions about the accuracy of his [Big Crow’s] translations.”\textsuperscript{612} Stolzman legitimized the accuracy of the summaries offered by Big Crow and Black Bear, Jr. by referring to the transcripts: “All meetings were recorded, and line-by-line translations, even complete transcriptions of the meetings for a time, proved the accuracy

\textsuperscript{611} See for example Deborah Cameron, “Transcribing spoken discourse” in \textit{Working with Discourse}, (London: SAGE Publications, 2001), 31-44.  
\textsuperscript{612} Stolzman, \textit{The Pipe and Christ}, 16.
of these summaries.” By today’s standard, the omission of the Lakota language alone renders the transcriptions inaccurate. Thus the transcripts do not lend themselves to a close discourse analysis. However, the transcripts do provide sufficient notation about who is speaking, the dialogue exchange, and when someone is offering a translation. This allows for attention to the sorts of conversational shifts that Bromberg advocates. Further, the transcripts provide detail regarding responses, such as noting when something evoked laughter from the group.

**Situating Lakota Storytelling**

In the American Indian context, storytelling has taken on particular potency as distinctive of Indian identity. Cherokee scholar and novelist, Thomas King reminds that “the truth about stories is that is all we are.” Yet, storytelling is not a distinctive American Indian phenomenon. Work in childhood development by scholars such as Daniel Stern, argue that the capacity to develop and articulate a narrative account is an important, perhaps the last important developmental landmark, of childhood and that it is a universal human characteristic. Stern’s research finds that that the capacity for and practice of storytelling occurs around the age of four.

A narrative is not just having words for things…Narratives go further. They involve seeing and interpreting the world of human activities in terms of story plots. These stories are made up of actors who have desires and motives directed toward goals, and they take place in a historical context and physical setting that help to interpret the plot. Also, each story has a dramatic line, with beginning, middle, and end.

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613 Ibid., 16.
Storytelling has taken on this particular valence in the American Indian context for two interrelated reasons. First, modernity has privileged written accounts over oral ones. Returning to the notion of social evolution, societies that had developed written languages were considered more advanced in the evolutionary schema than those who had not. The ideal of civilized society rested upon the notion that literacy, conceived as the ability to write and read, was critical to the positivist agenda. The static nature of writing provided an aura of accuracy and factual information that was in contrast to the oral traditions of so-called primitive peoples. Oral traditions were considered subject to the fallacies of memory and variations of stories told by different storytellers were thought to attest to the inaccuracies of oral traditions. In their book on Native American Studies, Clara Sue Kidwell and Alan Velie suggest that the notion of oral traditions as inaccurate is further magnified because oral traditions do not always “agree with positivist readings of the reality of the historical past.” They argue that this should “not automatically discredit them as useful information” rather they “can be seen as a counter-narrative to the Western historical tradition,” “alternative remembrances of the past.”

Kidwell and Velie’s take on oral tradition focuses on positivist concerns: accuracy, truthfulness, and the real. Momaday offers another perspective; one that is attentive to the work of storytelling. In his now famous address to the First Convocation

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617 Ibid.
of American Indian Scholars, “The Man Made of Words,” Momaday (not unlike Stern) eloquently expressed his understanding of the importance of storytelling:

> Storytelling is imaginative and creative in nature. It is an act by which man strives to realize his capacity for wonder, meaning and delight. It is also a process in which man invests and preserves himself in the context of ideas. Man tells stories in order to understand his experience, whatever it may be. The possibilities of storytelling are precisely those of understanding the human experience.\(^{618}\)

Momaday went on to tell a story about a meteor shower that took place in 1833 and was observed by the Kiowa and taken as an ill omen of a “darker age for the Kiowa people.”\(^{619}\) Over the next few years the Kiowa people entered into treaty agreements with the U.S. government, their population was decimated by several epidemics, they were forced from their homelands, and their way of life was destroyed. Momaday argues that by telling the story of the meteor shower and the way it was related to future trials, the Kiowa were able to make meaning of those traumatic events.

In the Lakota context, there is a vast archive of stories. Most famous among them are the oral traditions collected by Walker during the early 1900s, which were reorganized, written, and archived.\(^{620}\) Perhaps the most well-known story is about the White Buffalo Calf Woman and how she brought the pipe to the Lakota people. There are multiple variations of this story, told by numerous storytellers. There are so many retellings of the story that it is considered *the* origin story of the pipe and how it came to the Lakota. The very first story told, at the first MMPM was about how the pipe came to


\(^{619}\) Ibid.

\(^{620}\) See chapter 2.
the Lakota people but it had nothing to do with the White Buffalo Calf Woman. That evening after Stolzman had opened the meeting he asked the various medicine men to talk about how God “revealed Himself through the Pipe.” He first called on Running Horse, who announced in English that he wanted someone to interpret for him, which Black Bear, Jr. did.

As far as the canumpa, the peace pipe, before—2000 years ago—there was no such thing as—peace pipe—or as a religion so that a man was out on a high hill by himself and just raised his arms and prayed. And one incident when this one particular man did this, he had his arms upraised and was praying. He prayed “Wakantanka, have pity on me. I don’t want anything bad to happen to me.” Yes that’s a prayer. While he was praying, the peace pipe appeared on his hands, so after that they used the peace pipe to pray with.

Attention to the storytelling exchange is revealing. After Running Horse finished his story and it was translated for the group, George Eagle Elk was the next to speak and he used the interpreter. When Eagle Elk was finished speaking, rather than translating his words, Black Bear, Jr. returned to Running Horse’s talk in order to clarify some key points. Black Bear, Jr., in fact, never translated Eagle Elk’s words. Whatever was offered by Eagle Elk was aborted in the exchange. The next speaker, Charlie Kills Enemy spoke in English. He referred to Running Horse’s story about the pipe. The third speaker, Big Crow, who also affirmed the story, retold the story again. “2000 years ago they didn’t have no pipe to pray with so they go out on the hill. And with outstretched hands they say “Wakantanka.”... And somewhere down the line, the pipe was brought

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down on earth and it is still laying up in Green Grass, somewhere near Eagle Butte up there.”

This story exchange is surprising in light of the way the White Buffalo Calf Woman story is re-circulated and retold as the origin story for the pipe. There is no doubt that the medicine men were well aware of the White Buffalo Calf Woman story; they referred to it during other meetings (they retold this story as well). Yet, no one corrected Running Horse. In fact, their seconding seems to suggest that they agreed this was the story about how the pipe was brought to the Lakota people. Ethnographer Kirin Narayan astutely observes that “all stories are told for some purpose” and that there are different telling at different times that are always shaped by the interaction between teller and audience. As Momaday suggests, this exchange hints that stories may have more to tell us about the creative and imaginative ways that the Lakota “invest and preserve” themselves “in the context of ideas” rather than a remembrance of a static event in the past. It is not the story per se, but rather the work that the story does. In the following section stories are sometimes “vehicle[s] of instruction.” At other times they are “example-stories.” But, they are always an effort to invest and preserve a Lakota identity.

**Storytelling as Social Commentary**

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624 In a recent conversation I was directed to Narayan’s book. Although too late to have a major impact on this project, it illuminated a direction not taken. Narayan makes an obvious, but critical distinction in her work an Indian (India) Swami. She situates him in a lengthy genealogy of religious storytellers. This inflection would be appropriate for this section as well and is a potential future project. Thanks to Amy Shuman for bringing this to my attention. Ibid., 5.
The transcripts of the MMPM reveal that the Lakota participants were deeply concerned about the material conditions in their community, conditions that they associated with the effects of colonialism. As such, they frequently engaged in dialogue that offered social commentary and critique. In some cases, as seen earlier, their criticism was directed at groups within their own community, whom they felt had assumed the role of the colonizer. Officials elected to tribal government were one such target. It is important to note that this attitude changed during the five years of meetings, reflecting changes on the reservation.

This shift occurs in the transcripts in 1976 when a new tribal president, Edward Driving Hawk, was elected. The committee members hoped that the new tribal chairman would have a different response to them and their efforts. At one meeting Dallas Chief Eagle noted that the group should take advantage of the changing atmosphere. Chief Eagle remembered that the previous administration tried to bar him from attending council meetings, but he always tried to go anyway, he said. One of the first acts of the newly elected tribal council was to contribute four thousand dollars to the MMA, an honorarium for future services to be rendered. The idea was that the medicine men would act as counselors and cultural consultants for patients at the hospital and alcohol treatment center. 625 Chief Eagle and the other medicine men were hopeful that the election of the new president reflected a different environment whereby the association members would be able to contribute to the material realities of their community.

Another group that they assessed critically was AIM, whom they felt did not understand Lakota religious thought and practice. AIM also used strategies such as violence, which were at odds with Lakota values. The principal Lakota value that the participants pointed to was respect. For the medicine men, community problems such as drinking, parents not taking care of their children, domestic violence, and theft, were the result of a loss of respect. For example, in 1975 Black Bear, Sr. told a story about a recent personal experience. The story was translated by Big Crow who re-emphasized its importance with his personal views.

[O]ther comments he made here and there towards us Indians. I’ll hit this one here. He thinks that we should all think about this. When he has cigarettes, he said that he gives it to them [the people] willingly, and he happened to run out one day, so he had to bum a cigarette from some guy. He really got a[n] earful, this guy really laid it on him, and this guy said that you have a job and everything; all this for one cigarette. This thing has some meaning; it’s a thing that’s called respect. In the old days the Indians they were kind hearted, they had consideration and this we have lost. There’s not respect for the elders. Also there’s no respect among ourselves and even among our children. I thought that this was a good thought when he said this. He was willing to go out and give out cigarettes. But when he asked for one he really got told off.626

This personal example about the lack of respect was followed by a second example.

After one of the recent meetings, Black Bear, Sr. and his wife returned to their car only to find out that it had been broken into during the meeting and several items were stolen including his wife’s beadwork, as well as the spare tire and jack. He further mentioned

626 Ben Black Bear, Sr., Translated, Big Crow, “Transcripts,” 8 April 1975, T22, 49.
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that “his happens even in houses even in town here.”\textsuperscript{627} For Black Bear, Sr. and Big Crow, the lack of generosity exhibited in the first example and theft described in the second, were evidence of a loss of respect among the Lakota.

On another occasion Big Crow translated personal stories from Running Horse about the loss of respect within the community. The exchange began with Running Horse suggesting that ceremonies such as the sweat lodge teach about respect. According to Running Horse respect is closely correlated to the primary Lakota prayer, mitakuye oyasin (all my relatives), which is said during every Lakota ritual. For Running Horse, the kinship relationships hailed through the prayer depended on certain protocols, which shaped one’s sense of respect for their relatives. He noted that he was losing his patience because he heard the prayer being said, but did not see it enacted in everyday life. Big Crow comments, “[S]ometimes he wonders and I guess we lost respect somewhere down the line.”\textsuperscript{628} Big Crow went on to translate two examples from Running Horse’s personal life.

And somewhere down there we had respect for each other and we lost that self-respect, we had respect for each other and our in-laws, mother-in-laws, son-in-laws. We hardly ever look at them or talk to them, this is respect, but nowadays that’s gone. He says he has a daughter-in-law and Art was sitting there smoking a cigarette but she came in and I guess Art was really enjoying his cigarette when out of a clear blue sky she said, “Art…gimme that cigarette.” And before he could reply she took it away from him….But the other one is worse than this, I gather it’s another daughter-in-law. She hollered at Art and you know the name we used to call each other when were mad, she called him that. So

\textsuperscript{627} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{628} Running Horse, Translated, Big Crow, 14 October 1975, T29A, 56.
These two different story exchanges occurred within a period of approximately six months, during which time the medicine men continued to return to the same theme. Not only are they seconding each other’s stories during a single meeting, but they are also seconding stories across meetings over time; a frequent practice. In this period, respect is a central concern, re-emerging meeting after meeting. In these exchanges, the speakers cite the issue of the loss of respect as the reason for their participation in the dialogues. They feel that the knowledge they have about Lakota codes of conduct should be documented and used to teach members of the community. They believe this will provide solutions to the social problems facing the Lakota.

While these social commentaries are motivated by their desire to contribute to positive change within their communities, we don’t see the same sort of intention in their commentaries about dominant culture. The medicine men frequently refer to contemporary issues of the time, such as the Vietnam War, social movement activities, and even the hippies. For them, the broader social concerns are related to dominant society’s approach to the world. One issue cited specifically is that many members of dominant culture do not practice the teachings of Christianity. The majority of medicine men express no opposition to the teachings of Christianity. Their complaint is that the teachings are not put into practice.

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629 Ibid.
630 This theme recurs at other times as well during the five years of meetings. Another time that it intensifies is in 1977 when Elmer Running attends for the first time.
631 There is a long history of this sort of Native social commentary. See for example, Eastman, From the Woods.
In January of 1974, Lame Deer offered a tirade that dominated the majority of the meeting. He critiqued dominant society’s practice of instant gratification, “instant steaks, instant port chops, instant squaw.”632 He went on to observe, “The white man has a good book but who practices? That is our trouble.”633 Lame Deer’s critiques were dramatically illustrated in a story told by Picket Pin, which was translated by Big Crow.634

Mr. Picket Pin…told the story about some big shot coming down here. He was smoking the peace pipe with the Indians. So they sit in a circle and the chief lit the pipe and passed down to this big shot. He was not an Indian. And when it came to him, well he took his handkerchief and wiped off the stem. Then he started smoking it. So when he passed it to the next Indian, he didn’t like this. You talk about brotherhood and sharing and there he was wiping off everything. When he passed it to the next Indian, [he] carried a knife in those days, so he reached in there and pulled out one of his little knives and cut the stem off all together.635

This story carried a great deal of potency and was remembered and re-told during another meeting by a different storyteller. The values of brotherhood, such as sharing with your relatives, were not being practiced by the “big shot.” Wiping off the stem of the pipe before smoking it was taken as an affront by the Lakota. This faux pas was amplified and mirrored back when the next Indian in rotation to smoke the pipe took out his knife and cut off the stem sending a powerful message that an important form of

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633 Ibid.
634 The transcripts from this particular meeting do not note who is translating. It appears to be Big Crow as earlier during this particular translation the speaker refers to chairing a meeting of the MMA the day before. Big Crow was usually the chair of these meetings.
etiquette had been breached. The telling and re-telling of this story was in itself one act of resistance among many by the medicine men during the MMPM

**Resistance in Conversational Exchanges**

One of the most surprising aspects of Stolzman’s book, *The Pipe and the Christ*, is that he never acknowledges the sustained resistance expressed through conversational exchanges by the medicine men. Was Stolzman oblivious to the messages contained in the exchanges? Did he recognize them but decide to ignore them in his own account of the proceedings? What is important is that the archives document the sustained resistance of the medicine men. At times they challenged Stolzman regarding his sources. For example, the origin story of the pipe is a frequent topic of conversation. At one meeting Stolzman proceeded to tell them the “real” history of the pipe as gleaned from archaeological records. “What authority you going by?” asked one unknown Lakota speaker.\(^{636}\) At other times, they resisted answering questions by turning a similar question back on Stolzman. For example at one point Stolzman asks what proof they had that the White Buffalo Calf Woman brought the pipe? William answers Stolzman with a parallel question. “Could I ask you a question also Father Stolzman? How do you know that God was going to put Jesus Christ and Mary on this earth?”\(^{637}\)

Perhaps the strongest resistance met by Stolzman regarded his plans for the book, *The Pipe and the Christ*. This resistance came on two fronts. First, the Lakota participants continued to resist Stolzman’s interpretation of the meaning of Lakota


\(^{637}\) The identity of William is not clear. It may be Bill Schweigman; the only medicine man whose first name was William. However, he is usually referred to as Bill. See William, “Transcripts,” 10 December 1974, T16, 15.
thought and practice. Second, many objected to his plans to publish *his* book. The transcripts reveal that there was a relaxed atmosphere during the early meetings. There was a great deal of laughter and easy bantering. The medicine men made jokes and teased each other. But, as Stolzman’s intentions to write a book were revealed the tone of the meetings changed and they became more somber. By 1974 Stolzman’s intentions became clear to the group. Part of his method included writing short papers that expressed his interpretation of Lakota concepts discussed at previous meetings. It is clear the Lakota resisted these interpretations and tensions were particularly intense from April, 1974 through January, 1975. The first time Stolzman presented one of his papers, only Big Crow and George Eagle Elk were in attendance. Stolzman explained that the paper was about the pipe and he proceeded to read the first paragraph.\(^{638}\) Big Crow worked to diffuse Stolzman’s opening and instead talked about the lack of participation that evening. He expressed his disappointment that there was only one medicine man in attendance and that he was not happy that Stolzman was going to proceed under the circumstances. “Especially meeting like this, I hardly approve of things like this.”\(^ {639}\) He went on to take Stolzman to task. He suggested that the poor attendance was due to Stolzman’s mishandling of a previous meeting. In Big Crow’s opinion, as “chairman,” Stolzman should have asserted more order at the meetings. He “shouldn’t favor nobody, he should keep the meeting in order and not get into a stormy session but debate things like adults. We’re adults, we’re supposed to be but we get into stormy sessions.”\(^ {640}\) Big

\(^{639}\) Big Crow, “Transcripts,” 30 April 1974, T8, 2.
\(^{640}\) Ibid.
Crow went on to say that in spite of the situation, he and Eagle Elk would do their best to answer Stolzman’s questions. Stolzman did not acknowledge or respond to Big Crow’s comments. Instead he proceeded to explain that he wanted them (Big Crow and Eagle Elk) to verify his interpretation. “What I would like to do now, I would like to read this entire position paper or working paper. And as you’re going through I would like you to mark on or check on an area that you will find in disagreement with. Please do so as I do this reading.” Problematically, the very first information apparently contained within the position paper had absolutely nothing to do with information shared by the medicine men during previous meetings. Rather it was Stolzman’s summary of the history of the pipe from “the time of Christ” through the present, which he had gleaned from academic sources. This knowledge was not from the Lakota perspective and it was unfamiliar to both Big Crow and Eagle Elk. The meeting took on a peculiar tone as Stolzman began trying to educate Big Crow and Eagle Elk about the history of the pipe. It was, of course, information that they could not verify. They questioned where he got his information and the discussion eventually drifted to the second paragraph of the paper, which described Stolzman’s version of the White Buffalo Calf woman. This paragraph became contentious over Stolzman’s use of the word “legend” to describe the story. For Big Crow and Eagle Elk, legend carried the connotation that the story was false. Stolzman

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641 Ibid.
642 Important to note that the text of these position papers and the reading of the contents are never recorded in the transcripts. We only read the response.
assured them this was not the case, but they doubted that Stolzman really equated “legend” with “fact.” At this point the exchanges stalled and the meeting was ended.

There was a much larger attendance at the next meeting in May and Stolzman did not fare any better. The first point of resistance came from Big Crow and involved Stolzman’s interpretation of the appropriate codes of conduct around the pipe. “You made a statement that no impure man shall touch this pipe. Is that true?” Stolzman said yes. Moses continued, “In my opinion I don’t think I can go for that.” Throughout the next meetings, the pace of the discussion almost came to a halt as the Lakota participants continued to resist Stolzman point by point. By October, six months later, the meetings had grown quite large and Stolzman was only five pages into his first position paper. It was at this meeting that Lame Deer finally challenged Stolzman’s plan to write a book. He began indirectly by suggesting that the book should be written in “Sioux” like another book that he knew. “Why can’t we do that with this book? Why can’t we work together and make this in other words? If we get together and get all the stories together and put it back in there where it belongs, well that would give the medicine men more power…If we’re going to fight back on this here paper, just know why I’m doing this.” Lame Deer wanted the Indian point of view expressed and he drew on Nicholas Black Elk’s collaboration with John Niehardt in the 1930s as a problematic, but better model of cooperation and collaboration. Minutes into his talk, Lame Deer was cut off by Stolzman who brusquely inserted, “Well, John if you and the medicine men are interested

644 Narrative exchange Big Crow/Stolzman, 29 May 1974, T9, 2.
646 Ibid.
in doing such a thing that’s up to you.” Stolzman went on to state that was not a project that interested him or the other pastors. Stolzman went on to chide the medicine men and then abruptly he closed the meeting.

A considerable number of the medicine men did indeed get involved with other projects that expressed their point of view. Lame Deer and Crow Dog worked with writer Richard Erdoes to produce autobiographies. Wallace Black Elk collaborated with Scott Lyons to write a book about Lakota thought. Bill Schweigman authorized a biography authored by his student Henry Niese. Dallas Chief Eagle wrote a work of fiction based on his understanding of Lakota culture. And Moses Big Crow was involved with an oral history project through the University of South Dakota.

While this contestation reached its fullest intensity in 1974, the tensions did not derail the meetings, which continued until 1978. Perhaps the most potent act of resistance was that the medicine men continued to return to the table to share their stories and knowledge in spite of the fact that they felt Stolzman misinterpreted what they were saying. They continued to challenge many of his interpretations. They were also clear about what they felt was the appropriate corrective to Stolzman’s misunderstanding (or that of anyone for that matter). The only way to really understand Lakota thought was to experience Lakota ritual.

Emphasizing the Experience of Lakota Ritual

Throughout the MMPM, the Lakota participants referred to experience with great frequency, in many different ways. They were extremely distrustful of knowledge that

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comes from books and theories of any sort. Black Elk (Wallace) articulated this perspective during one meeting when he challenged Western assertions that Indian people arrived on the North American continent by crossing over the Bering Strait.

“Christian people theorize in the infinities. [They] theorize the western hemisphere was together at one time and we dumb Indians wandered off…They are always theorizing and these two never jive.” According to Black Elk, privileging theoretical knowledge creates confusion for people.

The medicine men firmly supported the notion that judgments and interpretations should be based on reflections about personal experiences rather than on the opinions or, knowledge obtained from others. At the very first MMPM, Stolzman asked the medicine man whether or not, as a spiritual advisor, he should recommend that Lakota attend a yuwipi ceremony. At issue for Stolzman was that some purported medicine men may well be frauds. At first, the medicine men were perplexed by the question. There was considerable exchange in Lakota and multiple speakers were engaged. Finally Kills Enemy said, “Well, I don’t know. To my knowledge I don’t know. Maybe he should go by his own judgment. To go and find out what is going on.” He was immediately affirmed by Black Bear, Jr. “That’s a good answer” and then by Black Bear, Sr. “Trust—prove it…prove it first.” There was more dialogue in Lakota, which the medicine men found humorous and Stolzman requested an interpretation. Apparently they were laughing because there were always rumors about various medicine men, that they were frauds. Each had been the object of these rumors and they laughed about it. Big Crow

turns the question on Stolzman and asks if the medicine men should pay attention to rumors about the priests; if they heard someone saying negative things about the priests should they listen? “No, we better have the facts first before we can do this. And that works vice-versa [with] these medicine men.” Big Crow says “If they want to find out, go there and, I think he [Kills Enemy] means attend their ceremonies to find out first hand whether this is so.”

The medicine men clearly believed that if the priests would attend their ceremonies that they would come to a better understanding of Lakota thought and practice and they frequently announced and extended invitations to the priests to attend various rituals. For example in October 1973, after a lengthy series of questions posed by the priests about how the medicine men could be so sure that the spirits that they communicated with were indeed not a guise of the devil, the priests immediately received invitations to participate in ceremonies. They received invitations for two different sweat lodges being held the next night, followed by another invitation to attend a ceremony that same evening that was to begin as soon as the meeting came to a close.

The experience gained by years of practice was also highly valued. One issue that recurred throughout the meetings regarded whether or not the pipe should be used in the Catholic Church. The medicine men could not come to a consensus on the issue, but they did agree that if this is done, the ritual specialist should be someone who has significant experience with the pipe. In their view none of the priests possessed this qualification.

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At one point, Schweigman argued that for now, the pipe and Mass should be kept apart.

In an exchange with one of the priests:

Schweigman: Keep them apart and try to find a way to make them work together. You teach me how to say the mass in a couple of Sundays and I’ll teach you our religion.

Priest: I think that is going to take years.

Schweigman: It is going to take years and it is going to take time before I could be ordained a minister. However, I am an ordained medicine man and I hold the pipe of the Sioux Nation Sun Dance and [am the] chief. And, [I want] to invite you this summer to our Sun Dance, Father I want you to participate with us. If you appear with me that is entirely up to you.

Priest: That is a very nice offer, but I am not ready.

Schweigman: These are the things, and I say that we are not ready (emphasis added).  

During the same meeting, medicine man Robert Stead referred not only to the importance of knowledge gained from years of experience, but also emphasized the importance of keeping an open mind. He argued that if he attended the Catholic mass he would approach it with an open mind and that he expected the same from the priests.

While the medicine men participating in the MMPM clearly valued some aspects of intellectual knowledge, for them the most powerful teacher of Lakota thought was experience. Their epistemology, or theory of knowledge, was that understanding must be grounded in the experiential, particularly through participation in Lakota ritual. This was so highly valued that they accepted one’s account of experiential knowledge over their

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own intellectual understandings or beliefs. For them the Western privilege of intellectual
knowledge was not only problematic, it was the site of difference between Lakota and
Western understandings of the world. The most revered of all experiential knowledge
was that received in direct communication with the spirits, which occurred almost
exclusively in ritual contexts.653

The experience of a vision, given by the spirits, was in fact the only requirement
for being a medicine man. This vision contained specific instructions for the medicine
man regarding ritual protocol and each was different. There was an appropriate time and
place for sharing this experience and it was during ceremony. In fact, hanbloglaka,654 the
recounting of the particular vision given a medicine man, telling “how you got it [the
vision] and who your spirits are,“655 was a requisite part of Lakota ceremony. “If you
have received a vision, and if you perform a ceremony, you pray with this [the
hanbloglaka]. You tell it then. It is a sort of a prayer.”656 In a number of cases, the
medicine men refused to discuss specific details or their personal understandings about
Lakota religious thought in the context of the meetings. This was, in their opinion, not
the appropriate place for elucidating such knowledge. However, they were more than
happy to invite the priests to participate in ceremonies so that the priests could learn what
they wanted to know in the appropriate ritual context.

653 There is one instance described by a medicine man who claimed that his vision did not occur during
ritual, but rather in broad daylight as he was working as a manual laborer on a farm.
654 For a complete discussion of the sacred ceremonial language of the Lakota, see William Powers, Sacred
Language: The Nature of Supernatural Discourse in Lakota, (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press,
1986).
656 Ibid.
The importance of experiencing a vision is most clearly demonstrated in the story of Big Crow. Big Crow was the grandson of two medicine men and had gone to ceremonies all his life. The other medicine men clearly respected him and what he had learned from attending ceremonies. He knew the songs, how the altars were arranged, and the order of ritual activities in a ceremony for a variety of medicine men (each was different). He had gone on the hill, in other words participated in the vision quest, but he had never experienced the necessary vision given by spirits. As such, Big Crow never claimed to be a medicine man, nor did the others recognize him as such.

**Concluding Thoughts**

Against a backdrop of social unrest in the American scene, transformations in approaches to thinking about Native peoples took place in multiple registers—institutionally, in the social imaginary, and among Native peoples. Paradigm shifts reflected an emergent understanding of the relevance of culture and historicity that produced a new more sympathetic approach to Native peoples. In this chapter, the focus on the colonial project shifts away from a focus on direct colonial activity to consider the insidious effects of colonialism, such as indirect colonialism, the impact on Native thinking, and material conditions. The colonized mind finds little room for pride and self-esteem and continues the work of the oppressor. Not all Indian people were colonized in this regard and not all were fully colonized. There was a vast range of Native responses to the colonial project. Life on the Pine Ridge and Rosebud reservations had changed little, under self-government. The same issues of poverty and health had not altered much since the finding of the Meriam report decades earlier.
AIM emerged out of this scenario, calling for a return to Native cultural practices, in particular religious practices such as the Sun Dance, because many of them were disconnected from their culture. At this particular intersection, a shift in thinking about Native peoples and the real world material conditions, AIM was set to garner international attention. Their strategies for social, political, and religious activism were often aggressive and violent. The attention on AIM obfuscated other activist endeavors that utilized different approaches.

In contrast to the social, political, and religious activism of AIM, the medicine men involved with the MMPM chose a strategy that focused on sharing the stories of their personal experiences and understanding. Caught between the constraints imposed by dominant culture and the colonization of their own Lakota people, they chose a strategy that was not violent. Rather, the strength of their approach rested on their ability to identify an opening in popular sentiment and the patience they demonstrated to engage in sustained dialogue and quiet resistance. These participants were the cultural knowledge bearers, whose efforts predated those of AIM by decades. They were marginalized not only in the public domain, but by their own people as well. They patiently challenged the status quo in two ways. First, they continued to practice Native rituals, such as the sweat lodge, vision quest, and yuwipi. And, annually they challenged the constraints imposed on the Sun Dance. Second, they chose to engage in storytelling. Storytelling was a vehicle for instruction and they sought to build their social identity via the practice, as well as change their social world.
Moses Big Crow emerges from the means as the principle mediator. He worked not only to mediate the dialogue between the medicine men and the priest; he also mediated between the medicine men. The agentive role he took during the MMPM is unusual. Not only did he serve as primary interpreter, he also oversaw the transcription of the majority of the dialogue, quite an accomplishment for a blind elder. Big Crow was motivated by a spiritual mission to bring all people together and he worked toward this end throughout the meetings.

Interpretation takes on a whole new meaning when considering the MMA. These men considered themselves interpreters on a spiritual level. Their primary work was interpreting the messages of the spiritual realm for the people. They worked to interpret on three registers—between the spirits and the people, between the priests and Native practitioners of Lakota ritual, and between their own people and themselves. They were very directed in their efforts to share the knowledge they carried with other Lakota and Indian people. Change would begin within.

In the next chapter I move to one individual who participated in the MMA and MMPM, Elmer Norbert Running. Although Running attended only a few MMPMs, throughout his life he considered himself as a member of the group. In the last year of his life, some four decades later he still carried a laminated card identifying him as a member of the Medicine Men’s Association.
CHAPTER 5: SMALL BEAR REVEALED: “WHEN THEY READ WHAT WE WRITE”

Ethnography, Social Science, and Gloomy Prognoses of the Sun Dance

I begin by offering a short vignette about historian of religions, Bruce Lincoln’s article titled “A Lakota Sun Dance and the Problematics of Sociocosmic Reunion,” in order to contextualize both my interest and the sorts of questions raised about the contemporary Sun Dance practice. I first read Lincoln’s article as research for a final paper for an undergraduate course on myth and ritual. At the time I was excited to find any academic article written about the contemporary Sun Dance (as they seemed in short supply) particularly one written by an esteemed and very popular scholar of religion whom we studied in the course. In the article Lincoln begins with an operative theory of religion and ritual. Religion offers a temporary and often partial relief to “a poignant sense of ontological separation, alienation, or estrangement” and ritual is the means for producing such moments of relief. That reunion is always only temporary necessitates a periodic recurrence of the ritual, which accounts for recurring ritual practices, such as the Sun Dance.658

657 I borrow this phrase from Caroline B. Brettell, When They Read What We Write: The Politics of Ethnography, Caroline B. Brettell, ed. (Westport, Connecticut and London: Bergin & Garvey, 1993).
In Lincoln’s assessment the Sun Dance offers temporary relief on two registers, both the cosmic and the social. He relates these to particular symbols of the Sun Dance. In his analysis the tree signifies vertical or cosmic reunion and the circle formation delineated by the four directions represents horizontal or social reunion. For Lincoln however, the contemporary practice is strained to its breaking point in its function to produce social reunion in light of a history of colonial conquest and repression. Lincoln observes that the contemporary practice frequently includes the admission of whites at some Sun Dances, raising important questions. “Just who is a part of one’s social universe? With whom does one wish to be reconnected? To whom can one gladly, honestly, and wholeheartedly say ‘We are all related?’” 659

Lincoln concludes by providing an example of a Sun Dance he attended in 1991 to demonstrate these issues “posed in particularly dramatic fashion.” 660 This particular annual dance, which began in 1979, was conducted by a medicine man, whom Lincoln refers to as Francis Small Bear. From the beginning, Small Bear maintained the position that his instruction from the spirits was to help all people because “we are all together on this earth.” 661 As such, race or ethnicity was not a determining factor for Small Bear when he considered who could dance and be a member of the community of practice. However, according to Lincoln, the year he attended the dance, it was an issue for a number of the participants from the local Lakota community, whose criticism had grown more vocal in direct relation to the ever increasing numbers of white participants. This

659 Ibid., 9.
660 Ibid.
661 Ibid., 10, 13.
culminated after the first day of dancing when “five Lakota women—all of whom enjoy considerable respect in the local community…—withdrew from the dance to protest Francis’s unprecedented elevation of a white woman to a position of leadership and ritual prominence.”662 In Lincoln’s final assessment we must question the efficacy of the ritual, or the capacity of the ritual to evoke social reunion, when an attempt to incorporate a broader social constituency (i.e., all people) comes at the cost of divisiveness on the local level.

When I first read the article I was taken aback by the statements of “fact” presented, which contradicted my personal experience of the Sun Dance. For example, he states that piercing takes place through the pectoral muscles of the chest and that all men are required to participate in this aspect of the ritual. In my personal experience, I find that neither of these statements is true.663 However, I was even more surprised when I reached the section where Lincoln describes the medicine man Small Bear and the specific Sun Dance he witnessed. I knew right away it was my father-in-law’s Sun Dance being described—his story being told—and that I had also been in attendance at the very same Sun Dance. Initially it was the direct quote, “we are all together on this earth,”664 that gave it away. Anyone who had attended any ceremony conducted by Elmer Norbert Running during the last 37 years would recognize that turn of phrase as it was central to his teaching. Never did a ceremony go by that he didn’t say this or the similar refrain, “we are all in this one world together.” If that alone did not make it clear that Small Bear

662 Ibid., 11.
663 I was first introduced to the Running family in the late 1980s and married one of Running’s sons in 1993. As the wife, daughter-in-law, and sister-in-law of Lakota medicine men, I have attended well over a hundred Sun Dances since the 1980s and danced myself for many years.
664 Ibid., 10, 13.
was Elmer Running, the biographical account and description of the dance certainly did. Nothing was changed except the names.

Carolyn Brettell, whose phrase I borrow for the title of this chapter, observes that when people read ethnographic accounts of their community they frequently make three critiques: 1) they note that pseudonyms don’t disguise the identity of the actors that are portrayed, 2) they are frequently troubled by social science terminology employed in the narrative, and 3) they find that the accounts tend to portray the community in a one-sided and gloomy perspective.\textsuperscript{665} She notes that members of the society being studied are not only increasingly readers of these accounts, but are also talking back.\textsuperscript{666} In my case, Brettell’s observations are accurate. Not only did Lincoln’s use of the pseudonyms fail to conceal my father-in-law’s identity, but the same was true in regards to the identity of other community members he mentions. I reflected on his statements of fact that did not correlate with my personal experience of more than twenty years and wondered what the material effects might be of the circulation of these inaccurate representations. And last, but certainly not least, I have to admit that I was disturbed by Lincoln’s final analysis that the Sun Dance may no longer be an efficacious ritual—a very gloomy prognosis, indeed.

If Lincoln’s assessment is correct, one might expect that the numbers of participants would be dwindling and we should soon see the ritual fade away. However, in the last three decades the Siouan form of the Sun Dance is arguably one of the most widely represented and practiced religious rituals from Indigenous North America. The number of Sun Dances held and the numbers of people participating in the ritual has

\textsuperscript{665} Brettell, \textit{When They Read What We Write}, 11.
\textsuperscript{666} Ibid., 2, 9.
grown significantly. During the summer of 2008, when I was visiting my father-in-law on the Rosebud Sioux Indian Reservation in South Dakota, there were fifteen different Sun Dances on that reservation alone. Sun Dances are not limited to this one reservation, nor are they found only on reservations or in the “Great Plains” states that we generally associate with the practice. Sun Dances that same year were held in California, Oregon, Washington, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Minnesota, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Florida, and Maryland. The Sun Dance is also a global phenomenon as the practice is transmitted across national borders. In 2008 there were five Sun Dances in Mexico, as well as Sun Dances in Denmark and Germany. Today participants cross tribal affiliations and Native (and non-Native) ethnicities. They come from other reservations, American urban areas, Mexico, Europe, and Japan. Links to other indigenous peoples, perhaps most notably dancers from Mexico, point to the sorts of connections being created with other indigenous communities under the rubric of indigeneity. These communities of practice extend well beyond the boundaries of specific reservations and traditional kinship units, which formed the pool of participants for most nineteenth-century Sun Dances.

In this chapter I examine three decades, 1980 through the present (2010), to consider the tremendous growth in the practice of the Sun Dance. Why is the Sun Dance growing? Why are people motivated to participate? What is being negotiated at sites of tension and anxiety as the pool of participants and the borders of the practice change? And, what are we to think of academic accounts such as that provided by Lincoln? What can we learn from them? I take Lincoln’s article as a point of departure to demonstrate

667 These locales indicate only the Sun Dances of which I have knowledge and it is likely that Sun Dances occur in other locales as well.
Brettell’s three-point critique. I argue that these three issues—ethnographic practice, social science terminology, and one-sided, gloomy perspectives re-circulate in other accounts and obfuscate the complexity of the dynamics of this ritual in the contemporary setting.

In the first section, “Considerations of Ethnographic Practice,” I contextualize approaches like Lincoln’s ethnographic observer account within contemporary conversations about ethnographic best practices. I provide an emic account of Small Bear/Running’s biography in order to illuminate critical aspects of Running’s approach to the Sun Dance that trouble Lincoln’s observations. In the second section, “The Enduring Valence of Hunter-Gatherer Discourse,” I trace a history of hunter-gatherer discourse, that has been identified as deeply implicated in early colonial projects and the way that it continues to shape interpretations by exaggerating certain aspects of the ritual. The third section, “Ideological Hegemony in the Contemporary Sun Dance Practice,” demonstrates that the gloomy, one-sided perspective Lincoln offers in his prognosis that the ritual may no longer be efficacious obscures the rich and complex emic ideological contestations at work. Here I take Lincoln’s primary concern regarding who constitutes one’s social universe to examine the ways that these contestations pivot on notions of identity and tradition, as Sun Dance communities of practice negotiate these issues.

In some way each of these critiques offers an emic perspective, which challenges and/or enriches Lincoln’s assessment of the contemporary Sun Dance practice. In the conclusion, “The Transformative Effect of Sun Dance,” I argue that while Lincoln is distracted by identity politics he misses the claims being made about the real
transformative effects of the Sun Dance ritual by participants, which account for much of the increase in the practice. As such, the Sun Dance practice continues to be a powerful, efficacious ritual.

**Considerations of Ethnographic Practice**

In her edited collection, *When They Read What We Write: The Politics of Ethnography*, Brettell notes that by the mid-1980s the trend of contemporary practitioners of ethnography was toward the reflexive, interpretive, and literary.\(^668\) Realization that the objects of study can and do read what the ethnographer writes led to a “contemporary crisis in ethnographic consciousness,”\(^669\) thus reception history becomes an important site of inquiry. Earlier ethnographic accounts were not subject to the same sort of academic crisis of consciousness in that the “Native” was assumed to be illiterate.\(^670\)

That the objects of study are indeed reading what is written about their communities and are talking back is evidenced by an emphasized focus on self-determination regarding the production of knowledge and representation, a key issue that permeates the academy more broadly and Native studies specifically. These conversations reflect broader conversations about the authority of insider (emic) and outsider (etic) status in research. A number of scholars have identified the way that the production of Western knowledge is implicated in imperial projects. As a result, some advocate insider research that presumes to avoid these pitfalls and gives special access to the truth. Yet others argue that insiders to the community do not necessarily understand

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\(^668\) Brettell, *When They Read What We Write*, 1-2.

\(^669\) Ibid., 3.

\(^670\) Illiteracy in the Native community is frequently associated with assumptions that are produced by hunter-gatherer discourse. See discussion later in this chapter.
their practices, may be blind to aspects of the practice, and are not able to maintain objective inquiry. Recently, other researchers have begun to trouble the insider/outsider distinction altogether. 671

Lincoln is not reflexive in his article. He does not provide a description of his ethnographic method nor does he account for his role as observer, which raises a number of important questions. Why did Lincoln shroud the event and people in anonymity? Did he ask permission to participate as an observer? He smoothly weaves observation and discussions with other participants with the biographical account, in order to provide an exemplary demonstration of contestation over participation, the critical point in his argument. Did he receive permission to interview and quote participants? The reader would assume Lincoln speaks directly to the ritual specialist as he sprinkles his narrative of Strong Bear’s biography with direct quotes. One has to wonder whether Lincoln identified himself as an academic observer. Nor do we receive from Lincoln any indication about the length of his engagement with the community. Did he return to the same dance? Did he follow up with people after the dance and if so, for how long? Would an ethnographic relationship with the community over an extended period of time have resulted in a different account? For example, the five women who left the sun dance that year, eventually returned, and the primary woman, whom Lincoln refers to as Roberta, became one of Elmer’s principal supporters in the last years of his life.

The important aspect of Lincoln’s account is that he actually observes a Sun Dance, which lends authority and credibility to his analysis. This is a common practice among many of the academicians who have written about the Sun Dance in the contemporary era. Philosopher of religion, Clyde Holler discusses his observation of Fools Crow’s Sun Dance on the Pine Ridge Reservation in 1983, which he describes in detail.672 Anthropologist, Elizabeth Lawrence notes that she attended a Crow Sun Dance on the Crow Reservation in 1980.673 Although Lincoln is the only one among his colleagues to obscure the identity of the community of practice being observed, their accounts are similar in that none is reflexive about his or her own role in the ethnographic production.

When Small Bear is revealed as Elmer Norbert Running, Lincoln’s interpretation of the contemporary Sun Dance practice is complicated. Running’s life story is significant beyond providing Lincoln with his case study. Running was one of the important figures shaping the contemporary dance practice and the years of the Running Sun Dance(s) correspond with and mirror the years of growth of the larger Sun Dance movement, as well as its issues. In the following section, I use Running’s death in 2009 as a point of departure to examine his life, influence, worldview, and practice as a medicine man in the Rosebud community in order to enrich our understanding of the dynamics that Lincoln found so fascinating.674

672 Holler, Black Elk’s Religion, 169-178.
673 Elizabeth Atwood Lawrence, “The Symbolic Role of Animals in the Plains Indian Sun Dance” in Society and Animals, Volume 1, Number 1, 19.
674 The composite biography is drawn from over 20 years of personal interaction with Running and an interview with his eldest son. Gilly Running, interview by author, 9 October 2009, Columbus, OH, tape recording.
An all-inclusive Approach to Lakota Ritual

~ Elmer Norbert Running~

ROSEBUD - Elmer Norbert Running was born May 23, 1921; he passed away on September 10, 2009.

Wake services for Elmer Running will be held at his residence at Iron Wood Community Sunday through Tuesday with services to be held there at 11:00 AM, Wednesday, September 15, 2009. Burial will follow at Iron Wood Hilltop Sundance Grounds. Elmer was born in Spring Creek, SD on May 23, 1921 to Frank and Alice (Janis) Running. He passed away at Rosebud Hospital on Thursday, September 10, 2009 at the age of 88 years. [sic]

The obituary, which appeared in the _Lakota Country Times_, was simple and perhaps fitting for a self-identified _ikce wicasa_ (common man). Only one small reference to his burial at a Sun Dance ground provided a clue to the role Running performed for countless people over many decades. It did not begin to describe the impact and widespread influence of the man during his lifetime. For more than forty years he worked as an “interpreter”676 for the spirits, conducting Lakota ceremony such as the Sun Dance, doctoring rituals (lowampi and yuwipi), sweat lodge, and vision quest. He was recognized on the Rosebud Reservation and beyond as a medicine man. He sang ceremonial and social songs, as well as danced at pow wows. Lakota was his first language. Although he lived on Rosebud Reservation for most of his life, he traveled

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676 Interpreter is the term that Running used to describe his work as a medicine man. The interpretive role is a recurring theme throughout the chapters of this dissertation.
extensively throughout the U.S. and abroad as a Lakota ritual specialist. There was no debate about Running’s identity; he was Lakota.

He began his first Sun Dance at Ironwood Hilltop on the Rosebud Reservation in August 1979. A close observer of the cycles in the natural world around him, Running chose early August because he had observed over decades an annual meteor shower at this time of year. It was not the first time that Running had conducted a Sun Dance but it was the first time that he and his wife Blanche also sponsored the event. The first year of the dance there were only a few dancers, men and women, all from the local Rosebud community. Within several years non-Natives began to participate and during the next decade the numbers of participants grew quickly and came from an ever widening base that extended well beyond the boundaries of Rosebud reservation. The growth was not slowed by the death of his wife in 1988, and by 1991, the last year that Running held the dance at Ironwood Hilltop and the year Lincoln attended, there were over 300 dancers and a thousand spectators.

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677 This is the annual Perseids meteor shower, which can be observed from mid-July through mid-August. The peak generally occurs in the second week of August, the date of the Ironwood Hilltop Sun Dance.

678 In the contemporary practice of the Sun Dance, the sponsor organizes the material aspects of the dance—the location, materials for the dance area and lodges, and food for the various feeds that take place. For descriptions of this role see Brown, “Sun Dance [First Edition]” 8845. Also, Lawrence, “The Symbolic Role of Animals in the Plains Indian Sun Dance,” 18.

679 There are discrepancies in the accounts about the first year regarding the exact number of dancers. Bruce Lincoln reports that his informants stated that there were sixteen dancers—eight men and eight women, see “A Lakota Sun Dance” 10. Gilly Running, the eldest son of Elmer and Blanche Running, recalls nine dancers—seven men and two women. But he states that he asked Albert White Hat, one of the original dancers, this question on two different occasions during the last several years. Both times White Hat reported that there were thirteen dancers—nine men and four women. See Gilly Running, interview by author, 12 December 2009, phone conversation.

680 Again we see discrepancies in accounts about the numbers of participants. Lincoln estimates the number at 150 (10). In my estimation there was twice that number of dancers. My suspicion is that Lincoln, being unfamiliar with the community and practice did not take into account that not all dancers dance all four days. So, although there may be 150 dancers in the arbor at any time over the four day period, as many as 300 could have danced.
During those years there was a great deal of change in the face of this community of practice. Who was dancing any given year fluctuated dramatically. Some participants felt called to dance for only a few years, some left to dance at other dances, and others left and started their own dances. Some dancers left because of disagreements over the way that the dance was held; Running’s all-inclusive stance, which allowed anyone to participate, was one such disagreement. But there were always new people to fill the void. Some left for several years and returned again, among those the principal women whom Lincoln described as opposed to Running’s stance for allowing anyone to dance. In other words, membership in the community of practice was always fluctuating.

In 1992 Running left Rosebud to move to the Santee reservation, where his new wife was a tribal member. He started a Sun Dance there, as well as starting Sun Dances in Indiana and Georgia. Various family members continued the dance at Ironwood Hilltop, which in 2009 celebrated its thirtieth anniversary. By 2000, Running had returned to the Rosebud reservation and he eventually received a tract of land next to the original hilltop site where he conducted the Morning Star Sun Dance until his death in 2009. Today over twenty different Sun Dances and hundreds of dancers trace their beginnings to Running. The networks of connection made through Running’s dances

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681 I want to note here that disagreements regarding the Sun Dance were not limited to who was allowed to participate. Some left because of Running’s stance that men and women should sweat separately. Others left because he refused to allow women to pierce. Some also left because of personal reasons. Running was known for his often grouchy demeanor and a number of dancers left because they felt that Running had been personally mean to them.

682 Just as Lincoln’s pseudonym for Running did little to conceal his identity, neither did his pseudonyms for the other actors in his narrative, such as the principal female vocal about her opposition to non-Native participation. This woman had returned to Running’s altar and was at attendance at Running’s Sun Dance the last year I was there in 2008. In spite of her advanced age, she was also at his wake every day.
reach globally to Mexico, Denmark, and Germany. Hundreds of Sun Dancers, both current and past, attended his funeral and to pay their respects.

Running’s contributions shaped not only the actual practice of the Sun Dance, but how we think about Lakota worldview. For some, such as Vine Deloria, Jr., Running’s life story was exemplary of an Indian way of life that had passed and was something for which Indian people should strive. His teachings about Lakota thought influenced scholars such as Ronald Goodman, who drew on Running’s interpretation about the relationship between the symbolism of the tipi and the place of the Lakota in relation to the universe. Fr. William Stolzman acknowledges his conversations with Running as contributing to his comparison of Catholic and Lakota worldview in *The Pipe and the Christ*. A.C. (Chuck) Ross describes the influence of Running on his decision to continue dancing after completing his original four-year commitment. “Later I was talking with a holy man named Norbert Running, and I said, “Well, I’ve completed my fourth Sun Dance. I’m finished now.” He sat there a long time, looking down, and then he commented, “You know, once you pick up the pipe, you’re never finished.”

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683 Deloria uses Running as a contemporary example of one whose vision quest was spirit initiated as opposed to those whose experiences are human initiated. He notes that Running received numerous calls (from the spirits or higher powers) before undergoing the vision quest ritual. He compares this experience to that of his ancestor Saswe. See Vine Deloria, Jr., *The World We Used to Live In: Remembering the Powers of the Medicine Men* (Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum Press, 2006), 17. For a detailed account of Saswe’s calling see Deloria, Jr., *Singing for a Spirit: A Portrait of the Dakota Sioux* (Santa Fe: NM: Clear Light Publisher, 2000), 3-38. One of the most famous examples of a spirit initiated calling comes from Nicholas Black Elk, as told through John G. Neihardt (Flaming Rainbow), *Black Elk Speaks, Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1932, 2000).


Not all Lakota or Indian people agreed with some of his foundational teachings, foremost among them that his altar was open to everyone, not just Indian people. He was known for a very literal interpretation of *mitakuye oyasin*, a key Lakota prayer roughly translated as “we are all related,” which he always associated with the instructions he received from the spirits. He was frequently taken to task about his willingness to allow *all people* to Sun Dance. Oftentimes the criticisms of Running were accompanied with various explanations for his stance. Some complained that he was being taken advantage of; others argued that he was in it for the money; some exclaimed that he was getting old and didn’t understand. In Lincoln’s account Small Bear is dismissive of the various criticisms of his stance. In fact, some recall that Running “seemed to care less” whether or not participants got along.\(^\text{688}\)

Three important points can be mined from this short biographical account of Running. First, there is the wide-spread and profound influence of Running on thought about Lakota ritual practice and the Sun Dance. His role as an “interpreter” for the spirits was recognized by the Rosebud community extending out to Indian people and beyond. Second was his unwavering commitment to an understanding of Lakota worldview, in which the prayer, *mitakuye oyasin*, conveys an all-inclusive approach to ritual practice. This stance was based on instructions he received from the spirits, in Running’s understanding, the ultimate source of authority. Last we read Running’s ultimate dismissal of internal contestation regarding the issue of who can participate. Lincoln notes Running’s response to the discord at the 1991 Sun Dance. “It seems to me that

\(^{687}\) This is also a stance that Lincoln insinuates. Lincoln, “A Lakota Sun Dance,” 10.

\(^{688}\) See for example, Gilly Running, interview by author.
things are going pretty good, and I’m not going to change them.” This suggests that in Running’s understanding the work of ritual did not necessitate that individual participants get along in order for the ritual to be efficacious.

The Enduring Valence of Hunter-Gatherer Discourse

In his 2004 work, *Hunter-Gatherers in History, Archaeology and Anthropology*, anthropologist Alan J. Barnard surveys the history of the enduring valence of hunter-gatherer discourse. He traces its inception to early work in the social sciences, where the category is prevalent in social and cultural anthropology and archaeology. For Barnard, this discourse carries connotations of its origin in the evolutionary approaches to the study of culture. It locates hunter-gatherer societies as an early (if not the earliest) stage of social evolution. Harvey Markowitz observes that this “developmental social theory or philosophy of history,” which emerged in the nineteenth century, “presumed a unilinear development of evolution of human societies,” in which primitive societies were deemed more infantile and were seen as developmentally falling behind their modern counterparts. Barnard observes that analyses based on this notion tend to emphasize danger and the warrior attributes of these social groups. As the antithesis of modernity, the hunter-gatherer is mobilized as savage. Barnard further argues that the noble-savage motif is another aspect of the hunter-gatherer discourse. Here members of

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society who feel alienated by aspects of modernity romanticize qualities of the hunter-gatherer society. This perspective is exemplified by Joseph Epes Brown in his discussion of the term religion within Native American culture. He writes “it is a fundamental and universal characteristic of Native American cultures, as indeed of all primal or primitive cultures, that “religion”…is not a separate category of activity or experience that is divorced from culture or society. Rather, religion is pervasively present and is in complex interrelationships with all aspects of the peoples’ life-ways.” In Brown’s account the primitive Indian worldview, that centers religious as permeating all relations, is a refreshing relief to the alienating compartmentalization of modern religion. What is important is that these connotations continue to shape accounts as we see in the work of Lincoln and other contemporary academicians.

We can trace how Lincoln draws on hunter-gatherer discourse to establish cause/effect relationships in order to account for or explain various aspects of the Sun Dance. For example when he seeks to explain why the Sun Dance, a four-day event, takes place in late July or early August, he links the timing of the Sun Dance to buffalo mating season—an important endeavor for a hunter-gatherer society. He distinguishes the rituals of hunter-gatherer societies from those from agricultural societies, whose

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693 For an extended account of the noble-savage binary in the enlightenment and American contexts see Deloria, *Playing Indian*.
695 I would note here the frequency with which this comparison is employed by academics, Native peoples and the attraction described by non-Native participants in Native ritual. See for example the discussion offered by Philip Arnold, “Determining the Place of Religion: Native American Traditions and the WWW,” in *Religion*, 32 (2002), 337-341.
696 Although I am speaking directly about academic representations, I do not intend to imply this perspective is limited to the academic realm. On the contrary, this perspective does circulate in the actual practice as we see in a segment of participants (almost always male), who call for ever increasing physical challenges, which mark the participant as a warrior.
rituals taking place in the spring. He argues that although the Lakota have long since ceased to depend on the buffalo, continuing to hold the dance at this time of year is identity driven as it “assert[s] a connection to their past.”\textsuperscript{697} It is only after the lengthy treatment that differentiates hunter-gatherer and agricultural societies that Lincoln, almost as an aside, suggests that the timing of the Sun Dance might have something to do with the fact that the sun is at its zenith during the summer months.\textsuperscript{698}

He describes the tree, which is an important symbol for his interpretation of vertical (re)union. He notes the ropes that are tied to the tree, one for each dancer, the rawhide buffalo and man figures, and the colors of the offerings and flags which mark the four directions, above, and below and symbolize the four races of man. His description of the actual dance is short, with the exception of the piercing aspect, which he observes provides the “most intense moments” of the Sun Dance and is required of all the male participants except for the young.\textsuperscript{699} He notes that the piercing passes beneath the pectoral muscles of the participants.

Lincoln offers a short account of the colonial period. The Sun Dance was outlawed in the 1880s, but continued to be performed in secret. The ban was repealed in the 1930s but the practice was suppressed in that piercing was forbidden until the 1950s. Afterward the practice became a tourist attraction and continued in this “impoverished form”\textsuperscript{700} until a watershed moment in 1972 when thirty activists from the American Indian Movement (AIM) danced and pierced. Lincoln argues that this event was

\textsuperscript{697} Lincoln, “A Lakota Sun Dance,” 5.
\textsuperscript{698} We have already seen that Running connects the timing for his Sun Dance with an annual meteor shower, pointing to neither hunter-gatherer discourse nor the sun at its zenith.
\textsuperscript{700} Ibid., 8.
supported by traditional leaders and it served to reaffirm the seriousness of the ritual. He sees the act as an assertion of ethnic identity and political militancy; an expression of ethnic pride.\(^7\) For Lincoln, the function of horizontal (re)unification in the Sun Dance is strained to the breaking point when participants include non-Native peoples, whose ancestors were germane to the practices of colonial conquest.

How does Lincoln’s account compare to those offered by other contemporary academicians? One commonality among the accounts is that each draws on hunter-gatherer discourse. When Lincoln evokes the hunter-gatherer discourse in his explanation about why the Sun Dance is held in late July-early August he is not alone. There appears to be an enduring valence to this discourse as it is characteristic in the majority of contemporary analyses of the Sun Dance. Lawrence draws on the hunter-gatherer motif as well. In her work about the symbolism of animals in the Sun Dance, she argues that the prestige of the buffalo as a sacred being comes into tension with the fact that the buffalo that must be killed as a primary source of food and material goods. The Sun Dance in her interpretation is one way of resolving this anxiety.\(^7\) While Lincoln and Lawrence privilege the hunter aspect of hunter-gatherer discourse, others focus on the gatherer aspect.

For example in his overview of Sun Dance in the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Brown notes that “these peoples were nomadic pasturalists” and the reason Sun Dances were held in late June or early July was because the sage was long and the chokecherries

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\(^7\) Ibid., 9.
\(^7\) While her work focuses on the Sun Dance more broadly, Lawrence does address the Lakota variation specifically. Lawrence, “The Symbolic Role of Animals in the Plains Indian Sun Dance,” 30.
were ripe. Brown’s interpretation is taken up and re-circulated in works such as Markowitz’s essay about the representations of the Sun Dance in Siouan painting. That Markowitz draws on this discourse demonstrates its enduring valence, as his other works do address the sort of work that a developmental or evolutionary approach had in furthering the civilization projects by the U.S. government and Christian organizations.

One prevalent aspect of the hunter-gatherer discourse is an emphasis on piercing as symbolic of and seminal to the development of warrior qualities. Lincoln notes that “piercing was understood to be part of a warrior’s training, steeling him to hardship and enacting a drama of capture by enemies, bondage and torture at their hands, and, finally, escape.” We see a similar analysis in Holler’s work, Black Elk’s Religion: The Sun Dance and Lakota Catholicism. He observes that the pre-reservation pledges to Sun Dance were made for success in war and thus served to reinforce the warlike values of the Sioux. Like Lincoln, Holler argues that the pre-reservation performance of the Sun Dance re-enacted a capture and escape motif that includes capture, torture, captivity, and escape.

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703 Brown’s use of the term “pasturalists” is misleading as pastoralism is the term used to identify the second evolutionary stage (after the hunter-gatherer) in developmental theory and refers to crop cultivation. This is clearly not Brown’s intention; rather he is speaking of the gatherer aspect of the hunter-gatherer discourse. Joseph Epes Brown, “Sun Dance [First Edition]” in Encyclopedia of Religion, ed. Lindsay Jones, Vol. 13, 2nd ed. (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), 8845.


707 Holler, Black Elk’s Religion, 150.

708 Holler traces this analysis to Walker, The Sun Dance, 149 and Sword’s description is clearly being recirculated in this analysis as well as in others See for example: Markowitz, “From Presentation to Representation in Sioux Sun Dance Painting” 165 and Rosalyn Amenta, “The Earth Mysticism of the Native American Tribal Peoples with Special Reference to the Circle Symbol and The Sioux Sun Dance Rite (Vision-Quest)” (Ph.D. diss., Fordham University, 1987), 153.
It is not surprising therefore that piercing in the performance of the Sun Dance is particularly prominent in these accounts, nor that they frequently describe a piercing that takes place under the muscle. It appears in many academic descriptions of the ritual and it is loaded with affect. Theorist Sara Ahmed argues that there is an emotionality of texts, that certain words and phrases are signs of emotion that stick to particular bodies and that we need to be attentive to “the circulation of words for emotion.”

Take for example the description offered by Brown of Sun Dance participants “to have the muscles of the chest pierced…These people then dance, encouraged by the drums and the songs of warriors (brave songs), pulling back on the thongs until the flesh and muscles tear loose.”

By far the majority of academic accounts describe piercing, as do Brown and Lincoln, as taking place either through or beneath the pectoral muscle. And Lincoln himself points to the affective when he observes that piercing is “[t]he most intense moments of the Sun Dance.” This registers on an affective level as disgust, which Ahmed effectively argues “is crucial to power relations” in that it serves “to differentiate between higher and lower bodies or more and less advanced bodies.”

Ahmed also observes that disgust is “metaphorically sticky” in that it is “a sign that gets repeated and accumulates affective value.”

We can observe the accumulation of affective value during the historical period of conquest and colonialism as piercing takes on particular emphasis as exemplary of the

713 Ibid., 89.
714 Ibid., 90.
sorts of practices that must be “vigorously repressed.” During the period of repression, Sun Dances sans piercing symbolize, for Lincoln, an “impoverished form.” Holler identifies this period of Sun Dances as one class of the dance, which although tribally supported, was a product of imperialism. In these accounts, some Sun Dances were held in private and may have included piercing, but they can’t be analyzed because they were secret and there were no public dances to observe. The dances that did take place in public were mere mimicry and the analyses imply that the actual practice was lost. The effect of the emphasis on piercing is that the practice is elevated as the primary rite of the Sun Dance. In other words, rather than being one aspect of the practice like that of fasting or gazing at the sun, piercing takes on exaggerated importance as central to the Sun Dance.

In these accounts the resurgence of piercing is symbolic of the revitalization of the Sun Dance, which occurs through the effort of the American Indian Movement (AIM) during the 1970s. Lincoln describes a particular dance in 1972, when AIM members pierce, as the moment when piercing becomes public. Holler locates the reclamation of piercing in the 1950s. In all cases the birth and participation of AIM and the reclamation of the piercing aspect are noted as significant factors in the shifts regarding both the meaning and function of the practice. The dances take on a political bent and in these accounts the dance functions as a performance and marker of an Indian identity.

715 Holler, *Black Elk’s Religion* 110. A discussion of this history is taken up in Chapter 2.
717 Holler, *Black Elk’s Religion*, 193. Holler’s criticism of the tribally sponsored Sun Dances is ironic as they were run by Frank Fools Crow, whom Holler identifies as perhaps the most legitimate and traditional of Sun Dance chiefs (178). For a thorough discussion of this period see Chapter 4 of this dissertation.
The accounts shaped by hunter-gatherer discourse are in stark contrast to the personal experience of many participants. For example, in her autobiography, Mary (Moore) Crow Dog reflects on her observations of dancers, who with a “trace of smile” on their faces danced with the tree. “[O]ne has only to look at their faces, their eyes, to see that they are dancing in a trance.”718 Thus when she dances and pierces for the first time she explains, “I did not feel any pain because I was in the power…I felt nothing, and at the same time everything.”719 This difference is noted by Native scholar Tink Tinker who writes, “While much of the professional literature misrepresents the piercing as self-torture or self-mutilation, for Indian communities it is always seen as a personal sacrifice offered on behalf of the people. In any event, participants invariably report that the piercing itself is not the most difficult aspect of this demanding ceremony, but rather comes as a climactic resolution that brings relief to the tension of one’s prayers.”720

In this brief survey of contemporary academic accounts there are many differences from the various scholars—differences that lie in small details such as the exact timing of the practice, when piercing became reclaimed in the practice, location (was it held on a hilltop or in a depression), and how many people participated. They also differ in their interpretation of what sort of work the Sun Dance is doing and what is symbolized by the performance of the ritual. Although, these accounts come from a diverse range of academic disciplines—history, philosophy, anthropology, and art history—they are also quite similar. Each scholar paints a conjectural history of a pre-

718 I use (Moore), Mary Crow Dog’s maiden surname to distinguish between her and her husband. (Moore) Crow Dog and Richard Erdoes, *Lakota Woman*, 259.  
719 Ibid., 260.  
reservation past practice that is profoundly shaped by hunter-gatherer discourse. They provide a historical context that addresses a colonial period when the practice was repressed, which serves to account for various changes in the practice. In this historical narrative, the piercing aspect is elevated in its importance to the ceremony and the reclamation of this practice during the social movement of the 1970s becomes a marker of Lakota identity specifically and Native identity more broadly. Yet, none of these analyses account for the affective release noted by (Moore) Crow Dog and Tinker.

**Ideological Hegemony in Contemporary Sun Dance**

“Just who is a part of one’s social universe? With whom does one wish to be reconnected? To whom can one gladly, honestly, and wholeheartedly say ‘We are all related’?”

It is important to consider Lincoln’s central questions within a shifting political climate that is more attentive to issues of self-determination. As a result of the social movements of the 1970s, a primary focus for tribal governments broadly and Indian people specifically has been self-determination in politics, representation, and culture. The importance of self-determination responds to a lengthy history of colonial dispossession, containment, repression, and forced assimilation where Native culture, in particular Native religious practices, was seen as an impediment to the colonial project. Since 1970 there has been a flood of federal legislation in areas such as self-determination, education, religious freedom, protections for Indian children.

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and repatriation. Although this series of reform legislation draws a great deal of criticism, it does signal a shift away from a federal policy of termination, both for tribal governments and Indian identity, to one of imagining some sort of nation-to-nation status.

The impact of this legislation is clear for tribes such as the Rosebud and Oglala Sioux. These two tribes are closely related through history, geography and kinship. Yet, a close reading of how each tribe works to represent its nation reveals significant differences in how they imagine self-determination in politics, representation, and culture.

*Imagining Self-determination in Politics, Representation, and Culture*

The Rosebud Sioux Indian Reservation is located in south central South Dakota and encompasses 922,759 acres. The 2003 census reports 24,426 enrolled members of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe (RST), of whom, 20,762 live on the reservation. The reservation unemployment rate is approximately 82% and the per capita income ranked Mellette County (home of the Rosebud Reservation) sixty-sixth out of sixty-six counties.

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727 Each of these pieces of legislation has been amended since its initial passage into law and each has come under considerable backlash as the acts tend toward policy statements and lack the appropriate measures to enforce their provisions. Take for example the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, which states “That henceforth it shall be the policy of the United States to protect and preserve for American Indians their inherent right of freedom to believe, express, and exercise the traditional religions of the American Indian, Eskimo, Aleut, and Native Hawaiians, including but not limited to access to sites, use and possession of sacred objects, and the freedom to worship through ceremonials and traditional rites.” This act has come under attack in a variety of ways, perhaps most notably for the Native American Church. A copy of the act is available at [http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/38/d0/9d.pdf](http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/38/d0/9d.pdf), Internet. For an overview of this issue see: Matthew L. M. Fletcher, “American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978,” in *Encyclopedia of American Civil Liberties, Volume 1*, ed. Paul Finkelman (New York: Routledge, 2006), 51-52.
in South Dakota in 1995. To the west of Rosebud is the Pine Ridge Reservation, home to the significantly larger Oglala Sioux Tribe (OST) whose reservation population was 28,787 in 2005. According to 2008 figures the OST has 47,197 enrolled members, almost twice the enrolled membership of the Rosebud Sioux. Although a significantly larger percentage of tribal members live off the reservation, the majority of Oglala Sioux citizens, live within the service area or the state of South Dakota. Like Rosebud, residents of Pine Ridge experience high unemployment and poverty with 45% of families and 52% of the individuals living below the poverty line.

As of 2010, both tribes have official web-sites that are generated and maintained by their respective tribal governments. The official web-site for the RST resides on a recently established nsn.gov web-site. Today, federally recognized tribes are eligible to house web-sites under this federal government domain because of their “native sovereign nation” status. The tribe petitions the U.S. government for such a site and while the RST’s request has been approved, that of the OST is awaiting approval. Work on both sites is currently ongoing (2010).

The RST maintains a historical timeline that presumably highlights watershed moments and issues that significantly impacted the tribe. Examining the moments deemed worthy for inclusion in the tribe’s self-determined representation of the period of

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the 1970s to the present, several themes emerge. First, the dynamics of continued interrelations and influence between the two governmental entities (the U.S. and the tribe) is clear. For example, federal legislation from the 1970s in the realm of education is noted on the timeline. The timeline demonstrates that this legislation was beginning to manifest change for the tribe by the early 1980s. In 1982 control of the St. Francis School, which had been run by the Jesuits, was transferred to Indian control. The site notes that “after 95 years the Jesuits leave.” Further, the tribal college, Sinte Gleska, received accreditation as a four-year college in 1983 and university status in 1992 making Sinte Gleska University “the first tribally controlled higher learning institution to become a university.” Self-determined, tribally controlled education has been a focus of the RST during the last three decades.730

Second, the history and ramifications of colonial activity continues to concern the tribe. For example, throughout this period the Black Hills claims issue has been of primary importance to the tribe. In 1982 the federal government offered an out-of-court settlement in attempts to settle a decades-long legal battle undertaken by Lakota tribes regarding the U.S. seizure of the Black Hills in violation of treaty agreements. The amount of the award (first offered in 1979), in excess of thirty-nine million dollars, was rejected by the RST. In 1984 the tribe held a referendum poll and by a narrow margin the citizens agreed to accept the monetary compensation. RST discarded the results and officially rejected the settlement. Today the treaty committee, which participates in the

Black Hills Claims Commission, is one of the primary committees of the RST’s tribal council.\textsuperscript{731}

Third, members of the RST recognize dual citizenship, an ambiguous role. The web-site notes numerous military engagements undertaken by the U.S. in recent years and emphasizes the participation of Sicangu citizens in each case. Highlighting contemporary wars such as the 1991 Gulf War, the 1995 Balkan War, the 2001 Afghanistan War, and in 2003 the Iraq War, the RST represents its members as both citizens of a sovereign nation and simultaneously, responsible citizens of the U.S.\textsuperscript{732}

The fourth and final theme to emerge from the site is the way in which Sioux (Lakota) culture is fore-grounded in decision-making processes, and the transmission of culture is an important concern for the tribe. For example, a recent amendment to the RST constitution (2007) charges the tribal council “to develop plans and consider implications of the decisions they make on the next seven generations.”\textsuperscript{733} In terms of education the emphasis on cultural preservation and continuity is self-evident as the tribe centralizes cultural transmission in their educational institutions. Lakota language and culture classes are now part of K-12 and higher education curriculum.

In some areas, particularly negotiating representational government and traditional governing structures, the move toward culturally relevant self-determination is more difficult. One of the primary critiques of the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act is that


\textsuperscript{732} Rosebud Sioux Tribe, “History of the Sicangu.”

the tribal constitutions required by the Bureau of Indian Affairs were not to sensitive traditional tribal approached to the governance of the people.\footnote{For a general overview of the critiques of the Indian Reorganization Act: Washburn, “A Fifty-Year Perspective on the Indian Reorganization Act,” 279-289.} Today, the tribe struggles to imagine traditional governance practices in the contemporary setting.

Since the 1980s the RST has reapportioned communities and their representation several times. In 1988, the original twenty communities represented by elected council members were changed to encompass eight districts with eleven representatives apportioned by population. In 1991, the districts were again reapportioned, this time with thirteen districts represented by twenty councilpersons. In 2004 the “Lakota women for change” petitioned council for a major overhaul of the constitution and a committee was charged with recommending changes. As a result twenty-seven amendments were recommended and they appeared on a special ballot in July of 2007. Twenty-three of the recommended amendments were adopted.\footnote{See Rosebud Sioux Tribe, “Constitutional Changes,” 1-56.} Of significant note, the four amendments rejected centered on wording that would have officially changed the name of the tribe from RST to the Sicangu Nation. Of the adopted constitutional changes, one again restructured the districts and their representation. The original twenty community designations were reinstituted, but representatives would be elected by citizens of the tribe at-large rather than by the individuals in the community represented.

The OST takes a different approach to representing the tribe. Although a much larger reservation area with a larger population base, the Pine Ridge Reservation is divided into nine districts that have remained unchanged since their constitution was first
approved. Each district has two representatives with the exception of Pine Ridge, which has three representatives. Like the RST, OST recently adopted numerous amendments to its constitution (2009), many of which emphasize culture as being a critical frame for decision-making. The two constitutions are very similar in design and wording both in regards to the initial documents and in the recently adopted amendments.

However, the OST historical narrative takes a different approach particularly in the way tribal identity is linked to popular culture representations. In addition to noting famous Oglala, such as Crazy Horse, Red Cloud, and Billy Mills, the web-site reminds the reader that the Oglala are the people represented in Dances with Wolves, Thunderheart, Black Elk Speaks, and The Broken Cord. Whereas the RST begins its historical account in 1934 when its constitution was adopted, the OST locates its history within a 150-year long colonial history between the U.S. and the Oglala, which emphasizes the United State’s role in the continued economic disparity of the Oglala Nation within the broader U.S. context.\footnote{Oglala Sioux Tribe, “About the Tribe, History.”}

**Issues of Race, Ethnicity, and Culture**

In this atmosphere of self-determination it is not surprising that the Sun Dance is a site where counter-hegemonic resistance to dominant culture is expressed not only in regards to how the practice is represented, but who can participate. However, when the principal value of a practice is conceptualized as all-inclusive, such as we see in the fundamental prayer, mitakuye oasin (we are all related) and as exemplified in the Small Bear/Running case, a conflict emerges in “minority-specific/majority-inclusive
distinction.”737 In the case of the Sun Dance, at the intersection of identity and tradition, we can trace hegemony on multiple registers.

Anthropologist Beatrice Medicine, who was enrolled in the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, provides a nuanced understanding of the issue of identity in the contemporary Sun Dance practice. In the introduction to their collection of essays about Sioux religion, editors Douglas Parks and Raymond DeMallie note “Of all the contributors to this volume, Dr. Medicine embodies most thoroughly in her own life both the participant in and the student of traditional religion.”738 In her article, “Indian Women and the Renaissance of Traditional Religion,” Medicine acknowledges her location as both anthropologist and a Lakota woman. Although she notes that it can be challenging to simultaneously hold Native and academic perspectives, she argues it is entirely possible to do so because her Lakota family transmitted strong Lakota cultural belief and values. It is from this grounded position she is “able to function in two worlds.”739

In her account of Sun Dance history, Medicine situates the contemporary practice in the colonial context of “cultural repression,”740 a period of re-emergence in the 1950s, a revitalization movement for some Sioux in the 1960s and by the 1970s, due largely to

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737 See Greg Johnson’s treatment of minority-specific/majority-inclusive distinction in his work on NAGPRA and repatriation. Johnson’s focus is on the ways that tribes work to appeal to dominant society through Christian discourse (majority-inclusive) while seeking to maintain minority-specific status. My argument here is somewhat different. The focus here is on inter-group dynamics where the religious imperative for the Lakota is all inclusive, which is in tension with counter-hegemonic resistance to dominant society. Greg Johnson, “Facing Down the Representation of an impossibility: Indigenous Responses to a ‘Universal’ Problem in the Repatriation Context,” *Culture and Religion*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (March 2005): 61, 63.


740 Ibid., 162.
the participation of the American Indian Movement (AIM), a nativistic movement and marker of a pan-ethnic Indian identity. Yet, Medicine observes some participants are not engaged in the practice for the purpose of identity performance associated with the nativistic movement. For Medicine some people are looking for “a viable believable system—an orientation to something that will guide them through their lives.” This orientation is about achieving a “well-being” which is accomplished by the embrace and practice of the Lakota virtues—generosity, fortitude, wisdom, and bravery—shaped by an understanding of one’s place situated within the larger extended family unit, the tiyospaye. According to Medicine motivation differentiates these participants from those caught up in the nativistic movement. Are they participating for the good of the people? Is their participation a sincere attempt to reorient their life-style; to embody the Lakota belief and values? Or is their participation motivated by desire to be recognized as a certain type of person or as a marker of ethnic identity? What is important about Medicine’s distinction is that she did not think that all of those participating in the Sun Dance movement were engaged in a performance of identity. For some there is a shifting of worldview that involves the transformation of actions that more clearly perform and transmit Lakota values.

741 Ibid., 162-163.
742 Ibid., 164.
743 Ibid., 166.
Case study: Contrasting Lakota Experiences

We see the Lakota characteristics described by Medicine exemplified in the autobiography of Leonard Crow Dog. Crow Dog, along with Frank Fools Crow, are most famously known as the primary spiritual advisors to AIM during the 1970s. Crow Dog’s personal narrative is unique in a number of regards. His individual story does not even begin until the ninth chapter. The first eight chapters work to establish his individual identity as deeply situated within a broad constituency of relations. One of the earliest stories that he tells is that of the White Buffalo Calf Woman. Of the many

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744 I want to acknowledge that these sorts of mediated productions have come under considerable criticism from a wide range of Native academics such as Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, Edward Valandra and Gerald Vizenor who argue these texts are another act of imperialism, which must be situated within the context of historical acts of conquest (such as presuming to represent the other) because they are written by non-Native authors. These critiques make three important contributions: they draw attention to the link between imperialism and the colonization of the mind, they illuminate the ways these productions work to render the subject invisible, and they raise questions about why there are not any Native-to-Native collaborative efforts. These critiques draw on a much broader contemporary discussion about colonialism that takes a two-pronged approach. First, there has been a tremendous effort identifying the colonial processes of oppression. One of the most significant works drawn on by many is Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples by Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999). Smith draws from Michel Foucault as she works to deconstruct the “regimes of truth.” She identifies four discursive strategies: imperialism, history, writing, and theory, as critical to the ways Native people have been colonized. The second effort has been to imagine a process of decolonization. For Smith this entails decolonizing methodologies where indigenous-centered research that is self-determined by and contributes to Native communities. While the critiques of the “as-told-to” stories raise important questions, they close the door to the possibility that the Native collaborator is self-determining. Cook-Lynn argues that the notion that this genre might contribute to our understanding of Native experience is misguided. For her, the genre is more about the social commentary provided by the white writer. While Cook-Lynn’s rhetorical strategy calls into question the mode of production, she also challenges the authority and legitimacy of the Native collaborator, which is evidenced by her observation that the native collaborators are almost always marginal in their community This argument becomes difficult to sustain when the sources are considered ritual specialists in their communities, which is the case for example for Leonard Crow Dog and Elmer Running. See Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, Anti-Indianism in Modern America: A Voice from Tatekeya’s Earth (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001); Edward Valandra, “The As-Told-To Native [Auto]biography: Whose Voice is Speaking?” in Wicazo Sa Review (Fall 2005), 103-119; and Gerald Vizenor, Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994, 1999).

745 I examine this relationship in more detail in Chapter 4.

746 This myth is fundamental to Lakota life and worldview as it describes how the Lakota came to be in possession of the Sacred Pipe, the crucial religious instrument of all Lakota ceremony and prayer. There
Lakota oral stories, that of the White Buffalo Calf Woman is the central narrative transmitting Lakota belief and values about establishing and maintaining right relations. By beginning with this story, Crow Dog situates his personal genealogy as directly linked to and shaped by the primary and primordial source of Lakota worldview. The following chapters clearly trace his relationship to his biological family, his tiyospaye (extended family or clan), the Lakota people, Indian people, non-Native people, and the spiritual world around him. In this we can read a different sense of a relationship to history and one’s personal identity as related to the larger human and non-human community. Crow Dog traces his direct family lineage to his great-grandfather, which directly connects him to the pre-reservation era. He writes about how a one hundred-year-old feud is resolved in the contemporary era at a Sun Dance.\(^\text{747}\) Crow Dog is meticulous and detailed when describing each relationship.

Crow Dog also conveys the sense of responsibility that he feels for his relatives. He notes that his motivation for participating in the production of this book starts with his family. “I want all this put down. I want my children to have a legend. It is important that they know the history of the Crow Dog generations.”\(^\text{748}\) His work as a medicine man is also clearly tied to the people. He relates the instructions received by the spirits during his first vision quest at the age of thirteen. The spirits tell him that he is to be an “interpreter for your people. Open your heart to them.”\(^\text{749}\)


\(^{748}\) Crow Dog is referring to the 1881 murder of Chief Spotted Tail by his ancestor, ibid., 39.

\(^{749}\) Ibid., 74.
His descriptions of his relatives explicate the qualities valued in the Lakota culture. His family displays a strong work ethic and they are industrious. His father builds their home with his own two hands; his mother is always cooking and feeding the people. She is quite adept at the Lakota skills of beadwork. The family centers their world on ceremony and they are quite generous with their time, home, and food. “The house was always filled with guests…whenever there was ceremony the whole floor was covered with bodies.”

There is relatively little told in Crow Dog’s autobiography about the Sun Dance specifically. In this narrative, the Sun Dance practice is one part of a larger Lakota ritual complex centered on a specifically Lakota approach to engaging the world where one’s social universe is conceived as all inclusive.

We also read in Crow Dog a critique of dominant culture and colonialism, yet this differs from the academic accounts in that details are more specific and the accounts privilege the resistance to oppression. He observes the way ceremony was forbidden, but spends a significant amount of time detailing the ways the practice continued in spite of the repression. He is quite aware of the savage/civilized dichotomy promoted by dominant culture. “From the white man’s point of view, Old Man Crow Dog was still living in the stone age—savage and uncivilized.” In spite of his supposed illiteracy, Crow Dog is quite knowledgeable about the dominant narrative.

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750 Ibid., 66.
751 Ibid., 12.
752 I use the qualifier “supposed” to draw attention to the ways in which Crow Dog is quite savvy about his self-representation. Both in his autobiography and in teaching he draws attention to the way he avoided education. Crow Dog mobilizes this rhetoric in two ways--first, as a statement that he is not tainted by dominant education; his mind was never colonized. Second, he also uses the rhetoric to make fun of western evolutionary approaches as he mocks notions of savagery and civilization. However when he arrived at our home on June 17, 1995, shortly after I had purchased one of the early releases of the book, he...
This narrative is very different from that of Crow Dog’s wife, Mary (Moore) Crow Dog, which is presented in *Lakota Woman* (1990). These “as-told-to-autobiographies” offer two different sorts of narratives about life experiences on the Rosebud reservation, which complicates our understanding of the Lakota experience. Moore’s family took the path of assimilation, she can not trace her lineage in the same way that her husband can and she is quite clear about issues of identity that resulted for her because of her background. She notes her experience was one of “being an iyeska, a half-blood, being looked down upon by whites and full-bloods alike,” unlike her husband’s family members who “have no such problems of identity.”

We read in this narrative many of the Lakota virtues that Medicine addresses: generosity, feeding the people, the importance of extended family (she is raised by her grandparents), and speaking the language. Her grandmother and mother attended boarding schools and accepted Christianity; they had, in her words, “whitemanized.” She was discouraged from speaking her Native language and encouraged to pursue an education and to behave as white because this was perceived as a way to get ahead. One senses from (Moore) Crow Dog a feeling of lack and being an outsider in her own community and this appears to emerge from differences in one’s religious sensibilities. As she moves into her husband’s world she is impressed by the way “religious

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spent considerable time reading through various sections. After giving his approval, he “autographed” my copy.

754 Ibid., 5.
755 Ibid., 8.
756 Ibid.
meaning”\textsuperscript{757} is part of every day life. Her sense of struggling between two worlds is between that of a “footloose half breed” and a “traditional Sioux woman,” which makes her feel like she has a “split personality.”\textsuperscript{758} For (Moore) Crow Dog, witnessing her first Sun Dance evokes a “personal re-awakening”\textsuperscript{759} and at her first Sun Dance as a participant she feels she “became wholly Indian” for the first time.\textsuperscript{760}

**Identity and Tradition as Rhetorical Strategies**

Race as a primary category of identity differentiation is clear in the work of Lincoln, who distinguishes between the Native and non-Native dancers he observes at the “Small Bear”/Running Sun Dance. Yet race is a complicated, complex and messy marker of Native identity. From Mary Crow Dog’s account, we hear rumblings about mixed bloods and from Medicine the complications of Lakota and pan-ethnic Indian identity, which place the marker of differentiation in the realm of ethnicity. In the article “Indigenous Identity: What Is It, and Who Really Has It?” Hilary Weaver argues for a focus on cultural identity rather than the categories of race (Native, non-Native) or ethnicity (ethnic specific and pan-ethnic) as a category for examining identity differentiation. Weaver argues that cultural identity is co-constitutively produced by self-identification, community identification and external identification and that it is shaped by processes of recognition, absence of recognition, and misrecognition and that individuals occupy multiple subject positions.\textsuperscript{761}

\textsuperscript{757} Ibid., 250.
\textsuperscript{758} Ibid., 251.
\textsuperscript{759} Ibid., 257.
\textsuperscript{760} Ibid., 260.
\textsuperscript{761} Ibid., 243, 244-246.
Questions of identity are important sites of contestation in that they serve to make a distinction between who can and cannot assert and represent community interests. As Weaver notes, “identity is always based on power and exclusion.”\textsuperscript{762} One of the most frequently employed and powerful rhetorical strategies used to delegitimize authority in Indian country is to call identity into question be it in the register of race (Native and non-Native), ethnicity (Lakota or not Lakota), or culture (language, residence, etc.). This strategy, which functions by challenging multiple registers of race, ethnicity, and culture, emerges out of and obscures contestation over ideological hegemony that pivots on a constellation of tradition, authenticity, and the real or true.

Raymond Bucko astutely observes, “Tradition itself is a vital term in contemporary Lakota discourse and constitutes a key symbol in Lakota culture. Tradition is used on the reservation today both as a term to authenticate a legitimate link to the past and as a mark of legitimacy itself. People, behaviors, and ceremonies are often called traditional.”\textsuperscript{763} The deployment of the term tradition is not limited to reservation Indians; it is equally bantered in academic ranks. For example in the two entries regarding the Sun Dance in the recently released \textit{Encyclopedia of Religion}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} edition (2005), the two contributors, Brown and Tinker use some variation of the term eighteen times in a six-page entry. Brown’s contribution is telling:

\begin{quote}
Attention will also be given to contemporary movements among many Native American peoples for revitalization of \textit{traditional} sacred values and practices. Indeed, it is primarily the Sun Dance that, as its popularity increases is
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{762} Ibid., 244.
\textsuperscript{763} Raymond Bucko, \textit{The Lakota Ritual of the Sweat Lodge: History and Contemporary Practice} (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 14.
acting as model and stimulus for *traditionalist* movements extending even to non-Plains tribes and to disenchanted non-Native Americans who are seeking examples of what *true* religious *traditions* really are.\(^6\)

The term “tradition” has become what Maurice Stevens terms an “evacuated signifier.”\(^5\) It is emptied of meaning thus it is able to cross boundaries easily and has the power to fill multiple needs.

A number of scholars are working to tease out what is at work in the rhetoric of tradition, authenticity, and the real or true. Bucko advocates an approach that focuses on the dialectic in order to understand the production of tradition. “The dialectical process holds that two opposite propositions (the thesis and the antithesis—in this case, the past and the present) come together to create a unique synthesis (in this case, tradition).”\(^6\)

Others, such as Regina Bendix, whose own work is about the production of authenticity within the academic discipline of folklore, suggest that the critical question is not what is being produced (tradition, authenticity), but rather how is the term being used.\(^5\)

**Case Study: Appeals to Tradition**

In this case study I look at the “Lakota Declaration of War against Exploiters of Lakota Spirituality” to examine the ways that the term “tradition” crosses boundaries and fulfills various functions. The much publicized 1993 declaration of war targeted new-agers, popular culture media such as television and film, academia, and Native people who contributed to what participants at the summit framed as a spiritual genocide. Non-

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\(^5\) Discussion with Maurice Stevens, 2/19/10.

\(^6\) Bucko, *The Lakota Ritual of the Sweat Lodge*, 12.

Natives, and Native peoples who associated with them, were seen as exploiters, abusers, and as misrepresenting the spiritual traditions of Native people.

The declaration begins with the statement “we represent the recognized traditional spiritual leaders, the traditional elders.” Disseminated across the internet and other media outlets, the declaration gains its authority and legitimacy by presenting itself as representative of a monolithic (traditional) Indian worldview. Scholar of religion Greg Johnson notes that “speaking tradition constructs authority.” Many of the web-sites, such as the one maintained by the American Indian Cultural Support organization, note that the declaration was unanimously passed and that there were over five hundred representatives representing forty different tribes and bands of the Lakota. They urge the reader to support and encourage others to support “each and every word written here.”

The declaration circulated widely and by the time it reached the national scene, the New York Times incorrectly reported that it was approved by the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI). NCAI, a national organization founded in 1994, serves to represent tribal interests in federal policy and legislation and NCAI never approved the declaration. The declaration was signed by only three individuals, none of whom is an official representative of either their respective tribe or a national organization. The perspective advocated carried a great deal of potency, due in part at least, to the way it self-legitimized as representing traditional interests.

768 “Lakota Declaration of War.”
769 Johnson, 63.
At issue in the declaration is the participation of “non-Indian ’wannabes,’” hucksters, cultists, commercial profiteers and self-styled “‘New Age shamans’ and their followers,” who are viewed as desecrating, mocking and abusing Lakota ceremony. As the antithesis of traditional, the new-ager is posited as responsible for the “contamination” and the “exponential exploitation of our Lakota spiritual traditions.”

Like the deployment of the term tradition, the use of the term new-ager (an equally empty signifier) is circulated on many fronts and works to discredit and dismiss. There is a proliferation of articles and books about the subject pointing to a deep anxiety about the appropriation of Lakota ceremony specifically and Native religion more broadly. The term new-ager is usually reserved for non-Native participants, while Native peoples who associate with them are labeled "white man's shaman" or "plastic medicine men.”

While this discourse appears to have achieved hegemonic dominance, it has not. Not all Lakota or Indian people agree with the formulations as we see in the Running/Small Bear case. Throughout his life, Running maintained that his altar was open to everyone, not just Indian people, and he was frequently taken to task about his willingness to allow all people to Sun Dance. Yet Running carries the markers that we might frequently associate with the concept of tradition: he was Lakota, born, lived, and  

772 “Lakota Declaration of War.”
773 Ibid.
774 See for example: Rayna Green, “The Tribe called Wannabee: Playing Indian in America and Europe” in Folklore 99, No. 1 (1988), 30-55; Lisa Aldred, “Plastic Shamans and Astroturf Sun Dances” in American Indian Quarterly Vol. 24, Issue 3 (Summer 2000), 329-343; Cook-Lynn, Anti-Indianism in Modern America; Vizenor, Manifest Manners; and Valandra, “The As-Told-To Native [Auto]biography, to name a few. What is interesting about these texts is that they not only function to target a general non-Native participant, but they also target specific individuals. This effort is different from that for example of Philip Deloria who works to understand why non-Native peoples are motivated to participate in Native ceremony, see Deloria, Playing Indian.
775 “Lakota Declaration of War.”
776 This was true for the medicine men who participated in the MMPM as well.
died on the reservation, Lakota was his first language, and he was recognized as a spiritual leader and medicine man within his community. The tension of the representations of Running, the respected elder and spiritual leader and Running the traitor is most clearly demonstrated in the immediate response to 1993 “Lakota Declaration of War.” Following the publication of this declaration, which Running, Crow Dog, and other elder ritual specialists refused to sign, a list of Lakota spiritual practitioners was generated designating individuals as either “authentic” or “fraud.” Running’s name appeared on both lists—as “authentic” under the name Norbert Running and as a “fraud” under the name Elmer Running.  

The move to institutionalize the perspective vocalized through the declaration, via tribal governance, has been to date unsuccessful within local communities such as the Pine Ridge Reservation, however it came close. On June 30, 1997, Oglala Sioux Chief Tribal Judge Patrick Lee signed a judicial order prohibiting non-Native participation in the Sun Dance and all other Lakota ceremony on the Pine Ridge Reservation. The order was thrown out less than two weeks later on July 9, 1997. Peter Bolz, who was visiting the neighboring Rosebud Reservation at the time, recalls conversations with several spiritual leaders. The “initiative by the Oglalas was dismissed as another typical ‘crazy idea: from Pine Ridge’” and they found the effort “rather laughable.” The ritual specialists from Rosebud cited a number of reasons for their position. First, due to Native and non-Native interrelationships during the centuries, making racial distinctions

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777 I have seen copies of this list on numerous occasions over the years but can no longer find a copy on the web.
was difficult, if not impossible. Second, there continues to be considerable inter-
marriage and the “rules of traditional Lakota society” are clear in that neither relatives
nor those whose intentions are serious can be excluded from ceremony. A similar
perspective, but slightly different response is offered by Sun Dance leader Gilly Running.
When asked about the boundaries of the Sun Dance community of practice he
emphasized that each was different. For Running the determining factor is the dream or
vision given to the spiritual leader by the spirits. “Some people who run it have certain
dreams, are meant to help certain people, a group of people. Others help only humans,
other people go beyond that.”

The Transformative Effect of the Sun Dance

In another of Lincoln’s works, *Emerging From the Chrysalis: Rituals of Women's
Initiation*, he offers a provisional, working definition of ritual. Here he defines ritual as a
“coherent set of symbolic actions that has a real transformative effect on individuals and
social groups.” He further notes that for the most part, rituals do indeed do what they
claim—they transform people. I argue that the claims and testimonials being made
about the transformation effects of Sun Dance are the driving factor in the increase in
participation. In the remainder of this chapter I survey the proliferation of experiential
accounts of the Sun Dance in the contemporary era from within the context of Lakota
worldview. I draw from a complex array of sources, in addition to the many

779 Ibid., 2.
780 Gilly Running, interview by author, 9 October 2009, Columbus, OH, tape recording.
781 Bruce Lincoln, *Emerging From the Chrysalis: Rituals of Women's Initiation* (Cambridge, Harvard
autobiographies; there are also numerous sources such as news articles, the internet, and my ethnographic research and interviews with participants.

Historian of religion, Lawrence Sullivan recalls the 1996 address to the plenary assembly of the American Academy of Religion, delivered by Vine Deloria, Jr. Deloria “emphasized that accounts of Native American religious life have seldom been fair or neutral and that a reappraisal of Native American religious life is essential to reestablishing right relations among peoples on the continent and, indeed, to reestablishing health and well-being.”782 The association between establishing right relations and well-being within the all-inclusive imperative is critical to Lakota thought as demonstrated in the case of Crow Dog where he meticulously traces the multiple relationships to which he must attend. From Medicine, there is a focus on the establishment of well-being, which in her argument involves the actualization of Lakota virtues that provide guidelines for maintaining right relations. Running’s dismissal of identity politics might suggest that in his understanding the transformative work of the ritual overshadows individual disagreements that will be worked through over time via continued commitment to the ritual practice.

When examining claims and testimonials about the transformative effects of the Sun Dance ritual, there are two sorts of often overlapping narratives: transformations that affect the individual and those that affect the individual’s relationship with the multiple constituencies that make up the collective. Take for example the following excerpt from

Running (Gilly) regarding his participation in the Sun Dance, who emphasizes, “I always get help from it.” When asked about whether his participation impacts his life, he responded:

Definitely I think it does and makes me aware of many different things…mitakuye oyasin [we are all related], understanding deeper life, things, spirits, ancestors, and the way I think, the way I conduct [myself], and the way that I say things. I think without it I would be in a whole different realm of reality now today. I think I’m into it to recognize the spirit and the sacredness of the dance and the tree and everything that goes on with it. The music, the prayers of the music and everything like that. So I think it does make a difference for me and helping me and knowing something is there when I think everything is not there no more. So it does help me think differently, react differently, do things differently.784

Running is clear that he receives help as a result of his participation. He claims transformation on an individual level which simultaneously transforms the ways that he relates to the collective. Claims about the transformative effects of Sun Dance tend to overlap and relate to participation in Lakota ritual more broadly, perhaps another indicator of the perspective that everything is related. As the central ritual of the Lakota, the Sun Dance incorporates other Lakota ritual. For example, the sweat lodge, which is frequently held outside of the Sun Dance ceremony, is also a necessary part of the Sun Dance. While not everyone who participates in any Lakota ritual also Sun Dances, the majority of those who dance do participate in other Lakota rituals. The transformative effect is attributed to all Lakota ritual and the Sun Dance is both a site of such possibility and a site of thanksgiving for transformations that take place in other venues.

783 Gilly Running, interview by author, 9 October 2009, Columbus, OH, tape recording.
784 Ibid.
The majority of testimonials attest to a healing that takes place on many registers as a central aspect of participation. Raymond Bucko calls these sorts of testimonies, “narratives of conversion.” Some are very specific, such as testimonies about healing from addictions, while others like Running offer testimonies about transformations in their thoughts and approach to the world around them. The reestablishment of health includes both physical healing and healing from desires that threaten the well-being of the individual, family, and community such as addictions.

**Transformations for the Individual**

Testimonies about the individual effects of participation in the Sun Dance ritual frequently involve healing narratives. Individuals claim healing from physical ailments, unhealthy practices such as addiction, and psychological issues. Lakota academic and Sun Dancer, Chuck Ross observes “Many diseases are cured at the Sun Dance: cancer and diabetes, for example.” In Ross’s account of his personal experience, he describes being healed as a result of a yuwipi ceremony. When returning to sponsor a thanksgiving ceremony he was called to Sun Dance as an offer of thanksgiving for his healing. Founder of the Native American Indian Center of Central Ohio, Dakota Selma Walker was a diabetic and in need of a kidney transplant when she traveled to South Dakota to attend a Sun Dance in 1992. In her interview with John Switzer of the *Columbus Dispatch*, she noted, “They prayed for me at the sun dance. It was so dramatic…I felt like it was an instant cure…I was in a wheelchair before I left. I walk all over now. I come to

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786 For example see Bucko, *The Lakota Ritual of the Sweat Lodge*, 171.
work every day. I sleep every night.”

In an interview for The Toronto Star, Jordy Lishman tells reporter David Graham that he is convinced that miracles occur. His brother is apparently cancer-free after his attendance at a Sun Dance. Lishman had urged him to attend after watching him suffer through several rounds of chemotherapy. In an article for the New York Times, Russell Archambault describes how he decided to Sun Dance at the urging of his father when complications during his wife’s pregnancy “meant their baby had only a fifty-fifty chance of surviving.” The week after Archambault completed the Sun Dance; the couple returned to the doctor and they were told that there was nothing wrong. “He [the doctor] was amazed. We knew what had happened, but we didn’t tell the doctor.” Archambault’s father, Wyman, was able to convince his son to participate because he credited “the strength to quit drinking” and “the power to start his life over” to his own participation in the Sun Dance.

The transformative potential of the Sun Dance in the realm of addictions is a frequent testimony. Today Lakota ritual, from the sweat lodge to the Sun Dance, is considered a powerful therapeutic tool in the treatment of addiction. Many reservation treatment centers incorporate these practices into their recovery programs. Likewise, many communities of practice spring up around recovery. Almost all Lakota ritual assert a prohibition of alcohol and drugs as one of their primary rules. Likewise,

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791 The great majority of Sun Dances now post prohibitions against alcohol and drugs on the Sun Dance grounds either on their posters or on signs outside the gates to the grounds. See for example the poster for the “Indian Creek Sacred Sundance” held in California in 2008. “Sundance” (1 August 2008, accessed 26
participants’ use of alcohol and drugs, even outside of the ritual, is frequently cited as reason for exclusion and/or derision. Medicine referred to this propensity as “reformative desire” in that a solution is being sought for a problem and “[i]n this case, the problem to be solved, or at least, diminished is the use of excessive alcohol on some reservations.” Bucko observes the frequent blurring “of the philosophies of Lakota religion and Alcoholics Anonymous.” This blurring is apparent in the testimony offered by Ross, who suffered not only from physical ailments, but from alcoholism as well. He relates a dream wherein he is told to stay on the Red Road, which he relates to the advice offered in AA to live “one day at a time.” John Redtail Freesoul describes the way that his own addiction to amphetamines was healed during a vision quest. His participation in the Sun Dance was to offer thanksgiving for this healing. He pinpoints Lakota ritual as “effective therapeutic tools in dealing with alcohol and drug abuse.” In an interview for the Boston Globe, Pat Janis, a spiritual counselor at the Wounded Knee School, credits his ability to “quit drinking and carousing” to his participation in the Sun Dance and other Lakota ceremony.

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792 See for example, Tim Giago, “Can the ceremonies save a people” in Native Sun News, 18 October 2009.
794 Bucko, The Lakota Ritual of the Sweat Lodge, 171.
796 John Redtail Freesoul, Breath of the Invisible: The Way of the Pipe (Wheaton, IL: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1987), 119. It should be noted that both Ross and Freesoul have come under attack as new-agers posing as Native people.
Testimonies that point to psychological healing also comprise a large portion of the claims of transformation associated with the Sun Dance. Take for example Freesoul, who notes that prior to his participation he felt psychologically depressed and emotionally confused.\(^{798}\) Another participant, Webster Poor Bear, describes the way that his participation helped him with the demons that had haunted him since Vietnam.\(^{799}\) Issues of identity also point to psychological healing, which was demonstrated in the case of (Moore) Crow Dog. Gretchen Bataille comments about the way (Moore) Crow Dog experienced a sense of wholeness as a result of her participation in the Sun Dance ceremony.\(^{800}\)

*Establishment of Right Relations*

The (re)establishment of right relations is connected with the sense of individual well-being that is experienced both in one’s sense of self and in one’s understanding of one’s relationship to the world around one. One interviewee called her participation “life transforming.” During her first experience at a Sun Dance she felt like she had returned home and her experience at the Sun Dance caused her to redefine her life; it impacted her relationship to every aspect of her life. Even in her work as an artist her participation has affected her choices about the colors that she uses in her painting and the subjects she works to express.\(^{801}\)


\(^{801}\) Joan Staufer, interview by author, 28 November 2009, Columbus, OH, notes.
Participants claim that their participation was critical to transformations in their worldview as well as in their personal lives. One interviewee noted that it caused her to live more consciously as a spiritual being rather than a material being.802 Another noted that prior to her participation she only thought in terms of herself and her immediate family, but as a result of her participation she began to see herself in relation to all people.803 One component of reestablishing right relations includes reprioritizing one’s relationship to one’s family. Bucko notes there is an increased return to such practices by families.804 On his website Native Discover, DJ Vanas offers a reflection on the way that the Sun Dance experience changed his life. “In Sun Dance, I learned gratitude, humility and to reprioritize my life.”805

One of the most interesting and potent stories of transformative potential comes from Duane Brewer, who at one time played a critical role as a member of Dick Wilson’s notorious goon squad on the Pine Ridge reservation. Due to his participation in Lakota ceremony, Brewer “has had a spiritual awakening” and today even has a sweat lodge on his property. He notes “If you’d told me back in ’73 that I would have a sweat lodge, I’d be surprised…That was AIM, not goon.”806 Brewer’s story suggests that even the identity issue is indicative of the transformative potential of Lakota ceremony.

802 Ibid.
803 Janice Musick, interview by author, 23 January 2010, Columbus, OH, tape recording.
806 Golden, “The Legacy of Wounded Knee.”
Concluding Thoughts

This chapter has taken Lincoln’s article, “A Lakota Sun Dance and the Problematics of Sociocosmic Reunion” as a case study as it exemplifies a number of trends in academic productions. As a member of the community which was the object of study in this account, I drew on the three critiques, as observed by Brettell, which occur when we read what is written about us. Each of these critiques illuminates important issues that enrich and complicate the way that we understand the contemporary practice of Sun Dance. First, the current conversations about ethnographic practices call for reflexivity and investment (such as prolonged and intensive research) in the communities being studied. We see, for example, that the short duration of Lincoln’s commitment to the community of practice prohibits him from understanding that the critical symbols of discontent, the women who leave the 1991 Sun Dance, return several years later to the Sun Dance even though Running/Small Bear’s position regarding all-inclusive ritual never changed.

Second, Lincoln’s article employs the social science terminology, hunter-gatherer, to explain certain aspects of the ritual. Locating this as discourse demonstrates the continued influence and circulation of this frame, which profoundly shapes interpretations of the practice. We see the way hunter-gatherer discourse accentuates warrior attributes, exaggerates the importance of piercing in the Sun Dance ritual, and accrues affective value. This is in contrast to participant experiential accounts that articulate piercing as an uplifting release, such as in the case of Mary (Moore) Crow Dog.
Third, Lincoln does point to an important dynamic of the contemporary practice when he asks: “Just who is a part of one’s social universe?” In a climate hospitable to imagining self-determination after a lengthy historical experience of colonial repression we can expect counter-hegemonic resistance to dominant society. Yet, this single, pessimistic focus obscures another register of emic hegemonic processes, which pivot on notions of identity and tradition and deepen our understanding of the interrelational dynamics occurring.

While a productive exercise, none of these points gets any closer to understanding why there is such a tremendous growth in the contemporary Sun Dance practice. I suggest a return to thinking about the ritual itself via the personal claims of powerful life transformations are potent and are circulated widely via the genre of “as-told-to autobiography,” news reports about participation, and word of mouth. The testimonies of the positive transformational effect of Sun Dance account in large part for the appeal and allure of the ritual and in large part for the increase in the numbers of people participating in the practice.
Chapter 6: The Sun Dance Road

Sun Dance Season (2010)

At this point in the summer of 2010, the Sun Dance season is in full swing on the Pine Ridge and Rosebud reservations and beyond. In the past week alone I received an invitation to a Sun Dance in Mexico, pictures from an Indiana Sun Dance that just finished, and daily updates from Rosebud where this weekend (as I complete this summary) there are four different Sun Dances. As I count the number of Sun Dances that I have heard about this year, the number is already almost equal to the number of Sun Dances that I knew about two years ago—and there is still another month to go during which time numerous other Sun Dances will occur. There is no doubt that the number of Sun Dances and participants continues to grow.

Tracing participants from Elmer Running’s Sun Dance group is instructive. Last year approximately sixty dancers participated in the Anpo Wicapi (Morning Star) Sun Dance. Running passed away in September, 2009, and since that time the group has splintered and dancers have moved in a number of different directions. Without a strong internal leader in the group, some have moved to dance with one of Running’s two sons who lead Sun Dances, one of whom runs the original Ironwood Hilltop Sun Dance, which will celebrate its thirty-first annual offering this year. Another group is determined to continue at the site of Running’s dance during the last years of his life, but to date they
have been unable to find a medicine man willing to run it. It appears that they will proceed without a ritual specialist. Another segment of the group found a new location and started a new dance. The communities of practice are unstable, fluctuating; membership is continually shifting. This is not unusual.

In spite of these sorts of fissures, which are frequently fraught with tension, individuals return year after year to participate. The appeal of the ritual exceeds the individual returning to dance year after year and it annually draws even larger numbers. I began this dissertation with a short quote, expressing a deep joy about the Sun Dance from Brings Home a Blue Horse, which I repeat here: “When they stopped dancing, we died. We stopped living. We felt there was nothing left to live for. Now we can dance again, and it brings sunshine into our hearts. We feel j-u-s-t good!” (1934)\textsuperscript{807} The quote offers a productive point of departure from which to consider the tremendous growth of the contemporary Sun Dance movement as it gestures toward powerful sentiments evoked by the ritual, the impact of colonialist repression of the Sun Dance, and the social. All of these are important aspects to consider in relation to the research questions shaping this project. How did the Sun Dance endure in spite of a lengthy period of colonial repression? What evokes the powerful sentiments associated with the Sun Dance? How can we account for the growth of the contemporary Sun Dance?

In order to engage these questions involves, to expand upon a phrase offered by Avery Gordon, a “writing of the history of the present” practice of Sun Dance.\textsuperscript{808} This

\textsuperscript{807} Reginald and Gladys Laubin, \textit{Indian Dances of North America: Their Importance to Indian Life} (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1977), 81.
\textsuperscript{808} Gordon, \textit{Ghostly Matters}, 195.
involves a “crawling back”\footnote{Long, \textit{Significations}, 9.} into the “contact zone”\footnote{Pratt, \textit{Imperial Eyes}, 4.} of colonialism where messy and complex exchanges shaped by power relations—colonialist interactions—take place. Colonialism is a central focus of this dissertation—in particular, the ways that individuals mediate the “highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination” and interpret the “social spaces where disparate cultures meet.”\footnote{Ibid.}

One of the hallmarks of power is the way that it works to conceal its processes and produce invisibility, what Charles Long refers to as the “dynamics of concealment.”\footnote{Long, \textit{Significations}, 141.} This project seeks to get at the concealed processes and the invisible, which continue to shape the contemporary Sun Dance. Each section is attentive to the ways that the Sun Dance ritual has been shaped by the historical conditions of colonialism that “in the past banished certain individuals, things, or ideas, how circumstances rendered them marginal, excluded or repressed.”\footnote{Radway, “Foreword,” xv.}

Gordon persuasively argues that the dynamics of concealment produce ghosts that continue to haunt, and she makes three important observations, which I paraphrase: the ghost is a signal that something is missing and it most often represents a loss; the “ghost is alive” in that it continues to shape the present; and there is a highly charged affective component produced by the process. That the Sun Dance ritual was rendered marginal, excluded, and repressed as a result of colonialism is enough to raise suspicion that ghosts abound and that a haunting is taking place.
In this chapter I offer a few final remarks. I am reluctant to think in terms of conclusions, which, to me at least, suggests that there is some final destination—and I think of this project as an entrée into understanding the enduring resilience and potency of the Sun Dance ritual. Throughout this project I’ve finished each chapter with a set of concluding thoughts and it is in this same spirit that I continue. I begin with a summary that revisits the structure of this project, the data, methodology and prominent findings. I move to a section that articulates my analysis of the research, and I bring to the fore a number of implications that emerge as a product of the work and how they contribute to other academic conversations. In the third section, I examine the limitations of this research and offer suggestions for future research.

Summary

One of the earliest observations of a broad and insidious obfuscation, gleaned from a massive body of work about the ritual, is that the majority of narratives about the Sun Dance claim that there was a period of time during which the Sun Dance was not practiced and as a result certain knowledge was “lost.” This is the case for both dominant and marginal narratives. As a result the contemporary practice is, for the most part, considered largely invention. The historical record, however, challenges both the length and the extent to which this repression occurred. At locations such as the Pine Ridge and Rosebud reservations, sources document public Sun Dances occurring until 1883 and starting up again in 1910. Numerous oral histories claim that Sun Dances continued during this twenty-seven-year period devoid of documentation. While I certainly do not wish to diminish the impact that the federal ban had on the Lakota and their cultural
practices such as the Sun Dance, I do argue that a focus on this aspect has served the ever-shifting colonial project well by obscuring the extent to which the Sun Dance continued and cultural knowledge was transmitted.

In order to consider the multifarious operations of the ever changing colonial project, I wanted to consider colonialist interactions between the U.S. and Native peoples since contact. The lengthy span of the colonial project and the huge corpus of materials that have been produced about the Sun Dance necessitated certain methodological choices. I constructed four provisional historical eras co-determined by shifts in the historical process of colonialism and watershed cultural productions that mark transitions in the production of knowledge about the Sun Dance. During this process, certain ghosts emerged as guides.

The first era (from contact—1917, chapter 2), examines a period of blatant, often violent, and harsh repressive colonial strategies, which gave rise to an intense effort to document cultural practices, such as the Sun Dance, that were thought to be destined for obliteration by the progress of modernity. Out of this period James R. Walker’s text about the Sun Dance, *The Sun Dance and Other Ceremonies of the Oglala Division of the Teton Dakota*, emerged and it remains today the primary source for information about the Sun Dance. The significant role that Lakota George Sword played as a contributor to this work was largely marginalized by Walker. Walker’s approach was to compile all of the information about the Sun Dance he received from a number of Lakota informants and compile one composite description. In that act the source of the information was erased. Walker does acknowledge Sword in his introduction and a handful of segments that come
after the Sun Dance description do convey the names of the sources—Sword among them. However, the composite portrait of a typical Sun Dance does not include this information. Sword’s contribution was obscured.

In the second era (1917-1944), containment of Indian peoples on reservations had been achieved. During the early reservation period acculturation programs remained harsh, children were sent to boarding schools, and the daily life of the people continued under extreme surveillance and micromanagement. Yet, it was clear that the program of forced assimilation had done little to adjust the majority of Indian people to dominant culture. As a result, the government commissioned a study of the current living conditions. The study suggested new approaches toward assimilation, which were legislated in the Indian “New Deal” in 1934. One of the primary efforts of the legislation was to prepare Indian people for home-rule on the reservation. Yet, as we see in this chapter the end result was the assertion of a new layer of governmentality, pitting Native against Native. In this era, Ella Deloria emerges as an example of the first generation born on the reservation, who were products of various assimilation projects under colonialism. Deloria’s family was actively involved in the Episcopalian Church. She was raised as a Christian and received a great deal of her education away from the reservation. From the perspective of dominant culture she was a “success story” eventually receiving her degree from Columbia University. Deloria’s work, Speaking of Indians, was a popular success when it was published in 1944. Yet, during her lifetime she was never able to find a publisher for two of her other important works: Waterlily, a
fictional account of pre-contact Dakota life and *The Dakota Way of Life*, based on years of ethnographic work. Both were rendered invisible for decades.

The third era (1945-1979) was a period of significant transformation both on the American scene and for Indian people. It signaled a shift in thinking that attended to historicity and cultural relevance. The atmosphere was filled with tension as social movements emerging from marginalized groups came to national attention, anti-war sentiments abounded, and there was a new concern for environmental issues. On the reservations, colonialism had shifted—it was internalized. One of the groups that came to the fore during this era was the American Indian Movement (AIM), which drew attention to the continued issues of American Indian people. AIM often chose violent strategies for its political, social, and religious activist endeavors, which focused not only on the continued colonization of the U.S. government, but also on the colonial efforts of its members’ own people. One important issue for the membership was that many were disconnected from their Native cultural practices and they turned to spiritual leaders from the reservation, such as Frank Fools Crow and Leonard Crow Dog. Fools Crow was a respected spiritual leader and an elder from the Pine Ridge reservation. And we see him throughout this project as he was actively involved with maintaining Lakota religious practices for decades. His autobiography, written by Thomas Mails, is the watershed cultural production marking the end of this era, as it paved the way for a flood of similar autobiographies that inundated the market after the success of his book.

Yet, it was not Fools Crow who emerged in this era as a ghostly presence. Rather, it was a group from the neighboring Rosebud reservation, the Medicine Men’s
Association (MMA). This organization came together in the early months of 1973. In an atmosphere more sensitive and sympathetic to Native peoples, this group chose a very different approach to political, social, and religious activism. Among their many projects was a five-year-long dialogue with ritual specialists of the Catholic Church, in order to come to a better understanding. Over forty medicine men, many of whom were Lakota ritual specialists for decades, took part in the MMA. This demonstrates that Lakota religious practices had a stronger presence on the Rosebud and Pine Ridge reservation than previously thought and that Lakota thought and practice, albeit repressed, had not been lost. The intense focus on AIM has obscured the important efforts of the MMA. The work of the MMA remains marginalized today.

The fourth era (1980-2010) is marked by an increased emphasis on self-determination for Indian people, not only in regards to government, but also representation, education, economics, and religious expression. Historian of religion, Bruce Lincoln’s article about a Sun Dance that he attended in 1991 is the watershed cultural production that provides a point of departure to consider the contemporary era. In the article, Lincoln describes the contentious identity politics that shape the Sun Dance that he witnesses. The issues surround the medicine man that runs the Sun Dance, who Lincoln calls Small Bear. Small Bear’s approach to the dance is that it is all-inclusive—anyone can dance. And this approach is in tension with dancers who believe that only Native people should participate in the ritual. Small Bear’s identity is obscured by Lincoln’s account that gives him this pseudonym, but he is revealed by this author, his daughter-in-law, as Elmer Norbert Running, who had a profound influence on the
contemporary Sun Dance. A close reading of Lincoln’s article reveals the way positivist leanings continue to shape analyses about the Sun Dance and how a focus on the political obscures the important narratives about the transformative effects of the Sun Dance.

**Analysis and Contribution**

While the summary above provides obvious examples of the “dynamics of concealment,” this research demonstrates that there are many layers of obfuscation at work. Knowledge about the Sun Dance (re)circulates as new configurations and each circulation shapes the practice. For example, during the 1980s the Sword material was recovered through the efforts of DeMallie and Jahner. The effort reintroduced Sword as an important contributor to contemporary understandings of the Sun Dance for both Native and non-Native publics. The impulse to engage in this reclamation project was prompted by “requests from the Oglala community at Pine Ridge for copies of the material collected by Walker for the use in Oglala history classes. Mimeographed notebooks of the myth cycle have been widely circulated among the Lakotas, fulfilling a deeply felt need for materials relating to their traditional religion and culture.”

The work Deloria sought to have published was eventually published posthumously in the 1980s (*Waterlily*) and in early 2000 (*The Dakota Way of Life*).

Yet, the “dynamics of concealment” as a process of marginalization and exclusion reconfigures itself. In the case of Sword, the recuperation of his contribution has been accompanied by an idealization and romanticization of the man. His claims that he was a medicine man and Sun Dance leader have been accepted uncritically even though a close

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examination of the history record raises questions. What is offered is a flat, uneven portrait of the man that renders invisible his complex personhood. Sword whole-heartedly embraced the colonial effort and his participation in the colonial effort has disturbing implications. I argue that Sword, and by extension the knowledge about the Sun Dance that he produced, needs to considered from a hermeneutics of suspicion that takes into account his complex personhood and the messy and complicated ways that he interacted in the contact zone.

Deloria is another whose work has been recuperated in the contemporary era and a number of scholars now draw on Deloria to exemplify a number of current issues: the literary turn, cultural critique, feminism, and anthro-performance. Yet, the majority of contemporary scholars do not engage her work on an analytical level—continuing to obscure her contribution. A particular case-in-point was her challenge of the Sword materials that remains marginalized today. A product of her time, the frame of complex personhood provides insight into the way that Deloria misrecognized the Sun Dance when she saw one.

The MMA introduce us to a way of Lakota thought and practice that was at first rendered invisible by direct colonialism, a practice that was continued under internal (indirect) colonialism on the reservation by their own people. The focus on AIM and the “loss” of Native culture obscures an uninterrupted history of a group of Lakota people who continued Native religious practices, such as the Sun Dance, in spite of colonial repression and constraint. Further concealed were the alternative strategies of political, social, and religious activist endeavors undertaken by the MMA. As we move to Elmer
Running it is clear that an emic contestation about the Sun Dance practice and more fundamentally Lakota thought is at work. Questions about who can dance, identity politics, tradition, and sharing knowledge are at the center of the contemporary Sun Dance.

One of the activities of the MMA, in which Running was involved, provides a case-in-point. In July of 1974, the group decided to come together to put on a Sun Dance in partnership with Sinte Gleska College. The intention was to film the Sun Dance and donate it to the archives at the college so that the knowledge would be preserved and be available to future generations. There were internal issues, personality conflicts, arguments over who would lead the Sun Dance, but in the end the dance was held during the summer of 1975. Thomas Mails describes the efforts and writes that “tradition was poorly handled,”815 but he never explains what he means by this statement nor does he provide examples. The dance was filmed and supposedly placed in the archives at Sinte Gleska, but it is unavailable for viewing. The contemporary focus on self-determination, particularly in regards to representation, has presented in a move to forbid taking pictures or filming the contemporary Sun Dance. This perspective has become dominant and as a result even members of the tribe are unable to view the film.816 The result is a marginalization of the medicine men’s efforts.

Each of the ghostly presences followed in this dissertation exhibited a strong impulse to act as a mediator in colonialist interactions and to interpret Lakota culture for

815 Mails, Sundancing at Rosebud, 13.
816 Running’s son has requested to view the film on several occasions as his mother and father both took part in the Sun Dance, but he has been denied access.
a range of audiences. While the focus on deconstruction of colonialisist projects has begun
to attend to the hegemony of the dominant American culture over the marginalized Indian
culture, this perspective obscures the sorts of negotiations, challenges, and contestations
taking place within both groups. Although the focus of this project has not been on
dominant culture, there are clear indications that the processes and approaches of
colonialism were always being contested within dominant American society.

The close examination of Native figures likewise demonstrates that there was a
wide range of responses from Native peoples to the colonial agenda. Figures like Sword
assimilated as fully as possible to dominant ideology and practice and further became
strong proponents and enforcers of colonialism. Deloria was a product of assimilation; in
particular education and Christianity had a profound effect. Yet, it is clear that in many
other ways she was still a product of Dakota values, in particular kinship structures,
which she maintained throughout her life. In the MMA we see a range of responses. The
medicine men engaged in varying degrees with the educational system and Christianity,
but maintained a strong embrace of Lakota culture—belief, practices, and values. In this
historical moment we get a glimpse of internal hegemony among the Lakota taking the
fore. This situation is amplified in the case of Elmer Running, whose knowledge and
practice of Lakota religion, in particular the Sun Dance, becomes marginalized by other
Indian people.

**Limitations and Future Research**

One issue that comes to the fore in this dissertation is the breadth and scope of the
project. Productive for illuminating the circulation and reconfiguration of certain trends
resulting from colonialism, this project is most valuable in gaining general insights, rather than detailed specificities. Yet, understanding the history of the present Sun Dance is an important and necessary first step. A question still begging for further investigation has to do with the strong sentiments that the ritual evokes. I begin to gesture toward some of the processes that generate affect, which intensifies as it sticks to certain bodies and practices and recirculates, but there is much work that remains.\footnote{See Ahmed, The Cultural Politics of Emotion.} Another important direction for further research is the experience of Sun Dance. The members of the MMA and Running clearly believed that experience was the key to understanding Lakota religion. Ultimately, people would not participate in the Sun Dance unless their experience of the ritual was one in which the benefits outweigh the disadvantages and tensions. This is one direction that I want to pursue in the future.

Each one of these chapters is rich and could have served as a stand-alone dissertation project. As such, there is a certain disservice as details and nuances are glossed. I am particularly intrigued by the MMA, which offers a rich archive that has much to teach about Lakota thought and practice. I envision and am already in discussion about a collaborative project with Native Lakota speakers that would work with the original tapes.

Lastly, as I point to in the introduction to this dissertation, there are two important recurring themes that present as trajectories not taken in this project—ritual and ethnography—about which I have a few words to say. First, for the scholar of ritual studies, a close examination of the Sun Dance would be productive. It is a surprisingly
resilient ritual considering the intense efforts to eradicate its practice. And, in spite of various reconfigurations of the actual practice, there are a surprising number of consistencies over the 150 years of data collected. The staged event of the ritual and the complex of rituals that take place under the broader ritual, the Sun Dance, give rise to a reconsideration of ritual and thinking about rituals within rituals. Lastly, the Sun Dance lends itself to a consideration that goes beyond and challenges the thought/practice dichotomy as it strongly reminds that the emotional intensity (or affect) and the social are equally important aspects.

This project is also very much about ethnography—its practices and products. The various interactions—between the observer and the observed, the scholar and the Native informant—shaped by their historical moment lend themselves to an analysis of this sort of production of knowledge in the contact zone. The problems and issues faced by earlier ethnographers, such as Walker, foretold the contemporary crisis of representation. These aspects offer an important contribution to the contemporary work of meta-analyses of ethnography and anthropology.
APPENDIX A:  
BRIEF OUTLINE AND SUMMARY OF BODY CHAPTERS

2.0 Chapter 2: Reconsidering George Sword ................................................................. 27

Early Colonialist Interactions and Constructions of the Sun Dance ............. 27
In this section I introduce James R. Walker’s text The Sun Dance as the canonical text about the ritual. Central to this text is the collaboration between George Sword and James R. Walker. In the contemporary era Sword’s role has been emphasized. He is uncritically accepted as a medicine man; authorizing and providing legitimacy to the knowledge about the Sun Dance that he shared, and/or he is considered exemplary of Lakota cultural thought and expression. Yet Sword is much more complex than that representation. Sword’s approach during early colonialist interactions was one with disturbing implications. Because of the roles he played during this era, we can trace Sword through the historical record making him a productive point of entry to think about responses to early colonialist interaction and constructions of Sun Dance.

George Sword, the Early Years ................................................................. 34
In this section I follow the early years of Sword’s life to think about transformations he underwent as a result of early colonialist interactions. Sword’s multiple names are a metaphor for the many changes he faced during these years until we see in the mid-1870s the George Sword, collaborator to The Sun Dance text, emerge. This George Sword (the name that he goes by for the rest of his life) is (re)envisioned not only as friend to dominant culture, but as someone who worked to promote the values, ideas, and beliefs of the colonizer.

Sitting Bull’s Sun Dance and the Battle at Little Big Horn ..................... 39
Sword’s efforts to distance himself from the Battle at Little Big Horn (perhaps the most widely circulated story of Indian/American engagement) draw attention by omission. In this section I examine the way that many Native people linked the battle to a Sun Dance held just days before their victory. The connection to the Sun Dance situates the victory as religiously sanctioned and tells a lot about the power invested in the ritual for its practitioners. It provides an example of another approach to the ritual at the time.

The Aftermath of Little Big Horn ................................. 45
In this section I examine the (re)envisioned Sword in his first historical act as friend to the U.S. His attempt to persuade Crazy Horse to surrender at the agency was a topic that he wrote about on several occasions. While some academicians point to this event as representative of Sword trying to save his
people, Sword’s own concern may have more to do with receiving the credit for Crazy Horse’s surrender, which is questionable because several other Native peoples participated in similar missions after Sword and Crazy Horse did not surrender for months after that visit. Then I move to Sword’s participation in William Cody’s early performative shows, precursor to the Buffalo Bill’s Wild West shows. Sword was in fact one of the earliest performers hired by Cody. His work with the show provided him with exposure to the western world, a route undertaken by many other Indian people.

**Sword on the Reservation: McGillicuddy’s Sword?**

This section explores the early reservation years and Sword’s powerful role as the head of the newly formed Indian police force. This role put him in direct conflict with one of the most powerful chiefs, Red Cloud and shows the great lengths that Sword went to in order to force the Lakota people to acculturate to dominant society.

**The Last Great Sun Dances(s):**

This section describes Sun Dances during the early reservation era and Sword’s role to stop the practice. This provides insight into the way that the ritual was approached from dominant culture’s perspective as locals, governmental officials, and scholar observe the practice.

**Closing of an Era:**

In this section I trace a variety of factors that led to the Wounded Knee massacre, generally considered the end of the “Indian Wars.” A constellation of events, the prohibition of the Sun Dance, reduction of the Lakota land mass, and the emergence of the Ghost Dance practice all contributed to the watershed event that marks the end of a way of life for the Lakota. As an important figure on the reservation, Sword played a prominent role in these events as well.

**James R. Walker, George Sword, and The Sun Dance**

As an introduction to this section, which reconsiders the Sword—Walker collaboration, I examine how quickly after arriving on the Pine Ridge agency that Walker began his project, interviewing locals about Lakota customs with a particular emphasis on their religious beliefs and practices. I also question two similar claims made by the two men: for Sword that he was a medicine man and repository of secret knowledge and for Walker that he was initiated as a medicine man.

**Questions about Walker’s Methodology**

In this section I examine a number of challenges presented by Walker’s methodology. Walker was not trained as an ethnographer, but he did have guidance from one, Clark Wissler. Wissler offered advice about methodology, which was more often than not, ignored by Walker. Walker’s
worldview was profoundly shaped by a biological evolutionary approach to the Lakota. He saw the people as primitive on an evolutionary progression, incapable of coherent, organized thought and saw himself as critical to the project of presenting a coherent, whole representation of the Sun Dance. I also look at specific inter-related methodological issues such as: translation, qualifications of the informants, validity of information and disagreement among the informants.

**Sword on the Sun Dance**

In this concluding section I examine a primary text on the Sun Dance practice, written by Sword and offer a brief summary of the chapter.

**Concluding Thoughts**

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### 3.0 Chapter 3: Ella C. Deloria: “I Have a Mission”

**Strategies of Cultural Interpretation and Mediation**

This section introduces Deloria via a quote from her about her mission to humanize Native peoples for dominant society. In this sense, I argue that she should be located as what Robert Warrior calls an American Indian Intellectual tradition in that she struggled for an American Indian future. I also raise the question, why wasn’t she able to find funding to publish the novel, *Waterlily* or her ethnographic work, *The Dakota Way of Life*? I point out other ways that Deloria’s work has been invisible on a variety of fronts in spite of the fact of her association with Franz Boas. I then describe how I’m going to proceed. I introduce Elaine Jahner’s argument about the productivity of putting textual communities into conversation with each other.

**Deloria’s Present: “The Indian Problem”**

I introduce the IRA as the most significant legislation impacting Indian people during this era by pointing to the way this is described by the Rosebud Sioux Tribe today. Meant as a culturally enlightened approach to dealing with “the Indian problem” the IRA brought tremendous changes to the reservation system.

**The Meriam Commission: The Current State of Indian Affairs**

I link the IRA to the release of the 1928 report from the Meriam Commission and provide a context for thinking about the Meriam report. I describe the report and illustrate the way that it reflects progressive thought invested in notions of science as ‘Truth’ as I argue that the underlying assumption, Indian people must assimilate to dominant culture, remained unchanged. Only the approach to facilitate that assimilation was changed.
Native Recollections of the Interwar years and the IRA

I juxtapose the ‘misery and oppression’ for Indian people as reflected in the statistical data offered by the Meriam report with accounts from Frank Fools Crow who called those years the best of his life. I point out how Sun Dances continued throughout the early reservation years and how Fools Crow suggests that Indian people learned to live within those constraints and that the IRA made things more difficult for people on Pine Ridge and Rosebud because of the additional layer of governmentality put in place. Problematic was that Indian people now comprised that new layer of governmentality.

Deloria’s Presence: A Transitional Life

This section introduces the notion of thinking about life stories as useful for thinking about Native thought. I introduce how I am going to proceed in this section by thinking about Deloria in this way.

Anpetu Waste Wi, Good Day Woman

This section provides a short biography of Deloria that is attentive to a perspective that is inclusive of the Saswe story.

Appeals to Scientific, Progressive and Christian Approaches

This section examines the way that Deloria appeals to the dominant discourses of science, progressivism, and Christianity in her work Speaking of Indians.

Deloria’s Future: Four Themes from Contemporary Academic Communities

I introduce the four categories of contemporary engagement with Deloria: literary, writing against the grain, feminisms and kinship and anthro-performance.

The Literary Turn: Deloria—The Poetic Storyteller

I use Clifford’s seminal work identifying the literary turn to locate Deloria as multiply influenced to engage in multiple discursive domains (in an era where many anthropologists are producing ethnographic fiction, studying of Native storytellers; and familial background in storytelling tradition) in order to teach a dominant audience about the humanity of Indian people.

Cultural Critique: Deloria--“Writing Against the Grain”

I examine the ways that Deloria not only wrote against the grain of dominant representations of Indian people, but how she also challenged the privileging of scientific knowledge and method.

Feminisms and Kinship

I examine the way that Deloria has been taken up by feminists in the contemporary era in that her work, Waterlily, is textually innovative and focuses on a women’s perspective. I argue that Deloria might not have been
comfortable with this designation and suggest a reading that is attentive to her multiple, and often vexed positionality within the kinship structure.

Anthro-performance

I examine the varied ways that Deloria engaged in what anthropologist Faye Harrison calls anthro-performance (ethnographically informed performance) including her own lectures delivered in Indian regalia, her work with the Camp Fire Girls, and her involvement writing and directing pageants.

Deloria’s Past: Sun Dance

I look at two aspects of Deloria’s work on the Sun Dance: her own complicated relationship to the ritual and her work to verify the Sword materials about the Sun Dance and related myths.

Concluding Thoughts

4.0 Chapter 4: The Medicine Men’s Association: To Work to a Better Understanding

Strategies of Social, Political, and Religious Activism

In this section I juxtapose AIM’s meeting with the MMPM meeting to introduce the argument that both meetings represent strategies of social, political, and religious activism undertaken by Lakota people as they sought to intervene in the many problems faced in their communities. I further argue that the strategy of engaging in story exchange, particularly with representatives of institutional oppression, in order to come to a better understanding made an important contribution, which is obscured by the focus on AIM. I proceed to lay out the outline of the chapter focusing first on the historical moment and then on specific story exchanges in the MMPM.

Transformational Historical Moment

In an introduction to this section I locate the MMPM within the context of social unrest in the U.S. during this era. I introduce three domains (institutional, popular culture, and internal) that reflect a more sympathetic attitude towards Native people. I also introduce Franz Fanon’s argument about the Native bourgeoisie in order to consider internalized colonization.

Institutional Approaches: Changing Mission of the Catholic Church

In this section I provide a history of the Catholic Church’s presence on the reservation, discuss the original Catholic mission, and provide examples from the MMPM of personal experiences during the early mission period. I then look at the way Vatican II ushers in an era characterized by a different engagement with Native peoples.
National Sentiments: History, Text, and Cinematic Portrayal

This section traces three arenas of popular culture that reflect transformations in the national sentiment about Native peoples. These include history (Bury my Heart at Wounded Knee), texts (such as Black Elk Speaks) and film (A Man Called Horse).

Native Sentiments: National and Local Perspectives

In an introduction to this section, I look at N. Scott Momaday and Vine Deloria, Jr., whose seminal works in 1969 introduce the notion of Native pride and the revitalization of Native religion and culture.

The Work of Colonization

This section provides examples that demonstrate the Lakota participants were well aware of the internalized colonization that had taken place on the reservation. The participants describe the colonized mind and look at both the tribal council and AIM as examples of the effects of colonization.

Decolonizing the Colonized: Performative Challenges

This section describes some of the efforts undertaken by some Lakota, through the practice of Sun Dance, to challenge the constraints imposed by the tribal council, which served to continue the colonial agenda of the oppressor.

Aspects of Storytelling Exchange during the MMPM

In an introduction to this section, I summarize Joann Bromberg’s work on conversational exchanges and describe how I’m going to proceed.

Primary and Notable Participants in the MMPM

This section provides a brief bio about the primary participants in the MMPM.

Challenges of the MMPM Transcripts

In this section I examine the problems and issues faced when working with the MMPM transcripts. Challenges occur in translation, interpretation, and transcription, which break today’s conventional standards for these processes. Yet, in spite of the messiness of the archives, they document the agency being asserted by the Lakota participants and are appropriate for documenting conversational exchanges as advanced by Bromberg.

Situating Lakota Storytelling

In this section I survey different approaches to thinking about storytelling and use the example of stories about how the pipe was brought to the Lakota people to argue for an approach attentive to the work of storytelling rather than the
I also describe how I’m going to proceed by looking at three examples of the work storytelling does in the MMPM (from a Lakota perspective).

**Storytelling as Social Commentary** ..........................................................202
I provide examples of story exchanges that work as social commentary during the MMPM. I particularly accentuate a primary concern expressed by the medicine men; the loss of respect for each other within the community.

**Resistance in Conversational Exchanges** ..............................................208
I provide examples of story exchanges that work as resistance during the MMPM. I particularly accentuate Stolzman’s interpretations of Lakota theology and his intention to write a book (publish the (mis)interpretations.

**Emphasizing the Experience of Lakota Ritual** ........................................212
I provide examples of story exchanges that work to promote experience during the MMPM. Experience is promoted by the medicine men as a corrective to: misunderstandings about and misinterpretations of Lakota ritual. Experiential knowledge is privileged.

**Concluding Thoughts** ................................................................................217

5.0 **Chapter 5: Small Bear Revealed:**
“**When They Read What We Write**” .................................................................220

**Ethnography, Social Science, and Gloomy Prognoses of the Sun Dance** .................................................................220
This section provides a brief synopsis of Lincoln’s article, introduces Brettell’s observations about the three sorts of critiques made about studies of one’s community and how these critiques apply to Lincoln’s article, argues that Lincoln’s interpretation does not account for the increase in the numbers of Sun Dances and participants, and lays out how I will proceed using Brettell’s model.

**Considerations of Ethnographic Practice** .................................................226
This serves as a brief survey of contemporary discussions of ethnographic best practices, focusing on the reflexive, interpretive, and literary and discusses how Lincoln and his contemporaries do not employ these methods.

**An all-inclusive Approach to Lakota Ritual** ..............................................229
This section offers an emic account of Running’s biography, which highlights his approach all-inclusive approach to Lakota ritual.
The Enduring Valence of Hunter-Gatherer Discourse ........................................234
This section lays out critiques made about the way hunter-gatherer discourse has been complicit in colonial projects, noting the way it works to reinforce noble-savage motifs and emphasize warrior qualities in “primitive” cultures. And, I examine the way that hunter-gatherer discourse shapes descriptions about the Sun Dance (by Lincoln and his contemporaries) as well as influencing their analyses.

Ideological Hegemony in Contemporary Sun Dance............................................242
This section contextualizes a discussion of the gloomy prognosis made by Lincoln that the Sun Dance may no longer be an efficacious ritual by returning to Lincoln’s question regarding who constitutes one’s social universe within a climate that is particularly tuned to imaginings of self-determination.

Imagining Self-determination in Politics, Representation, and Culture ...243
This section provides an extended treatment of the ways that the Rosebud and Oglala Sioux tribes are imagining self-determination demonstrating that regardless of the close relationships between the two nations, they are choosing to focus on and represent themselves in very different ways. This serves to challenge any notion of a monolithic Lakota perspective.

Issues of Race, Ethnicity, and Culture ...............................................................248
This serves to introduce the idea that Lincoln’s focus on counter-hegemonic resistance to dominant society obscures emic ideological contestation, which I locate as the tension between a Lakota worldview of an imperative for all-inclusive vs. the divisiveness of minority-specific counter-hegemonic resistance.

Case study: Contrasting Lakota Experiences ...............................................251
This section looks at the autobiographies of Leonard and Mary Crow Dog in order to illuminate certain characteristics of Lakota worldview and to demonstrate that there are very different experiences for those living on Rosebud reservation.

Identity and Tradition as Rhetorical Strategies .............................................255
This section introduces the way the terms identity and tradition are widely used as rhetorical strategies to delegitimize/legitimize and authorize/challenge authority.

Case Study: Appeals to Tradition .................................................................257
This section offers a close reading of the way tradition is mobilized in a specific case.

The Transformative Effect of the Sun Dance.....................................................261
This section summarizes the challenges made so far, offers Lincoln’s provisional definition (Emerging from the Chrysalis) as a point of entry to consider the claims
and testimonies about the transformational aspects of the Sun Dance. I argue the appeal and allure of these testimonies can account for the growth in participation. I further highlight and suggests a provisional Lakota approach to the ritual, which can be mined from Crow Dog, Running, Medicine, and Bucko and is articulated by Deloria. It emphasizes right relations, well-being, and health.

**Transformations for the Individual** .................................................................264
This section provides a survey of claims regarding individual transformations in regards to health, addiction, and psychological (including identity) issues.

**Establishment of Right Relations** ...............................................................267
This section provides a survey of claims regarding transformations for the individual in relation to the collective

**Concluding Thoughts** ..................................................................................269
APPENDIX B:
MMPM Archives References

The Medicine Men and Pastor Meeting Archives at held in the Special Collections at Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI. The references below are organized by the speaker’s last name and date. Information includes, the date of the meeting, the tape number of the recording of the meeting and the page number of the transcripts.

Chief Eagle, Dallas. 4 May 1976. T43, 19

Big Crow, Moses. 13 February 1973. T1, 5, 6, 7

----- 20 October 1973. T3, 5

----- 30 April 1974. T8, 2

----- 21 February 1977. T51, 39

----- 1 March 1977. T51, 45

Ben Black Bear, Sr. 20 March 1973. T2, 9

----- 8 April 1975. T22, 49


----- 8 April 1975. T22, 53


----- 12 October 1976. T48, 6

Hilbert. 14 December 1976. T52, 9

294
Kills Enemy, Charles. 12 February 1973. T1, 4

----- 20 March 1973. T2, 13

Lame Deer, John “Fire.” 29 January 1974. T5, 8, 14

----- 8 October 1974. T11, 6

Narrative exchange Big Crow/Stolzman. 13 February 1974. T1, 27

----- 29 May 1974. T9, 2

Narrative exchange Schweigman/Unknown Priest. 29 January 1974. T5, 15


Picket Pin, Frank. 29 January 1974. T5, 11

Running Horse, Arthur. 13 Feb. 1973. T1, 1, 2

----- 10 February, 1974. T11, 2

----- 14 October 1975. T29A, 56

Schweigman, Bill. 28 September 1974. T10, 10

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