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THE EMERGING INFLUENCE OF PAN-INDIAN ELEMENTS ON THE TRIBAL
IDENTITY OF THE GROS VENTRE OF NORTHCENTRAL MONTANA

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THE EMERGING INFLUENCE OF PAN-INDIAN ELEMENTS ON THE TRIBAL IDENTITY OF THE GROS VENTRE OF NORTHCENTRAL MONTANA

DISSERTATION

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

By
Sanford J. Siegel, B.A., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University

1983

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To Susan, Aaron, and David
I was awarded small grants by the Ohio Academy of Science and the Society of Sigma Xi and wish to acknowledge their support of this dissertation research. Special recognition is given to the Jesuit Priests and the Dominican and Franciscan Sisters who accepted Susan and me, and allowed us to live and work at St. Paul’s Mission. Their open-mindedness and genuine concern made our stay at the mission enjoyable and rewarding. I would also like to thank Mike Ley and Bill Chambers for their encouragement and support of the research project.

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VITA

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITA</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Chapter

### I. INTRODUCTION: ACCULTURATION AND ETHNIC IDENTITY

- Acculturation and Ethnic Identity:  
  - A Literature Review: 3
  - The Gros Ventre Case: 22

### II. FIELDWORK AND METHODS

- The Original Research Proposal: 39
- The Study of Gros Ventre Ethnic Identity: 47
- Our Role in the Community and the Collection of Ethnographic Data: 53

### III. HISTORY OF GROS VENTRE ACCULTURATION

- Gros Ventre Culture and Culture Change: 64
  - A Literature Review: 64
  - From the Saskatchewan River Valley to the Fort Belknap Reservation: 72
  - Missionaries Among the Gros Ventre: 78
  - The Loss of Traditional Gros Ventre Culture: 80
  - Federal Government Policy and the Fort Belknap Reservation: 92

### IV. ACCULTURATION: THE GROS VENTRE PERSPECTIVE

- 103
## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Montana's Indian Reservations</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The Fort Belknap Indian Reservation</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER ONE  INTRODUCTION: ACCULTURATION AND ETHNIC IDENTITY

The focus of this dissertation is the relationship between acculturation and ethnic identity. The fieldwork research was conducted on the Gros Ventre, a Plains Indian tribe that has experienced extensive acculturation since the mid-nineteenth century. Through acculturation most of the traditional Gros Ventre culture and the language have disappeared. Consequently, there is little in the contemporary culture that distinguishes the Gros Ventre from other small, rural, western communities.

Acculturation has not progressed at a uniform rate among the Gros Ventre. This differential rate of change has had two major effects upon the process of Gros Ventre culture change. First, there is diversity among members of the Gros Ventre tribe with one segment oriented toward the dominant White society, and another segment that has retained their orientation toward being Indian.

The second effect of differential acculturation is that the material culture, economy, political system, social organization, and religious system have changed in the direction of the dominant White society, but the Gros Ventre tribal identity has persisted throughout this process.

The objective of the dissertation is to explain the process by which the Gros Ventre have retained a strong ethnic identity despite
the extensive acculturation experienced by the tribe. This explanation will involve a response to the following questions.

1. What factors, including cultural elements, institutions, and processes, account for the persistence of the Gros Ventre tribal identity?

2. What cultural elements have been selected as symbols of ethnic identity?

3. Why are these particular elements selected as symbols of ethnic identity?

4. How do these elements serve as symbols of tribal identity?

5. What differentiates those Gros Ventre who use these symbolic elements for tribal identity from those who have not adopted these elements?

These are the major issues to be treated in this dissertation.

The research topic concerning ethnic identity is a departure from the original proposal developed before initiating the fieldwork. In addition, significant modifications were made in the field to the intended methods designed in the original research project. In the following chapter on methodology, a brief description of the original proposal will be presented. In addition, the reasons for the changes, both in the research topic and the methods, will be provided.

The following section presents a review of the research which provides the foundation for the study of Gros Ventre acculturation and ethnic identity. The identification process analyzed in this dissertation is the result of acculturation. A brief history of acculturation theory will be presented below. The resistance of ethnic identity to
the effects of acculturation will be treated both from the perspective of the acculturation and personality literature and the research concerning the concept of identity. The acculturation continuum models which influence this dissertation research are discussed in the section on acculturation and personality studies. The theoretical work and research relating the concept of identity to acculturation are the basis of this dissertation research. This literature will also be reviewed in this chapter.

**Acculturation and Ethnic Identity: A Literature Review**

Acculturation studies grew out of the work and orientation of Franz Boas. Boas (1896), reacting to the generalizations proposed by the evolutionists, turned the field of anthropology toward rigorous field techniques and data gathering, and made cultural relativism a standard philosophy underlying all singular cultural studies. Boas' historical particularism molded the discipline in America toward a concern with culture history and culture process.

Mead's (1932) research on a Plains Indian tribe was one of the pioneer studies in acculturation. The mark of the Boasian orientation is clearly seen in Mead's study. She traces the particular culture history of the "Antlers" from contact to the present, describing the stages of acculturation and the impact of acculturation in each of these periods. This stage or period approach became a model for acculturation studies through the 1950s. Mead describes a society disorganized from the influx of White culture, and concludes that the "Antlers" were unable to adapt to the changing conditions.
Other early acculturation studies were conducted by Parsons and Lesser. Parsons' (1936) study of Mitla traced the social fusion (Linton 1940) of Indian and Spanish culture into a distinctive Mexican culture. Lesser's (1933) research on the Pawnee focused upon a reactive process resulting from acculturation. He describes the revival of the handgame from the moribund traditional culture, and its transition from a gambling game to a ritual in the Ghost Dance.

The studies conducted in the 1930s stimulated a need for direction and standardization in acculturation research and reporting. The goal that emerged was to generate comparable materials which would make possible generalizations and eventually principles in acculturation theory. This concern with nomothetic statements regarding the acculturation process resulted in the 1935 Social Science Research Council Seminar conducted by Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits. The "Memorandum on the Study of Acculturation" (Redfield, Linton, Herskovits 1936), generated by the seminar, provided a definition of acculturation, and an outline of issues which was to serve as a guide for collection, classification, and analysis of acculturation data. The concept of acculturation was defined as

those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups (Ibid.:149).

The outline provided variables for acculturation research in five broad categories: type of contact, contact situation, process of selection and integration, psychological mechanisms, and results of acculturation. This approach provided the basis for acculturation studies in the 1950s,
and has had a profound influence on all acculturation research to the present time.

Following the 1935 seminar, cross-cultural studies and major theoretical works emerged as the focus of acculturation research. Linton (1936) develops the concepts of form, function, meaning, and use as aspects of a culture trait or trait complex, and as an analytical framework for the study of the selection and integration process in acculturation. Through the use of this framework, Linton refines and describes the acculturative processes. He explains that a trait may be borrowed in form, but its function and meaning are often reinterpreted to fit the pre-existing patterns of the recipient culture. Material elements are borrowed early in contact situations, for they require little change in the pre-existing culture pattern. Behavioral and ideological elements require imitative learning and the communication of abstractions and meanings are, therefore, borrowed only after lengthy contact. Linton also develops the concepts of an element's utility, its compatibility with pre-existing patterns, and the factor of prestige in the selection process.

Herskovits (1938) makes a major contribution to the understanding of acculturation with the development of the concept of syncretism. He relates this process of reinterpretation to the acculturative experience in the Caribbean. His classic Caribbean study demonstrates the reinterpretation and merging of meanings and functions of African gods and Catholic saints among the native population.

Linton (1940) edited a collection of ethnographic case studies of North American Indian acculturation. The cross-cultural comparisons and
theoretical analysis represent an attempt to apply the acculturation process. North American Indians remained the laboratory for the investigation of acculturation through the 1940s and 1950s.

Hallowell (1945) made explicit the importance of psychological mechanisms in the acculturation process. He introduces learning theory into the process of selection and then the reinterpretation of elements to fit the pre-existing patterns of the recipient culture. Hallowell describes the process of imitative learning on the part of the recipient culture, with the donor culture providing models for a particular culture element.

The 1940s and 1950s were characterized by classifications, stage models, and typologies in acculturation research. In 1953 another Social Science Research Council Seminar was held on acculturation. Broom, Siegel, Vogt, and Watson (1954) published the results of the seminar. Acculturation studies were reviewed, concepts were classified and defined for greater precision, and there was a call for the narrowing of acculturation research and specialization. Attention was focused upon types and situations of contact.

Spicer (1961) edited a collection of case studies concerning acculturation among six different Indian tribes. His work, which emerged as a result of the 1953 seminar, was a comparative study focusing upon the relationship between contact situations and conditions and the identification of types of change. The acculturation study concerned two types of contact: directed contact, in which one society is subordinate to the other, and non-directed contact, in which neither society has a superordinate status.
Linton (1943) describes a type of revitalization movement, a reaction to acculturation. Nativistic movements are conscious and organized attempts, on the part of a society's members, to revive or perpetuate selected aspects of its culture. Linton explains that people only become conscious of other cultures when they perceive that their own culture is threatened, and that this consciousness is a result of the acculturation process. Elements are selected, and are given symbolic value as providing their society with a unique character, distinguishing them from all other societies.

Through the 1940s and 1950s, the relationship between culture change and psychological variables became a central concern of acculturation research. Several significant generalizations have been drawn from this area of investigation. The acculturative continuum models have demonstrated that there is variability within a society due to differential rates of acculturation. Acculturation is not a uniform process, and the members of a society may represent different levels of change. The acculturation and personality studies have focused some attention on the individual's place in the acculturation process. There are also differential rates of change between the systems of a culture. As a result of this latter generalization, researchers have demonstrated that personality tends to be highly resistant to the effects of acculturation. There may be extensive changes in a society's economic, political, and social systems, and yet basic personality may remain aboriginal in character.

The pioneer research into the psychological aspects of acculturation were conducted by A. Irving Hallowell. Hallowell (1950, 1951, 1955)
established a continuum of three acculturative levels for the Ojibwa Tribe based upon source of subsistence, social organization, religion, and language. Through the use of the Rorschach technique, Hallowell found that even among the highest levels of acculturated Ojibwa, whose manifest culture approximated that of surrounding Whites, that the basic personality remained aboriginal in origin. He concluded that personality is highly resistant to acculturation. While the highly acculturated Ojibwa retained a basic personality structure, Hallowell does note a change in personality among the highly acculturated Ojibwa. Due to the disintegration of the traditional religious system and the associated values, and the absence of satisfying replacements, the highly acculturated Ojibwa were experiencing a low level of psychological adjustment. Despite culture change, and the traits borrowed from the dominant culture, the personality structure persists, and is resistant to change.

Friedl (1956) substantiates the findings of Hallowell regarding the Ojibwa. She concludes her study, that despite three hundred years of contact with Euroamerican culture, the Ojibwa modal personality structure has been retained.

Wallace (1952) demonstrates the persistence of Tuscarora personality despite acculturation, based upon the use of Rorschach protocols. The resistance of personality structure to acculturation was also demonstrated by Bruner (1956) among the Mandan-Hidatsa of North Dakota. Eggan (1956) explains that despite the incorporation of western elements by the Hopi, they have maintained adherence to their traditional values. Both Bruner and Eggan account for the personality and traditional values by explaining that those culture elements internalized through
Socialization in infancy and early childhood are the most resistant to the changes which result from acculturation.

Following the lead of Hallowell, the Spindlers (G. Spindler 1955; L. Spindler 1962; Spindler and Spindler 1957) employed a continuum model to study the relationship between acculturation and personality among the Menomini. Spindler and Goldschmidt (1952) developed a schedule of sociocultural variables to measure degrees of acculturation. Religious affiliation and orientation were selected as the primary determinants of membership in a particular acculturative category. On the basis of the administration of the sociocultural schedule among the Menomini, it was determined that five acculturative categories fall along the continuum. The acculturative categories were the native-oriented, the Peyote Cult, the transitional, the lower status acculturated, and the elite acculturated. Using the Rorschach technique, the Spindlers demonstrated the persistence of personality structure through all the levels of acculturation. They did find psychological transformations among the elite acculturated associated with their successful adaptation to the middle-class American value system. The Spindlers conclude that when the subordinate group, aspiring to American goals, has the means available to achieve these goals, that there may be psychological changes. Where there are no barriers to achievement, the new adaptation becomes rewarding, and psychological changes are fostered.

Bigart (1971) demonstrates that the important psychological aspects of the Indians on the Flathead Reservation have been sustained despite the adoption of western technology, schools, and Christianity. He describes a high incidence of intermarriage and rapid biological
assimilation into the White population. Even among Indians down to one-eighth degree blood, however, he demonstrates that their Indian-ness has been maintained. Bigart explains that socialization accounts for the retention of Indian-ness, despite biological assimilation. The Indian community socializes those children with little Indian blood, and despite the influence of their White ancestors, the children internalize their Indian identity and the elements associated with the Indian way of life.

It was long assumed by government officials and anthropologists that the American Indian would eventually assimilate into the dominant White society. There are a number of authors (Lurie 1961; Berkhofer 1971; McNickle 1973) who argue that not only is the American Indian not assimilating, but tribal populations are growing, and the tribes are surviving. An important point made by these authors is that the Indian people are making a conscious effort to sustain their tribes and tribal identities while borrowing significant amounts of the dominant White culture. Their preference to retain their Indian-ness conditions the selective borrowing of White elements so as not to threaten the persistence of their ethnic identities.

In their study of the Kwakiutl, Rohner and Rohner (1970) make the following statement:

The Kwakiutl are no longer exceptional because of their eco-nomic activities, their religious practices and beliefs, their social or ceremonial life, their house style or food they eat. In most ways, in fact, they live in a style very similar to the White fishermen and loggers who reside in the area. Therefore, the Indians can be viewed as a rural, working class subcultural variant of the North American class structure, rather than being a distinctive cultural group (Rohner and Rohner 1970:38).
According to the Rohner's description, the Kwakiutl have been almost entirely assimilated into the dominant White society. The Rohners equate technological, economic, social and religious change with tribal assimilation into the dominant society. An investigation of the more abstract elements, such as value orientation, personality structure, and ethnic identity might lead to quite different conclusions concerning Kwakiutl acculturation. There are a number of studies which demonstrate that there is no equation of technological, economic, social, and religious acculturation with the assimilation of the tribe or the loss of Indianness.

The study of identity has become a significant focus of acculturation research. Ethnic or tribal identity is an important element which operates to sustain the solidarity and integrity of the tribe. The use of the identity concept has great value in the study of acculturation. Through the investigation of tribal identity, it has become apparent that technological, economic, social, and religious acculturation does not imply tribal assimilation into the dominant White society. There are tribes making successful bicultural adaptations to acculturation. Tribal identity plays a significant role in facilitating this bicultural adjustment by fostering the maintenance of the solidarity of the tribe at the same time as White elements are being incorporated into the tribe's way of life.

The identity concept was developed by personality theorists in psychology (Erikson 1951; Rogers 1959; Sullivan 1953). The concept of identity and its application to the study of acculturation has since been adopted by anthropologists. As an element of a tribe's personality
structure, ethnic or tribal identities have demonstrated some resistance to change. The persistence of identity is consistent with the work of Hallowell (1950, 1951, 1955), Wallace (1952), and the Spindlers (G. Spindler 1955; L. Spindler 1962; Spindler and Spindler 1957) regarding the resistance of personality to the effects of acculturation.

According to Robbins (1974) there are five basic assumptions which underlie all models attempting to explain the concept of identity:

1. the way an individual conceives of his self or identity will have an effect on his behavior and beliefs;
2. a conception of self is a prerequisite to human social life... or is necessary to orient the individual to others and to his physical environment;
3. an individual's identity is formed and maintained in the course of interaction with others (Goffman 1959);
4. individuals need to have communicated to them by others information that confirms, validates, or reinforces their particular view of self;
5. individuals are constantly striving to obtain from others confirmation of their view of self.

According to Robbins (Ibid.) self-identity is an individual's view of self, while social identity is the concept an individual has of the way others view him. Parker (1964) defines ethnic identity as the assessment of an individual's membership identification in an ethnic group. Robbins explains that self-esteem is based upon the congruity between self-identity and social identity. These identity concepts are analytically separated, but in actuality are highly interrelated. One's view of self
and his perception of the way others view him are dependent upon his social interaction with members of his own society and other societies (Goffman 1959). In addition, ethnic identity is a vital component of both self-identity and social identity.

Goodenough (1963) explains that self-identity or personal identity is determined by one's perception of the relevant attributes or dimensions of a person that make him like some and different from others. The identification of relevant dimensions and their definition are shared in a society. The individuals in a society who wish to have a particular identity will work to acquire the dimensions of that identity. Goodenough also contends that a person's membership in a group is a function of his or her acquisition and display of personal dimensions. In addition, Goodenough argues that in every society some identity dimensions are considered inherent. For example, in most American Indian tribes degree blood is an acquired characteristic or dimension that determines ethnic group membership, and cannot be changed throughout a person's lifetime.

Wallace (1967) explains that all levels of identity are a function of an individual's ability to confirm that identity to one's self and to have it confirmed and validated by others. An individual cannot sustain a particular social, personal, or ethnic identity without this confirmation. The lack of confirmation would result in low self-esteem and possible psychic distress. The process of confirmation involves the acquisition and presentation of those dimensions which are symbols of the valued and desired identity. The dimensions may be such features as possessions, behavior, skills, physical appearance, beliefs, and values.
According to Robbins (1974) identity processes are those cultural processes that are associated with the formation and maintenance of identities. He states that the study of identity processes has illuminated the significance of socialization in adolescence and later life. Desired identities may be acquired in later life through the learning and acquisition of the traits which symbolize that identity.

Spindler (1968) relates personal identity and ethnic identity. Spindler explains that a group shares a collective identity. This shared identity, based upon group membership, becomes a significant component of an individual's personal identity. As an integral part of an individual's personal identity, the ethnic identity must also be confirmed to protect the individual's self-esteem.

There are a number of acculturation and identity studies which investigate the effects to an Indian tribe or segment of the tribe that desired a shift in identity in the direction of the dominant society, but were not given access to the cultural elements which confirm that identity. Chance (1965) found, in his study of North Alaskan Eskimos that those who identified with Anglo-American culture, but lacked the means to achieve that identity displayed symptoms of psychic distress. In another study of an Eskimo village, Parker (1964) found that the incongruity between the desired western identity and the means to acquire the elements of that identity, resulted in deviant behavior. He explains, for example, that in the village in which western behavior, values, and goals are internalized and become a component of the personal identity, but barriers to the achievement of the identity are perceived, there is a problem with juvenile delinquency. Graves (1967)
demonstrates that limited access to internalized and desired western goals among an Indian population in a small southwestern town led to psychological disorganization and heavy drinking.

Berreman (1964) studied an Aleut community in which a segment of the population identified with western society and internalized western cultural models. They identify with Whites but resent the Whites for not accepting them. The Aleuts maintain an internal group loyalty to avoid being rejected by Whites. Their desire for western identification and inability to achieve their goals has led to stress and alcohol consumption.

There are a number of studies demonstrating the resistance of ethnic identity to the impact of acculturation. The definition of relevant identity features and the process of identity confirmation are essential aspects of the continuity and persistence of ethnic identity. Tribes are making a conscious effort to maintain their tribal identities and solidarity. They are accommodating to acculturation, not through assimilation, but by adopting a bicultural adaptation to the culture contact with the dominant White society. This bicultural adaptation involves the incorporation of White elements into the tribe's way of life, while maintaining their Indianness, and more significantly their tribal identities.

In a study of the Haida mortuary complex, Blackman (1973) describes the incorporation of Christian elements into the native culture. The Haida have adopted these elements from Anglican missionaries, but have changed their meaning to fit Indian ideology and values. This integration process points to the importance of values and ideology in the
maintenance of Indianness. The traditional values, in this case, were retained despite the acculturation of the Haida.

In his study of the Hupa on the Hoopa Valley Reservation, Bushnell (1968) states that the Hupa way of life is indistinguishable from surrounding small, rural White towns in northwestern California. While their way of life is almost entirely American in character, the Hupa maintain their unique tribal identity. The Hupa do have access to the dominant society, and thus the retention of their identity is based upon a conscious choice to do so. Their Hupa identity is based upon several traits which symbolize and confirm their Indianness. These traits are the ties to the reservation, the revival of selected aspects of the traditional culture, and the Hupa beliefs regarding prayer and the supernatural. It is interesting that the Hupa consciously avoid the incorporation of Pan-Indian elements. In their attempt to salvage and sustain traditional elements, the Hupa do not want the dilution of these elements by mixing them with imported Pan-Indian traits.

According to Suttles (1963) the Coast Salish have adopted western material culture and have experienced the effects of intense missionary activity and government administration. He explains that the Coast Salish do not have access to participation in the dominant society. Suttles argues that Indians who experience barriers to assimilation may seek alternatives which protect their self-esteem. The maintenance of psychic integrity is the motivating force which operates to foster the emphasis upon the value of Indian identity, and the stimulus to sustain Indian culture. The traits of Coast Salish culture which function to maintain tribal integrity and identity are the winter dances, which
include potlatching, summer sports events, and the Shaker Church, a Pan-
Indian religious movement which combines Indian and Christian elements.
These dimensions provide the mechanisms for the individual's confirm-
ation of their Indianness and Coast Salish identity.

Spicer (1962) describes the persistence of ethnic identities among
the tribes of the southwest. He states that the maintenance of tribal
identity has no relation to the extent of borrowing of western elements
or the loss of traditional culture. The process of cultural assimila-
tion and the process of ethnic identification are different processes.
Spicer explains that the factors which support and maintain unique tri-
bal identities are their sense of a shared history, the ties of the land,
and selected traditional elements that are given symbolic value in de-
fining the tribe's uniqueness. He also describes the influence of White
interaction with the Indians as an important feature of the Indian's
definition of their unique identity. They are influenced by the White's
definition of those features that are Indian.

Through the use of the life-history approach, Spradley (1969)
demonstrates the bicultural adjustment of a Kwakiutl chief. The author
describes a case in which an individual has made a successful bicultural
adaptation to the contact situation. The individual has adapted to both
Kwakiutl and White culture, and maintains a bicultural identity.
Through identity models in both societies, the chief has been socialized
in both western and Kwakiutl culture, and is positively rewarded in both
systems. Similarly, French (1961) describes a bicultural adjustment for
the Wasco-Wishram. These Indians have learned both Indian and White be-
havior, have access to participation in both societies, and are rewarded
by identification with both societies. Consequently, parents socialize their children in both cultures and foster a bicultural identity in their children.

The Narrangansett of Rhode Island are highly acculturated and integrated into the dominant White society. Boissevain's (1959) study demonstrates the significance of tribal identity to the maintenance and solidarity of the tribe. The tribe sold their reservation in 1880 and lost their wardship status with the government. They have lost their traditional culture and have become almost completely indistinguishable from the dominant society. Boissevain explains that the Narrangansett base their tribal identity not upon aboriginal elements, but rather, through a conscious effort, and the use of certain introduced elements. The traits which operate to confirm their Indian identity are the tribal organization, reinstated through the Indian Reorganization Act, the meetings and social events held by the tribal organization, pow wows and other ceremonial occasions, and membership in the Indian Protestant Church. The Indians are motivated to sustain their unique identity by a sense of obligation to maintain their heritage, by the satisfaction deriving from a sense of community, by the advantages of not being identified as Negro by the dominant White society, by the creative outlet resulting from participation in the pow wows, and by the wider acceptance by other Indians made possible through their membership in the Narrangansett Tribe. Boissevain concludes the study by explaining that the tribe has survived through a conscious effort to sustain their identity, and that this identity need not be dependent upon traits that are either unique to the tribe, or are of particularly long-standing
association with the tribe.

One of the most illuminating studies of acculturation and ethnic identity concerns the Lumbee of Robeson County, North Carolina. In her study of the Lumbee, Blu (1980) demonstrates the vital role played by ethnic identity in the persistence and survival of a group of people. The Lumbee are a mixture of Indian, Black, old White ancestry, and are legally recognized as "free persons of color" in North Carolina. They do not have a reservation, an Indian language, or a unique Indian culture. Their recognition as an Indian people by the government came as late as 1956, and resulted from their own active effort to achieve this recognition. The Lumbee identity is founded upon their sense of history, and upon their definition of relevant characteristics which symbolize and confirm their Indianess. These characteristics of Indian identity are pride, meanness, cohesiveness, talking Indian (a dialect of English), keeping one's word, and owning land in Robeson County. These characteristics are defined as "Indian" by local Whites who have reinforced the relevance of these traits of Indian identity in their interaction with the Lumbee. The Lumbee's adherence to, and expression of, these characteristics validates their Lumbee identity. It is not degree blood, but the extent of adherence to these characteristics which determines the Lumbee's degree of Indianess. The Lumbee use their sense of shared history and the behavioral traits to reinforce and confirm their ethnic identity. Blu explains that the Lumbee demonstrate a case in which group identity has been maintained despite tremendous changes to the ethnic group. She concludes her study by arguing that conscious choice plays a significant role in the ethnic
identity aspired to by an individual. An individual may also have a choice regarding their degree of commitment and involvement to an ethnic identity. An individual may choose to ignore their ethnic identity, adhere strongly to their identity, or select any position in-between. The Lumbee have survived as a group through their conscious effort to sustain their ethnic identity.

In his study of Blackfeet acculturation, McFee (1968, 1972) presents a case in which the tribe has developed a bicultural social structure, each representing a particular adaptation to cultural change on the reservation. McFee refers to the social groups as the White-oriented and the Indian-oriented. The terms signify the cultural "directions" or "orientations" of the social groups. The White-oriented have integrated American values and participate in a way of life similar to other small, rural, Montana communities. The Indian-oriented have internalized the value of being Indian as the primary motivation which directs their behavior. They confirm the Indian identity through the participation in Indian activities, the use of the Blackfeet language, and their adherence to those practices that symbolize and reinforce their Indianness. Their Indian culture is a mixture of attenuated traditional culture, traditional values, borrowed Pan-Indian elements, and White elements. Their primary goal is the retention of their ethnic identity, and they are consciously anti-assimilationist. While the White-oriented aspire to White goals and values, they identify as Indian when this identity is threatened. McFee contends that their goals are realistic given their cultural similarities to the dominant American society.
The Blackfeet White-oriented compose the majority of the population on the reservation and dominate the economic and political system on the Blackfeet reservation. While the White-oriented and Indian-oriented represent two distinct social groups, they are united by shared membership in the tribe, shared residence on the reservation, and shared participation in the economic and political system. The Blackfeet recognize the social distinction between the two categories, although they employ the designations "full-blood" and "mixed-blood." McFee refers to these labels as stereotypes, and contends that degree blood is not a sole determinant of orientation. The major factor in determining orientation is socialization.

McFee (1968) cautions against adopting the concept of cultural replacement—"progressive" adaptation leads to cultural loss—in acculturation research. The adoption and integration of White behavioral patterns and material culture by a tribe does not imply a concomitant loss of Indianness or tribal values and identity. Both may co-exist, and one does not necessarily replace the other. McFee explains that the use of the Spindler's sociocultural schedule did not delineate clear acculturative categories for the Blackfeet. He presents the transitional category of Indian-oriented. They have achieved some experience in the White culture, and are able to deal with the White man's world. He refers to these people as "Interpreters." They are Indian-oriented, resist assimilation, and sustain their traditional values and identity, but are proficient in the ways of the dominant White society.
Both McFee's White-oriented and Indian-oriented model and his analysis of the Indian-oriented identity are of primary significance to the dissertation research on the Gros Ventre. The following section will provide a general description of the Gros Ventre ethnic identification process and the impact of acculturation on this process.

Acculturation and Ethnic Identity: The Gros Ventre Case

The Gros Ventre Tribe lives on the Fort Belknap Reservation located in northcentral Montana. Their traditional territory extended far beyond the borders of the present-day reservation, but the Gros Ventre have lived in this region at least since the early nineteenth century. The Gros Ventre share the reservation with the Assiniboine Tribe. Both tribes have lived on the reservation since its inception in the late 1880s. While the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine share a common history of contact with western society, since the mid-1800s, the two tribes are culturally and linguistically distinct. The Assiniboine Tribe is a branch off of the Yanktonai Sioux, and their language belongs to the Siouan Language Family. The Gros Ventre language is Algonquian, and the tribe is an offshoot of the Arapaho.

The third major Indian population located on Fort Belknap is the French-Chippewa-Cree community. This group is not enrolled on the reservation, and is therefore referred to as the "Landless Indians." Only the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine tribes are enrolled on Fort Belknap. This French-Chippewa-Cree population is part of a much larger group which is spread out over the western states and the Canadian provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan. The Landless Indians have shared their residence with the past three generations of Gros Ventre, and have played a significant role in Gros Ventre acculturation.
The Gros Ventre have experienced extensive intermarriage with both the Assiniboine and French-Chippewa-Cree on Fort Belknap. Despite the intermarriage and their shared residence on the reservation, the three groups maintain separate and distinct ethnic identities.

The fieldwork research for this dissertation was conducted in Hays, the traditional home of the Fort Belknap Gros Ventre. The Agency, or Milk River community, was traditionally a predominantly Assiniboine community. Recently, a large segment of the Gros Ventre population has emigrated from Hays to the Milk River District, motivated primarily by the greater availability of housing as compared to Hays, and the proximity to greater employment opportunities. Consequently, there are about as many Gros Ventre living at the Agency as there are in Hays. The third major community on Fort Belknap is Lodge Pole, a predominantly Assiniboine community.

The dissertation focuses upon the Gros Ventre of Hays, Montana. Given the fact that almost all of the Gros Ventre in Hays have relatives at the Agency and that most of the Gros Ventre at the Agency originated from Hays, it may be assumed that there is little that distinguishes the Gros Ventre in Hays from those at the Agency. Most of what is described for the Hays Gros Ventre, therefore, should also apply to the Agency Gros Ventre. So little research was conducted at the Agency, however, that theoretical statements and descriptive data in the dissertation must be limited to the Hays Gros Ventre unless otherwise specified.

There are approximately two thousand Gros Ventre living on and off the Fort Belknap Reservation. More than half of the tribal members live off of the reservation. Many have left for economic and educational
Figure 1. Montana's Indian Reservations

FL Flathead Indian Reservation
BF Blackfeet Indian Reservation
RB Rocky Boy's Indian Reservation
FB Fort Belknap Indian Reservation
FP Fort Peck Indian Reservation
Crow Crow Indian Reservation
NC Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation
Figure 2. The Fort Belknap Indian Reservation
opportunities that are not available on Fort Belknap. Others have left for military service. Most of the off-reservation Gros Ventre live in urban areas in Montana, Washington, Oregon, and California. They are a highly acculturated population, and some have assimilated into the dominant American society.

As was the case with the Agency Gros Ventre, only minimal contact with off-reservation Gros Ventre was possible during the fieldwork research. Consequently, only minor reference is made to the off-reservation tribal members, and they are, for the most part, not included in the theoretical or descriptive material in the dissertation.

The Gros Ventre Tribe has experienced dramatic acculturation since their time of settlement on the Fort Belknap Reservation in the late nineteenth century. Their contemporary way of life bears little resemblance to their pre-contact culture. There is little about the routine way of life of the Gros Ventre that distinguishes them from other western, rural, small communities in Montana. Only a small constellation of traditional elements remain that link the Gros Ventre to their past, and that link becomes more fragile with each passing generation. The Gros Ventre language has almost entirely disappeared. There are only a dozen or so native speakers remaining, and all of them are older than 55 years of age. The native language is not being passed down to any of the middle-aged or young Gros Ventre. English has become the primary language for everyone in the tribe.

Traditional Gros Ventre customs are practiced by only a few, while for most, the traditions persist only as memories. It is primarily the elderly Gros Ventre who display the greatest knowledge of the
traditional practices, but they, too, have lost most of the native culture.

The quantity and quality of culture change experienced by the Gros Ventre has been extensive, and yet, their tribal identity has been sustained. The Gros Ventre identity has demonstrated some resistance to the forces of acculturation. While those Gros Ventre who place significance upon ethnic identity are in the minority, it is this persisting ethnic identity that has been largely responsible for the survival of the Gros Ventre Tribe. They make up considerably less than a third of the entire tribe. The precise number of Gros Ventre who value their identity as Indian and maintain their tribal identity, as opposed to those tribal members who do not place significance upon Indian or Gros Ventre identity, is, however, irrelevant to this study. The dissertation is an attempt to analyze the process of ethnic identification in the tribe and an exact enumeration has little bearing upon the explanation of this process.

For most of the tribe, what is uniquely Gros Ventre about the Gros Ventre is the inheritance of tribal membership. Inherited tribal membership is the minimal basis for ethnic identity. Given the disappearance of most of the traditional culture, tribal membership, or enrollment, is about all that remains that is distinctively Gros Ventre. Those who have only inherited membership do not place much significance upon Gros Ventre identity and are, rather, oriented toward White society in their behavior and values.
While the White-oriented consider themselves Gros Ventre, this group does not place much value upon ethnicity. The White-oriented identify most often as Indian and Gros Ventre when their identity is threatened, as in a display of prejudice toward Indians in one of the White towns off of the reservation. The White-oriented also identify as Gros Ventre when it is opportune to do so. For instance, they exercise their membership in the tribe when per capita payments from treaty claims are made available or when federal government benefits are offered exclusively to tribal members. In general, however, the White-oriented demonstrate little concern or interest in ethnicity. Some possible reasons for their disinterest in tribal identity are offered in Chapter Six.

For those Gros Ventre who maintain a strong ethnic identity, inherited membership in the tribe is not sufficient to confirm their tribal identity. This group, lacking their traditional culture and native language, has adopted the use of Pan-Indian cultural elements to serve as a display of their Indianness which, in turn, symbolizes and confirms their Gros Ventre identity.

A primary value for some of the Gros Ventre is being Indian. It is this value that motivates and directs the ethnic identification process. Through the adherence to this value, tribal identity has attained primary significance for these Gros Ventre, and the expression of that identity has become a manifest and conscious goal. The process of ethnic identification requires that the Gros Ventre define and acquire the relevant features or cultural elements that symbolize their unique identity, and make possible the confirmation of that identity. The failure to confirm this identity could result in psychic disorder and stress
for those Gros Ventre who have internalized the value on being Indian.

Central to the process of confirmation is the collective perception that the Gros Ventre Tribe is different from the groups that surround them. The Gros Ventre have been in continuous contact with the dominant White society since the late nineteenth century. In addition, they share the reservation and much of their lives with the Assiniboine and French-Chippewa-Cree. Consequently, remaining distinct from these other groups has required a conscious effort on the part of the Gros Ventre.

Through acculturation, ethnic identification has become a conscious process for the Gros Ventre (Linton 1940). Before contact with the dominant White society, the Gros Ventre identity was maintained on a subconscious level. They were Gros Ventre, because the culture they participated in and shared was Gros Ventre culture. It would have been inappropriate to state that the Gros Ventre "used" their culture in order to express or confirm their identity. Rather, they used their culture as an adaptation to their natural and social environment. Their identity was a function of their socialization and participation in that culture.

During acculturation the contrast of the native Gros Ventre culture with the culture of the dominant White society brought their awareness of their identity to a more conscious level. The differences became more prominent as the White cultural elements, adopted by the tribe, came into direct conflict with native customs and ideology. This was particularly the case in the conflict between the value systems. In the Gros Ventre case, for example, the traditional value of generosity, and the American values of individualism and materialism, as they relate to
status and prestige, created conflict for the Gros Ventre people.

The value of generosity was of primary importance for the Gros Ventre people. Numerous formal and informal mechanisms existed in the traditional social system that afforded individuals the opportunity to display their generosity. Prestige was measured by a person's display of generosity. A person who did not display this characteristic could not hold a position of leadership in the political or religious system. During the process of acculturation, the Gros Ventre began to adopt the American value system which placed emphasis upon individualism and materialism. Prestige was measured not by the materials that a person would give away, but rather, by the materials they would accumulate. The conflicting values came to exist side-by-side among the Gros Ventre and created conflict both in the community and on a personal level.

This is only one example of the many instances in which Gros Ventre cultural elements came into direct conflict with, and were contrasted with, the American culture. As a result of their acculturative experience, it can be stated that the Gros Ventre use specific features or culture elements to sustain their ethnic identity.

As mentioned above, an important component of the Gros Ventre ethnic identification process is the role played by outside groups in the confirmation of this identity. Barth (1969) describes the significant role of outside groups in a discussion of the maintenance of ethnic boundaries. Outsiders serve to maintain ethnic boundaries by recognizing the distinction between their group and other ethnic groups. In the Gros Ventre case, the Whites, White-oriented Gros Ventre, and other Plains Indian tribes serve in this capacity to confirm the Gros Ventre
identity. These groups recognize the uniqueness of the Gros Ventre Tribe based upon their participation in Indian activities. Those Gros Ventre who adhere to a strong tribal identity have adopted Pan-Indian cultural elements as symbols of their Indianness and Gros Ventre identity. These symbolic elements maintain their distinction from other groups. The Whites, White-oriented Gros Ventre, and other Plains Indian tribes also recognize these symbolic elements as a confirmation of the Gros Ventre tribal identity. That the other Plains Indian tribes perceive a difference between their groups and the Gros Ventre is particularly interesting since the Pan-Indian elements which confirm the Gros Ventre identity are shared by most all of these tribes.

Acculturation has not progressed at a uniform rate among members of the Gros Ventre Tribe. While all of the Gros Ventre are highly acculturated, the differential rate of change has resulted in diversity among the Gros Ventre people. Three groups can be identified among the Gros Ventre of Fort Belknap. There are White-oriented Gros Ventre who display little interest in being Indian. They are Gros Ventre due more to inherited membership in the tribe than through the practice or participation in Indian activities. They do not have a strong Gros Ventre identity. The White-oriented are in the vast majority of the Gros Ventre Tribe, composing more than three-quarters of the tribal population. The Indian-oriented Gros Ventre maintain a strong tribal identity, and have the most extensive knowledge of the traditional culture. This group is primarily composed of elderly people. Some still speak the native language, but even for them, little of the traditional culture remains. Many of the Indian-oriented were raised by grandparents who
were a generation closer to the native culture, rather than by parents who were already experiencing the more intensive effects of acculturation. The Indian-oriented represent a very small category, numbering less than fifty people. The Pan-Indian-oriented Gros Ventre also maintain a strong Gros Ventre identity. They do not possess the knowledge of the Indian-oriented, however, and must find different means to support their identity. The Pan-Indian-oriented make up less than one-third of the tribal population.

The labels selected to identify the three Gros Ventre categories are derived from the analytical model developed by McFee (1968, 1972) in his research on Blackfeet acculturation. The terms were selected for use in this dissertation to indicate the theoretical relationship between the analysis of Gros Ventre acculturation and the work conducted by McFee on the Blackfeet. The theoretical foundation of McFee's work is also to be found in Spindler's (1955) research on the Menomini, and Hallowell's (1950, 1951, 1955) study of the Ojibwa.

There are significant differences, however, between the nature of the groups which exist among the Gros Ventre, and the acculturative categories presented by Hallowell, Spindler, and McFee. The three acculturative categories of Ojibwa, the five categories of Menomini, and the White-oriented and Indian-oriented Blackfeet represent social groups with identifiable members who are distinguished on the basis of socio-cultural differences. The cultural differences between the White-oriented, Indian-oriented, and Pan-Indian-oriented are not readily apparent. The entire Gros Ventre Tribe is highly acculturated, and further along the acculturation continuum than the Ojibwa, Menomini, and
Blackfeet. The three groups of Gros Ventre share much of their way of lives.

Another significant distinction between the Blackfeet and Gros Ventre cases is that the Blackfeet White-oriented and Indian-oriented represent spatially, as well as culturally, distinct groups. The Blackfeet recognize membership in these social groups. The White-oriented, Indian-oriented, and Pan-Indian-oriented are not spatially distinct groups. As opposed to the Blackfeet, they live interspersed in the same communities. In addition, the vast majority of cultural elements do not distinguish between the three groups of Gros Ventre. While the Gros Ventre recognize the characteristics that distinguish these categories, and make reference to the distinctions in terms of degree blood, they do not recognize these categories as social groups.

According to McFee (1968) the labels signify the "direction or orientation" of the groups. In the Gros Ventre case, the terms represent the direction or orientation of identity, and the cultural elements selected to define and confirm that identity. The cultural differences between the three groups are minor.

The Indian-oriented and Pan-Indian-oriented Gros Ventre maintain a strong tribal identity. There are differences, however, in the cultural elements used to express or confirm that identity. The White-oriented are directed toward the dominant White society. They are Gros Ventre, but the value on being Indian is not significant to these people, and they choose to relegate their ethnic identity to a minor role in their lives. They are Gros Ventre because they have inherited membership in the tribe. The differences between the White-oriented,
Indian-oriented, and Pan-Indian-oriented, and the factors accounting for these differences, will be treated in Chapter Six.

There are similarities between the Indian-oriented Blackfeet, described by McFee (Ibid.), and the Indian-oriented Gros Ventre. Both groups adhere to the value on being Indian and maintain strong tribal identities. Being Indian for the Blackfeet means participation in the Blackfeet way of life and speaking the Blackfeet language. The Blackfeet have also incorporated White elements and Pan-Indian elements which are sustained and serve to define their tribal identity. The Indian-oriented Gros Ventre also speak their native language, and while the traditional elements exist only in a very attenuated form, they serve to sustain their Gros Ventre identity.

The Pan-Indian-oriented category is an extension of the model presented by McFee (Ibid.). The Pan-Indian-oriented Gros Ventre have emerged during the acculturation process. These people have internalized the value of being Indian, and they have engaged in a conscious effort to express and confirm their Gros Ventre identity. They are different from the Blackfeet and Gros Ventre Indian-oriented, however, in that they do not speak their native language, nor do they have at their disposal the traditional Gros Ventre elements with which to confirm their Indianness.

Their culture is similar to that of the culture of the dominant White society and the White-oriented Gros Ventre, and yet, their ethnic identification requires that they be different, and be perceived as being different, from these other groups. Motivated by the value of being Indian, they have consciously sustained their tribal identity by
selecting Pan-Indian elements which serve to define the relevant features of their tribal identity, thus making possible the continuation of this identity, and to define those features which keep them distinct from Whites and White-oriented Gros Ventre. The Pan-Indian-oriented have adopted Pan-Indian elements and participate in Pan-Indian activities as the symbols which confirm their Gros Ventre tribal identity. The Pan-Indian-oriented use these elements to express and symbolize their Indianness. It is this Indianness, and the Pan-Indian elements which sustain this Indianness, that maintains their Gros Ventre tribal identity, and confirms their distinction from other groups. For this reason, this group is referred to as the Pan-Indian-oriented.

The imported Pan-Indian elements are an extension from their routine way of life. These borrowed elements represent a conscious effort to sustain identity and to acquire those features which validate it. The Pan-Indian-oriented do not live between two cultures, but rather, with more than one culture. Their unique identity is based upon a synthesis of White elements, a few remaining traditional elements, and Pan-Indian elements. The imported elements have begun to replace the traditional features that defined Gros Ventre identity before the tribe became so highly acculturated.

It is essential to note that while the Gros Ventre have adopted Pan-Indian elements to express their identity, it remains a Gros Ventre identity. The Pan-Indian elements support the Indianness of their Gros Ventre identity. They are, however, first and foremost Gros Ventre.
There are several factors which account for the Gros Ventre's selection of Pan-Indian elements as the symbols of their ethnic identity. Those Gros Ventre who value their tribal identity chose cultural elements that are identified as Indian by the White and White-oriented Gros Ventre. These elements, therefore, serve to distinguish the Pan-Indian-oriented from the Whites and White-oriented that surround them. Traditional Gros Ventre elements would have been the preferable choice, but these are not available to most of the young and middle-aged Gros Ventre. They have either entirely disappeared or so little is known about the traditional practices that the elderly do not feel competent to pass them down to younger generations. The importing of Pan-Indian elements represents the next best viable option. These Pan-Indian cultural elements are also used by other Plains Indian tribes and are recognized by the Whites and White-oriented as Indian elements. Thus, these elements have achieved the purpose of distinguishing Indian groups from significant outside groups and they maintain this purpose for the Gros Ventre. Finally, many of the Pan-Indian elements borrowed by the Gros Ventre are similar to elements that were found in the traditional culture before their disappearance and change. The fact that the Pan-Indian elements are Plains Pan-Indian elements, which were traditionally shared in similar form among the tribes in the Plains Culture Area, has facilitated their acceptance by the Gros Ventre. In addition, this historic reference has enhanced the value of the imported elements as symbols of tribal identity.

Socialization has played a primary role in the development of the Pan-Indian-oriented people. They were raised by Indian-oriented
grandparents and parents, some of whom spoke Gros Ventre, and all of whom either participated in, or had a knowledge of, the traditional culture. The traditions and language were not passed on, but they were instilled with a sense of pride in being Gros Ventre. While they were socialized in an environment that nurtured the importance of being Gros Ventre, they were not provided the means by which to express this identity. The adoption and use of Pan-Indian elements to achieve this end, represents a successful and satisfying adaptation to the high level of acculturation reached by these people, and to the value on being Indian internalized through their socialization with Indian-oriented grandparents and parents.

The borrowing or importing of Pan-Indian elements, and their incorporation into existing culture patterns is not unique to the Gros Ventre Tribe. All of the Plains tribes share these Pan-Indian elements. A strong network of relations has developed among the tribes of the northern Plains. The tribes travelled long distances in the past, and with the ease of travel, made possible by the automobile and new highways, these relations have become even more frequent and extensive. There has always been, and continues to be, a rather vigorous exchange of elements between these societies. What is significant about the Gros Ventre Tribe is the extent to which they depend upon the Pan-Indian elements as symbols of their own tribal identity.

A review of the literature concerning Pan-Indian research will be presented in Chapter Six. The Pan-Indian-oriented category of Gros Ventre and the Pan-Indian elements they have imported to sustain their tribal identity will also be treated in that chapter. Chapter Seven
will describe the factors, in addition to the Pan-Indian elements, which account for the persistence of the Oros Ventre tribal identity.

While all of the Oros Ventre are highly acculturated, there does exist a great deal of diversity within the Oros Ventre Tribe. Consequently, there are a considerable number of exceptions to the generalizations presented and developed in this dissertation. There are individuals who cannot easily be classified into any of the three categories described. This model is based upon general trends, and describes the process of ethnic identification as it applies to a majority of the Pan-Indian-oriented Oros Ventre. The model developed in this dissertation is an analytical tool which facilitates an understanding of the relationship between acculturation and ethnic identification. The categories are also a conceptual tool which provides some insight into the relationship between Pan-Indianism and tribal identity.
The study of ethnic identity, acculturation, and Pan-Indianism is a different research topic than was designed in the original research proposal. The research problem was altered in the field as an accommodation to conditions and circumstances I was unable to anticipate before arriving on Fort Belknap. It became apparent during the first year of my research that I would be unable to study the intended problem. Coincident with the loss of the original topic, I began to direct my attention to more salient issues for investigation. A description of this proposal and the problems which created the need to change both the topic and methodology will be provided.

The original proposal was intended to be an investigation of the influence of the Jesuit mission organization upon the ethnic groups on the Fort Belknap Reservation. The focus of the study was the Jesuit mission organization as an acculturative agent on the reservation and the differential rates and directions of culture change resulting from the acceptance of mission teachings by some ethnic groups and their rejection by others. Degree of acculturation and value orientation were to be employed as measures of change for the ethnic groups on the reservation. Acculturation categories were then to be determined through the administration of the Spindlers' acculturation questionnaire.
(Spindler 1955) for all of the ethnic groups on the reservation. The acculturation categories were to be compared to the value orientations of the ethnic groups, derived from the Kluckhohn Value Orientation Test (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck 1961), to investigate the relationship between acculturation and the process of change in value orientations.

Due to a number of methodological problems encountered during the fieldwork, as well as deficiencies in the original research design, it was necessary to shift to a different set of issues and methods in the study of acculturation on Fort Belknap. The comparison between ethnic groups on Fort Belknap was too difficult to accomplish because of the logistics of the fieldwork situation. This comparative approach would have required fairly extensive travel between Hays, the predominantly Gros Ventre community, and Lodge Pole, the town composed primarily of Assiniboine. We had a budget of one hundred dollars per month to meet all of the research expenses. Travel between the two communities with the frequency that would have been required to perform an adequate investigation of both tribes would have placed an excessive burden upon our already limited funds. In addition, developing rapport with the community required substantial time and effort. Attempting to conduct the study in the two separate communities would have diminished the quality of the investigation in both communities. Our rapport with the community of Hays was facilitated by our work at St. Paul's Mission, located in Hays, and, therefore, it was decided to limit the scope of the study to the Gros Ventre of Hays.

As will be described in some detail in this chapter, my wife, Susan, and I worked at the Roman Catholic Mission in Hays. Our
relationship to the mission seriously interfered with our ability to
study the acculturative impact of the mission upon the Gros Ventre. As
lay volunteers at the mission we were representatives of St. Paul's
Mission in the community. This role carried with it certain responsi-
bilities, one of which was a degree of loyalty to the mission organiza-
tion. While our observations could be conducted with objectivity, we
were limited in our ability to engage in interviews that would have in
any way brought to question the work of the mission in Hays. The
problem was exacerbated by the concerns expressed by some of the
missionaries that the research might jeopardize the mission's work in
the community. During the fieldwork we were given numerous and detailed
accounts of the mission's early approach to "civilizing" and
Christianizing the tribes of Fort Belknap. This information pertained
primarily to the boarding school period and concerned the rather harsh
punishments that were meted out by the missionaries to discourage Indian
children from participating in their Indian culture and from their
native language. Most of this information was provided without my
having to initiate any specific discussions on this subject. The people
of Hays were aware of my interest in the history of the mission and the
Gros Ventre Tribe and the information was often provided in general
conversations concerning the early days of contact on Fort Belknap. Al-
though the current missionaries understood intellectually that they were
not responsible for the early practices of the mission and that the con-
temporary mission did not bear much resemblance to the approach and
philosophy employed during the boarding school days, they were somewhat
defensive about this negative information and felt that its exposure in
my dissertation would only renew bad memories and hinder the present efforts of the mission. I indicated to the missionaries on a number of occasions that I recognized their positive influence and did not intend to dwell exclusively upon any negative issues. Our commitment to the mission and its staff did preclude our ability to investigate the mission's influence as an acculturative agent upon the Gros Ventre.

I also decided to limit my research to the Gros Ventre, and to abandon the comparative approach originally proposed in the study due to the mission's acculturative influence upon the Gros Ventre Tribe. Both historical references to be cited in Chapter Three, and observations of the Assiniboine during the fieldwork, indicate that the mission did have a differential acculturative impact upon the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine tribes. The mission's acculturative influence does not however account for the three categories of Gros Ventre presented in the dissertation, the White-oriented, the Indian-oriented, and the Pan-Indian-oriented.

The mission, as an acculturative agent, has had a homogenizing effect upon the Gros Ventre. Although the Gros Ventre fit into three different categories based upon identity orientations, they are all Catholic. The mission did not create differences between the Gros Ventre, but, instead, produced a common element among the tribal members. The similarities created by the mission's influence on the Gros Ventre provided yet another reason to abandon the study of the mission as an acculturative agent responsible for differential rates and directions of culture change.
The research topic was also modified due to the problems that were encountered both in the administration and results of the test schedules designed for use in the original proposal. The Spindlers' acculturation questionnaire was selected for use to determine acculturative categories among the Gros Ventre. These categories were then to be compared to the value orientations of these groups to assess the impact of acculturation upon value orientations. Most of the information on the acculturation questionnaire was fairly easily obtained, because the material could be collected through observations. The results, however, were of very limited value with regard to the intended study. The questionnaire did not result in the differentiation of acculturative categories, but, rather, demonstrated that all of the Gros Ventre are highly acculturated.

The Kluckhohn Value Orientation Test also failed to provide useful results planned for the original study. Both the acculturation questionnaire and the value orientation test were administered early in the second year of the fieldwork research. The Kluckhohn Value Orientation Test required a fairly lengthy reading of questions and eliciting of responses. We approached the study with the original intent of using a random sample from the community in the administration of the test schedules. We encountered serious resistance to these attempts and eventually abandoned this approach. I felt that our rapport with the community would be jeopardized if I pressured specific respondents, selected at random, to participate in the procedure. Some people were suspicious of the test and even after a lengthy explanation of its purpose still refused to take the questionnaire. I explained
that there were no right or wrong answers and that they would be
ensured of their anonymity. Many remained intimidated, however, by the
formal methods. The formality of the test and the setting made it ex-
tremely difficult to administer and to obtain valid results. Had I
asked the same questions in an informal setting, during the course of a
conversation, I could have arrived at the same information without any
reservations.

I was able to administer the test to ten Gros Ventre men and ten
Gros Ventre women in Hays. The respondents were selected on the basis
of their relationship to Susan and myself and their willingness to co-
operate in this project. Even in these cases, however, the partici-
pants were either too intimidated by the schedule or suspicious of its
use, that many gave responses quickly in order to complete the task and
did not give much consideration to their answers to the questions. The
Kluckhohn Value Orientation Test was also administered to ten mission
personnel, to ten Assiniboine from Lodge Pole, and to ten Whites from a
town located off of the reservation. These tests were administered for
comparative purposes. The results of the Assiniboine schedules were to
be compared with the Gros Ventre results to determine differences that
might have developed as a result of the differential influence of the
mission. The responses of the missionaries would have been compared to
the Gros Ventre responses to assess the direct influence of the mission
upon contemporary tribal values. The results of the test schedules ad-
ministered to the White sample were to serve as a control group by
determining regional White values rather than comparing the Gros Ventre
results, for instance, to the responses of Whites from a midwestern
city. Unfortunately, the failure to execute proper sampling procedures and the poor quality of responses had rendered the results of the value orientation test meaningless. Therefore, the results will not be considered in the dissertation.

The difficulties that arose in the conduct of formal research procedures did significantly alter the research approach taken in the field. The use of tape recorders, the taking of fieldnotes publicly, the use of formal interviews, and the administration of test schedules made most of the informants so uncomfortable that it was decided to minimize the use of any of these techniques. There are a number of reasons why these techniques created problems in the community. The use of formal methods seemed to pressure the informants into believing that they had a great responsibility to give the "correct" information to my questions. Given the tremendous amount of change on the reservation there are people who are somewhat defensive about their lack of knowledge regarding traditional practices. My attempts to alleviate these feelings met with little success. On a few occasions the belief was expressed that the research was being conducted solely for my benefit in the fulfillment of my degree and that the community would derive little benefit from the study. For the people who expressed this belief, the use of formal methods only reinforced their resentment. Even for those people with whom I had established a close relationship, there was some distrust of the research and the manner in which the results would be used. Most of the people in the community had some preconceived notion of what an anthropologist was and the type of research performed by anthropologists. Some of the older people
remembered the fieldwork of Cooper and Flannery in the 1930s and 1940s and most had favorable impressions and good memories of these anthropologists and the research they engaged in on Fort Belknap. Some people had read Vine Deloria's *Custer Died For Your Sins* (1969) and were familiar with the chapter, "Anthropologists and Other Friends." I discussed the issue of the anthropologist exploiting the people upon whom he conducts his research on a number of occasions and I presented the view that anthropologists have made significant contributions to many of the communities in which they have studied and not the least of which was to provide a source of information on native culture for those people who had lost much of their traditional way of life. The people remained suspicious, however, of the formal methods. I decided, therefore, that whenever my rapport with the community was in jeopardy, my investigation of a particular sensitive topic would be withdrawn.

The problems encountered both with the research topic and the methods designed for the study dictated that I modify my original plans. I relied upon informal methods for the collection of data. This approach allowed me to maintain the good rapport I had established in the community and ultimately provided material that was of far greater substance and quality than would have been possible had I pursued my original design. Although I had to abandon the original research project, the first year of the fieldwork did result in the gathering of useful information regarding the acculturative influence of the mission upon the Gros Ventre and much of this material is presented in chapters three, four, and five.
The Study of Gros Ventre Ethnic Identity

It became obvious during the first year of fieldwork that the maintenance of the Gros Ventre tribal identity was a significant issue due to the extensive loss of the traditional Gros Ventre culture and language. I began to collect information on this subject at the same time that I was conducting the study on the original proposal and collecting ethnographic data. By the second year, I abandoned the study of the mission as an acculturative agent and turned my full attention to the investigation of ethnic identity.

The research during the first year left me with some general conclusions about the Gros Ventre. There was little of the traditional way of life remaining in the contemporary culture of the tribe and, yet, there were some tribal members who had sustained their identity. So little of the traditional culture remained that the practice of Indian culture was easily identifiable and most seemed to be practiced as a special event. Most of the Gros Ventre did not place much significance upon ethnicity and, yet, they were members of the Gros Ventre Tribe. With these conclusions, the following questions became the focus of the dissertation research. What factors accounted for the persistence of the Gros Ventre identity, what elements were selected, and how did they serve as symbols of identity? Attention was also given to the investigation of the differences between those Gros Ventre who adhered to their tribal identity from those who did not consider ethnicity an important aspect of their lives.

The methods employed in this study were the participant-observation technique and informal, open-ended interviews. The successful use of
these techniques during the first year of research and the quality of information derived from their use dictated the continuance of these methods. A full discussion of the use of the participant-observation technique will be presented in the next section concerning our role in the community and the collection of ethnographic material.

Informal, open-ended interviews were conducted on a daily basis as a part of our routine in the community and through social visits to people and from people in the community. Visiting was the major recreational activity in Hays and this afforded many opportunities to conduct informal interviews. Once the focus of the research project was established I was able to elicit the pertinent information through conversations and informal questions. Fieldnotes were kept on a daily basis. Only on very few occasions were notes taken in public. Most of the notes were written in the evenings at the completion of the day's activities. Notes were taken in public only when the activity warranted that it would be appropriate and comfortable. I was able to take fieldnotes at council meetings, treaty committee meetings, school board meetings, and during formal and prearranged interviews.

Two complete sets of fieldnotes were developed. One set was arranged on a chronological basis, while the other set was arranged topically. The topical set was coded using Murdock's (1971) Outline of Cultural Materials. The chronological system proved valuable in placing a specific observation into a wider context. The topical file was instrumental in providing an efficient retrieval system. Each note recorded a piece of information, providing the source of the observation, the physical and social context of the observation, and the date of the observation.
During the fieldwork we had a number of key informants. We did not have one or even a few primary informants. We were always able to elicit several descriptions or interpretations of an event. The people selected for interviews were determined by the questions that were central to the research problem and by the willingness of people to discuss the topics we raised in conversation. We did not limit our involvement to any particular group or family, but did tend to center our attention on the individuals who were articulate and conversant on a topic. Once the research focused upon the Pan-Indian elements as symbols of Gros Ventre identity, we did tend to gravitate towards those families that participated in these activities. We had daily contact with many people in the community and, thus, were able to observe and interview all three classes of Gros Ventre on a regular basis.

The study of Gros Ventre acculturation and the mission's influence in this process was conducted through the use of open-ended interviews primarily with older Indian-oriented Gros Ventre who had been raised by their grandparents. We also interviewed Pan-Indian-oriented Gros Ventre who had some knowledge of culture change from their Indian-oriented parents and grandparents. Some of the questions I asked in order to elicit this information were what traditional elements were in practice when you were children; what elements from the traditional culture did your parents and grandparents participate in; can you describe these cultural practices; what elements have disappeared and why; and what elements have remained in the contemporary way of life and how have they changed?
The three classes of Gros Ventre were identified early in the research before the shift was made to the study of ethnic identity. Through observations and participation at Indian activities it became apparent that certain people attended these activities on a regular basis, while most of the Gros Ventre did not. The distinction between the White-oriented and the Gros Ventre who adhered to their tribal identity was obvious, but the distinction between the Indian-oriented and the Pan-Indian-oriented was far more subtle. Both the Indian-oriented and the Pan-Indian-oriented participate in Pan-Indian activities and, yet, there appeared to be a difference in the nature of their participation and in their identification as a Gros Ventre. Through interviews with Indian-oriented and Pan-Indian-oriented people which focused on their affiliation with the Gros Ventre Tribe, I noticed that the Indian-oriented stressed the past, their heritage, and their memories of the old way of life in describing what it was that made them a Gros Ventre. The Pan-Indian-oriented, due to their lack of knowledge concerning the traditional culture, were oriented toward the present and the Indian elements that were practiced in their contemporary way of life. I did little to direct these conversations with the Indian-oriented and Pan-Indian-oriented, but rather, allowed them to discuss these topics freely. The conversations were usually initiated by discussing the changes in Gros Ventre culture and what it is to be a Gros Ventre today. It was through this difference in perspective that I began to develop the distinction between these two classes of Gros Ventre.
Once the distinction had been made between the three categories of Gros Ventre, I focused my attention upon the characteristics that differentiated these categories of Gros Ventre and the factors that accounted for their differences. I interviewed White-oriented, Pan-Indian-oriented, and Indian-oriented people to determine their degree blood, their tribal affiliation, the degree blood and tribal affiliation of their parents, grandparents, spouses, and children, who raised them, if they were raised in a traditional home, if Gros Ventre was spoken in their home, if their parents practiced any traditional customs, if they participated in any traditional practices as children, why they participated in the contemporary Indian activities, or why they were not attending these activities. It was through their responses to these questions and the observations of community dynamics over the two-year period that I was able to discover the reasons for the differences between these groups.

The second year of fieldwork was spent primarily on learning about the Pan-Indian-oriented. Interviews and observations centered on those families who most actively participated in Pan-Indian activities. The elements that were selected as symbols of their Indianness were easily identified since those elements were most often set apart from their daily lives and were often participated in as special events. I studied each of the elements identified as a symbol of the Gros Ventre identity and engaged in a series of informal interviews and observations to determine the source of the cultural element, whether the element had been a part of the traditional culture, if it had been a part of the traditional culture, when it had disappeared, if the
element had been changed in form, function, or meaning, if it was a reintroduction, the element's form, function, and meaning, and the reasons why they participated in the activity. These questions were asked of both Pan-Indian-oriented and Indian-oriented Gros Ventre. I was also able to participate in and observe all of the Pan-Indian activities described in this dissertation except for the Sweat Lodge. By asking these questions of many of the Pan-Indian-oriented and by observing and participating in these activities, I was able to deduce the answers to the research questions.

During the fieldwork I did not discuss symbols of ethnic identity; nor did I ask direct questions concerning the factors which account for the persistence of ethnic identity. For the Pan-Indian-oriented, the Pan-Indian elements are their Indianess. They do not conceive of these elements as symbols. Likewise the cultural elements, institutions and processes that account for the persistence of the Gros Ventre identity were deduced from the two years of observations and interviews. For the Pan-Indian-oriented who have maintained their tribal identity, their ethnicity is of such major importance in their lives that the factors which account for its persistence were easily identified. Often times, they discussed these factors without my having to elicit this information, because they knew I was interested in their Indian way of life. For example, during informal conversations many people would discuss the importance of the treaty committee to the maintenance of the tribe, or the significance of their special status with the federal government, or the importance of degree blood in determining membership in the tribe. I rarely had to ask specific questions to elicit this information.
Our Role in the Community and the Collection of Ethnographic Data

The fieldwork was conducted on the Fort Belknap Reservation between August, 1976 and June, 1978. The research focused upon the Gros Ventre living in Hays. We lived in Hays, Montana, a small town on the southern half of the reservation, for the twenty-two months of the study. For the first five months of the fieldwork, my wife, Susan, and I lived in a small mobile home near the base of the Little Rocky Mountains. This living arrangement was made by the Roman Catholic Mission in Hays. For the remaining period of the study, we lived in a mobile home on the mission grounds.

The selection of the Gros Ventre as the focus of the dissertation research was based upon the opportunity which arose to conduct fieldwork on the Fort Belknap Reservation. As an important facet to my training as an anthropologist, and as an American Indian specialist, I chose to perform the fieldwork research on a reservation. I was, however, unable to secure adequate funding for the dissertation research. I applied to the Jesuit Volunteer Corp, an organization similar to the Peace Corp and Vista, which serves Indian missions across the northwest and western states. We accepted positions at St. Paul's Mission. Our positions at the mission had to be approved by the mission school board which was composed of a Jesuit priest, the principal of the school, and three parents from the community. In exchange for our work, we received room, board, and a small stipend.

After we arrived and began working for the mission, we described the fieldwork research to the tribal chairman, including the details of the subject matter, as well as the methods employed in the research. He
consented to our conducting the study.

Our working for the mission made the fieldwork research possible, but this work, as well as other roles we assumed in the community, provided the opportunity for us to offer a service to the community. I felt an obligation to provide this service because I was not conducting a study that had a direct application for the tribe. The Indian people recognize that social scientists have an obligation to the community in which they perform research. During a conversation with a Gros Ventre man who understood the nature of my research, he explained, "You have to be careful with your fieldwork. You can't just take from people any more. You also have to give to people in return."

In addition to our work in the community, we asked the tribal chairman if there was any research we could do, as a part of the fieldwork, that would be of benefit to the reservation and to the tribes. He suggested that we collect the stories from the "old timers." He said that so much of the Gros Ventre culture and language had already been lost, and whatever could be saved would be of great benefit to the tribe. This fieldwork goal became a significant part of the interviews that we conducted with some of the older people from the Gros Ventre Tribe.

The research was greatly facilitated by the fact that we were not required to learn the Gros Ventre language. English is the primary language for everyone in the tribe. Everyone converses in English, and this includes the use of kinship terminology. The significance of this fact cannot be overstated in terms of the fieldwork research. We were able to begin our research immediately upon arriving in the community.
Beginning to understand the "idiom of the culture," usually a long process when having to learn a native language, was accomplished in a relatively short period of time.

The most significant factor influencing the fieldwork was our role in the community. Our responsibilities at St. Paul's Mission were fairly extensive. During our two-year stay at the mission, I taught fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade social studies, and helped to supervise an evening recreation program in the mission gym. I was one of the school janitors, and also one of the school bus drivers. Susan prepared the school's hot breakfast program, supervised an arts and crafts night at the mission, and taught first and second grade music.

There was a small college program in Hays. It was located in two mobile homes in the center of Hays, adjacent to the public school. The Intertribal Education Center was established as a part of the national Urban-Rural Program, and the Title IV Indian Education Act for adult education. The college offered a degree in elementary education. The program was operated locally, but was administered, and the degree conferred, by the College of Great Falls, in Great Falls, Montana. I became instructor at the Intertribal Education Center, and taught courses in both cultural and physical anthropology. All of the students were adults from the Fort Belknap Reservation, and most were from Hays.

We developed an interest in the educational system on the reservation, and particularly in Hays. This interest evolved from our work as teachers at the mission, my position as a college instructor at the Intertribal Education Center, and also from the importance that education plays in the lives of the Gros Ventre people. During the
course of our research, both Susan and I became members of the Hays P.T.A. Susan was elected by the community P.T.A. to serve as the secretary-treasurer, and I was selected to sit on the curriculum committee.

Our involvement in the community was quite extensive. This involvement had both its benefits and its limitations. Our association with the Roman Catholic Mission could have been a serious liability, if the composition of the community had been different. The community of Hays, however, was almost one hundred percent Catholic, and the mission was the hub of almost all religious and social activity. Almost everyone participated in the social activities provided at the mission, such as the weekly bingo, the arts and crafts sessions, and recreation nights in the mission gym. In addition, the mission had one of the few public telephones in Hays. There was a telephone in the rectory which the priests let the community people use for personal calls to relatives and friends who lived off of the reservation or at the Agency. By living and working at the mission, we were afforded the opportunity to meet most everyone in Hays, and to become actively involved in the community.

Our involvement in the community provided Susan and me with readily defined roles which, in turn, facilitated our relationships with people. It was fairly easy for people to relate to us as teachers and mission volunteers. We never concealed the fieldwork research, nor the purpose of our study. This, however, was not the only role that we had assumed in the community. In fact, through my work at the Intertribal Education Center, my students, in their cultural
anthropology course, gained an intimate understanding of the subject matter, and the methods that were being used, in the research. Comments, such as, "are you studying that here in Hays," were frequent, as we discussed the various culture systems or theoretical areas presented in an introductory cultural anthropology course.

Susan and I took great pains to explain the reason for our presence in the community, but it was often the case that people preferred to define us in our other roles. People often ignored that I was an anthropologist, and the research that I was conducting. On occasions, we would attempt a rather lengthy explanation of our research, but people would express little interest or enthusiasm about the subject matter of the study.

The single most difficult problem, resulting from our working in the community, was time. Our work for the mission was never formalized into a strict routine and schedule. The mission was a center of educational, social, and religious activity. It was also a place for people to find counsel in times of need, a source of help during an emergency, and a place to find comfort and companionship. These mission functions were established long before our arrival, through the work and relationships that the priests, sisters, and volunteers had with the community. In addition to the responsibilities that were a part of the everyday functioning of the school, church, and recreation and social programs, there were often these other activities that required our time and attention. Our days were spent working at the mission, but our evenings were never predictable nor routine. Also, my work at the college made even greater demands on our time. The problem with time was always
with us, and was never resolved. As a result, much of the analytical work that we had anticipated would be accomplished in the field, had to be performed upon our return.

Another concern, generated from our working in the community, was the balance between our being participants in the community, and our being observers of the community. We were very sensitive to the fact that we had an extensive involvement in community life. Our participation went beyond attendance at various community functions. We were working members of the community. It was due to this participation, however, that many of our observations were made possible. Our participation provided an environment for observations. The roles we adopted in the community enhanced our ability to observe the ordinary activities, as well as the special or unusual events in the community. Our presence at any activity was rarely questioned, and as members of the community, we were often invited and expected to attend various functions.

I was always aware of the problem of losing objectivity due to the extent of our participation in community life. I never felt, however, that this became a serious problem. Concern and care for the people of Hays was a natural response, and we felt that we were able and fortunate enough to act upon those concerns through our community roles.

A secondary goal of the fieldwork research was the collection of data to write a Gros Ventre ethnography. The collection of general ethnographic data preceded our investigation of the research problem in order to gain a better understanding of the contemporary Gros Ventre.
There were several reasons for our decision to collect information concerning the culture of the contemporary Gros Ventre. First, the Gros Ventre have experienced a tremendous amount of culture change. The last generation of Gros Ventre who remember the old way of life are now in their 50s or are older. Some were raised by grandparents who remembered the traditional culture, and are, therefore, the last link to the native Gros Ventre way of life. We focused much of our attention on the information that they were able to provide concerning this traditional culture. In addition, we were able to obtain information concerning the impact of acculturation upon the Gros Ventre, and the experience of the generation that underwent the most extensive amount of change.

An anthropologist has the responsibility to collect ethnographic material in most fieldwork research. While the problem-orientation of anthropological research dominates in the discipline, ethnographic data remains the primary foundation for all theoretical work. This is true in all cases, but it is even more critical with regard to a tribe, such as the Gros Ventre. There have been only a few anthropological studies of the tribe, and the literature on the Gros Ventre is minimal. The responsibility for collecting ethnographic data also extends to those researchers concerned with culture change. A base-line culture must be available from which to measure change. Without these ethnographic descriptions it is most difficult to reconstruct the process of acculturation. This was one of the problems we encountered in our own culture change study. There was very little information available on the Gros Ventre culture after the extermination of the buffalo. There are
excellent ethnographic descriptions of the traditional culture, but there are few descriptions of the Gros Ventre Tribe once the acculturation process was set in motion.

The primary research methods employed to collect ethnographic data were the participant-observation technique and informal, open-ended interviews. While most of our questions were answered during informal interviews, there were certain subject areas that were covered with formal interviews. One of those areas was the community council and the tribal government. We were fortunate enough to arrange for interviews with the tribal council chairman who described for us the council government, tribal politics, and the relationships between the council and the reservation and the federal government. His insight and sensitivity to the problems of culture change provided important information regarding the process of acculturation as it operated on the Fort Belknap Reservation.

Another series of formal interviews were conducted to collect information about the traditional culture, folklore, acculturation, and ethnohistory. In keeping with our commitment to the council chairman to collect materials concerning the traditional culture, we conducted a series of lengthy interviews with an elderly Gros Ventre woman who was a wealth of information concerning the traditional culture, the folklore, and the history of culture change on the reservation and among her tribe.

One of the most interesting and useful research methods used during the fieldwork grew out of the cultural anthropology course that I taught at the Intertribal Education Center. One of the goals of the
course was to demonstrate the cultural diversity that existed in native North America. Most of my cross-cultural ethnographic examples were presented from native North America. The course was taught in the following manner. I would introduce a theoretical discussion concerning the traditional etic categories employed in teaching cultural anthropology, such as political systems, economics, kinship, subsistence and technology, socialization, social organization, religion, and rites of passage. I would describe several ethnographic examples to demonstrate and reinforce the theory. Following these lectures, the students were given an assignment to write an essay describing the particular system in their own society. The result was that each student wrote their own ethnography of Hays. In addition, each student prepared a kinship diagram of their own family. It was a most interesting and effective teaching experience and research methodology that provided invaluable cultural data.

Several other formal methods were employed to collect general information about the reservation and the Gros Ventre Tribe. The Fort Belknap Reservation has a weekly newspaper, The Camp Crier, which was filled with local stories about the reservation, and provided information concerning demographics, tribal government, politics and programs, employment and economics, law and order, education, and social activities. Another important source of information was The Harlem News, published in a small town just off the northern border of the reservation. The paper contained important information concerning the Agency community, and particularly the school system in Harlem which was the school system servicing the northern half of the reservation.
There was one store in Hays. Any social event, religious occasion, or tribal government program was announced on the bulletin board in the store. In the first few months of fieldwork, I asked the owner if he would save all the posters and bulletins from the store. In the course of the two years of research, I was able to collect, what amounts to, the social calendar for the community, including meetings, elections, government announcements, tribal business, pow wows, rodeos, parties, weddings, fiddle dances, and other recreational activities.

Susan played an important role in the fieldwork research. She was able to collect significant information in the study. As a woman, she was able to discuss certain issues that I was unable to approach. The women of the community felt much more at ease in discussing certain matters with her that would have been avoided, if I had been there alone. In addition to her active participation in collecting data, Susan assisted in the administration of the test schedules.

We felt that two years in the field were required to accomplish the research goals. We had accepted full-time employment in the community, and understood that this was time that would compete with our fieldwork research. As it turned out, working in the community was fieldwork. While time remained a problem, it was a problem primarily with recording the data, and not a problem of observing and collecting data. Our two years in the field proved to be most advantageous. It allowed us the time and opportunity to learn about the contemporary Gros Ventre culture, and enabled us to define our research problem in a meaningful and specific way.
CHAPTER THREE  HISTORY OF GROS VENTRE ACCULTURATION

The next three chapters set the background for the analysis of Gros Ventre tribal identity and acculturation. This chapter presents a broad outline of the history of Gros Ventre acculturation, Chapter Four presents the process of acculturation as it is perceived by the Gros Ventre themselves, and Chapter Five is a contemporary ethnography of the Gros Ventre of Hays, Montana.

The use of Pan-Indian elements in Gros Ventre tribal identification is the result of acculturation and the loss of most of the traditional culture and language. Chapters Three and Four will discuss the acculturation process and the resultant loss of Gros Ventre culture and language. Special attention will be given to the primary acculturative agents, the Catholic Missionaries and federal government, and their influence upon the Gros Ventre. Chapter Three will present a brief history of the Gros Ventre, from their migration to the Saskatchewan River Valley to their life in the twentieth century on the Fort Belknap Reservation. This chapter will describe the loss of traditional elements that are documented in the historical record. The final section will discuss the major government policies and programs which have played an instrumental role in Gros Ventre culture change. The following section is a review of the literature concerning Gros Ventre culture and culture change.
This chapter is a history, and not an ethnohistory of the Gros Ventre tribe. It is the process of Gros Ventre acculturation as described by explorers, trappers and traders, miners, ranchers, homesteaders, missionaries, and government agents and officials. Most of the historical information upon which this chapter is based, is the result of research and publications generated by litigation involving the Gros Ventre tribe against the United States government, and before the Indian Claims Commission. The research was conducted primarily by historians under contract either to the United States Government, or to the tribal plaintiffs and intervenors to a particular Indian Claims Commission case. The reports and publications were introduced as evidence into the cases.

The historical research was conducted by Burlingame (1957) and Barry (1974). The studies rely most heavily upon government documents and correspondence, and included no fieldwork research. The central focus of the historical investigations is the impact of federal Indian policies, programs, and administration upon the tribes of the Fort Belknap Reservation. The reports include discussions of federal policy and programs, government administration, treaties, land cessions, the establishment of the reservation, the relation of the Indian tribes to ranchers and homesteaders, the development of the Fort Belknap Constitution and Corporate Charter, and the reservation government and economy. The historical works emphasize the relationship between the tribes and federal government and make only minor references to tribal culture and culture change. Barry presents a detailed history of the Gros Ventre tribe preceding the reservation period. Barry discusses the
period between the 1850s and the 1950s, while Burlingame's research focuses upon the agreement which established the present boundaries of the Fort Belknap Reservation in 1888, and the events which led up to this agreement.

The noted exceptions to this category of research are Ray's (1975) analysis of acculturation on the Fort Belknap Reservation, and Ewers' (1974) work on the Blackfeet and the Gros Ventre. Ray's research was contracted by the plaintiffs to the Indian Claims Commission case, and does treat acculturation from the anthropological approach. His work is strong on theoretical grounds, but weak from the perspective of Gros Ventre cultural data. Ray is not to be faulted for this position. Early cultural information describing Gros Ventre change is almost nonexistent, and therefore, must be implied from the historical record, which makes only minor reference to the Gros Ventre culture in its various stages of change.

Ray's research also relies upon secondary sources, and in some instances, attempts to extrapolate from the experience of other plains tribes to describe the condition of the Gros Ventre. His discussion of acculturation does introduce some Gros Ventre cultural information. The focus of his research is the period between 1920 and the 1950s. Ray attempts to demonstrate that the Gros Ventre were sufficiently unfamiliar with White culture to render the agreements between the federal government and the tribes non-binding and not legitimate.

Ewers' research for the Indian Claims Commission case provides detailed information on the Blackfeet and Gros Ventre from the turn of the eighteenth century to the reservation period. His work, based on the
accounts of explorers, trappers and traders, and government officials, was used as evidence to determine the Blackfeet and Gros Ventre claims to the land involved in the Indian Claims Commission litigation. Ewers presents an excellent description of the tribes’ migrations, their relations to other tribes, including alliances and warfare, and their relations to Whites and the federal government.

Another significant feature of the Indian Claims Commission research is that the Gros Ventre are often times not considered as a unique entity in the reports. For the greater part of the treaty period, the government erroneously considered the Gros Ventre a part of the Blackfeet Nation, and included the Gros Ventre in the treaties negotiated with the Blackfeet tribes. Consequently, the Piegans, Blood, and Blackfeet, along with the Gros Ventre, are involved collectively in the litigation, and therefore, in the historical research. During the reservation period, the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine together became the Fort Belknap Community. These tribes are jointly involved in litigation, as well. Here too, in much of the litigation and historical research, the two tribes are not distinguished. It can be assumed that Blackfeet and Assiniboine acculturation was similar to the process as it operated among the Gros Ventre. The failure to consistently distinguish between the specific tribes, however, does result in a lack of clarity that would have been possible, if the Gros Ventre had been individually treated. This situation, therefore, does merit the exercise of some caution in the use of these historical analyses and reports in determining the process of Gros Ventre culture change.
There are anthropological works which describe the Gros Ventre tribe before the extermination of the buffalo and the reservation period. The anthropological research focuses upon the traditional Gros Ventre culture. The researchers describe little of the way of life they observed while conducting their investigations, and focus, rather, on the memory culture to salvage and reconstruct the native way of life from older informants. There is a large gap, therefore, in our understanding of the Gros Ventre between the period of their settlement on the Fort Belknap Reservation and the modern period of reservation life. These ethnographic accounts offer only minimal reference to the experience or results of culture change among the Gros Ventre. As synchronic studies, they contribute to the understanding of acculturation primarily as the description of a baseline culture from which to compare and measure change. Some of these publications trace the Gros Ventre from their period of living in Canada, along the Saskatchewan, to the reservation period, through the analysis of historical documents, and the accounts of explorers, trappers and traders, missionaries, miners, homesteaders and government officials. Their accounts lack substantive cultural information, and are sometimes biased by the various objectives which influenced their relations and observations of the Gros Ventre.

The earliest major anthropological investigation of the Gros Ventre was conducted by Kroeber. His fieldwork emphasized formal interviews with older Gros Ventre who recounted the traditional culture before the extermination of the buffalo. Kroeber's cultural descriptions of the Gros Ventre are not based upon observations. His fieldwork on Fort Belknap took place in the winter and spring of 1901. From this research
he published the Ethnology of the Gros Ventre (1907) and a collection of
Gros Ventre folklore, Gros Ventre Myths and Tales (1907).

The only other major anthropological research on the Gros Ventre
was performed by Cooper and Flannery, both from Catholic University of
America. Cooper initiated the research in 1938, and continued his work
in the summers of 1939 and 1940. His fieldwork in Hays was similar to
that engaged in by Kroeber. He relied upon interviews with older infor­
mants, and focused his attention on the traditional Gros Ventre culture.
This was also the case with Flannery, although Cooper directed his re­
search with male informants, while Flannery elicited her information
primarily from female informants. Flannery, under the guidance of
Cooper, conducted her research in Hays in 1940, and the summers of 1945
and 1948. Cooper focused his research upon the Gros Ventre religion.
Flannery collected general ethnographic data on all aspects of Gros
Ventre culture.

Both Cooper and Flannery published detailed ethnographic accounts
of traditional Gros Ventre culture. Flannery posthumously edited and
published Cooper's major work on Gros Ventre religion and ritual (1957).
Cooper (1944) and Flannery (1944) each published accounts of the Gros
Ventre shaking tent rite. Flannery's major ethnographic work was pub­
lished in 1953. Flannery's other publications on the traditional Gros
Ventre culture include "The Dearly-Loved Child Among the Gros Ventre of
Montana" (1941), "The Changing Form and Functions of the Gros Ventre
Grass Dance" (1947), and "Individual Variation in Culture" (1960).
Flannery and Cooper (1946) jointly published an account of Gros Ventre
gambling and its relationship to social organization.
Three other authors have published accounts of traditional Gros Ventre religion and ritual based on interviews with elderly informants. Dusenberry (1963) describes the Gros Ventre sweat lodge ceremony and the Gros Ventre sacred pipes (1961). Stallcop's articles concern the ceremony of supplication for long life (1970) and the Gros Ventre sacrifice lodge or sun dance (1968). Sister Clare Hartmann, who has lived in Hays, and has taught at the St. Paul's Mission School for over forty years, published her master's thesis (1955) describing the sacred pipes of the Gros Ventre, and the religious functionaries and ritual associated with the sacred pipes.

As was previously mentioned, the Gros Ventre had important alliances, first with the Blackfeet tribe, and later with the Assiniboine, before and after the reservation period. Consequently, publications concerning the Blackfeet and Assiniboine often times provide information on the Gros Ventre. In addition, the Arapaho and Gros Ventre were originally a single tribe; their separation occurring sometime around the turn of the eighteenth century. Descriptions of the traditional Arapaho culture, therefore, also present accounts of the Gros Ventre tribe. Some of these publications are Elkin's (1940), Trenholm's (1970), and Kroeber's (1902) accounts of the Arapaho, Ewers' (1958, 1961, 1968) works on the Blackfeet, and Rodnick's (1938) research on the Assiniboine. Rodnick's study of the Assiniboine on Fort Belknap has great significance for the investigation of Gros Ventre acculturation. Rodnick's dissertation research concerned Assiniboine culture change, and was based upon the observations and interviews he conducted during his four and a half months of fieldwork in 1935. His description of the Assiniboine in the 1930s has some application to the Gros Ventre, since both tribes share their government and
economic system, and have a similar relationship to the federal government. Rodnick's work provides first-hand observations and descriptions of Fort Belknap, by an anthropologist whose focus was culture change. Rodnick's fieldwork and published dissertation help to fill the large gap in our understanding of Gros Ventre acculturation.

There have also been studies of the Gros Ventre language. Kroeber's (1916) linguistic analysis took place while the language was still spoken by a majority of the Gros Ventre. The remaining linguistic studies, occurring after the language was changing and becoming extinct, can be considered as salvage projects. Flannery's (1946) article, "Men's and Women's Speech in Gros Ventre," is one of these projects. The other linguistic studies of Gros Ventre are Taylor's (1967), based on fieldwork conducted in August, 1960 and January, 1964, and Salzmann's (1969) from fieldwork in August and September, 1967. Both Taylor and Salzmann performed their research in Hays.

The Roman Catholic missionaries have had an important relationship and acculturative influence upon the tribes of Montana, including the Gros Ventre of Fort Belknap. The Jesuits initiated the missionary work with Montana's Indian tribes in the mid-nineteenth century, and maintain this activity to the present day. Palladino (1922) and Bischoff (1945), both Jesuit priests, describe the early missionary activity of this religious order among the Indian tribes of the west. These accounts present a description of the establishment of St. Paul's Mission and Church among the Gros Ventre of Fort Belknap, the work of the early priests at St. Paul's, the arrival of the Ursiline Sisters and the beginning of the mission boarding school, and the early relations of the Jesuits with the
Gros Ventre tribe. St. Paul's Mission receives financial support and some guidance from the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions in Washington, D.C. Rahill (1953) presents a description of the development of the Bureau, and its early relationship with the Indians. Tennelly (1943) also provides a description of the Bureau, offering insight into its policies, objectives, and attitudes directed towards American Indians.

Sister Giswalda Kramer (1981) presents a personal account of the St. Paul's Mission grade school and high school. Sister Giswalda arrived in Hays in 1936 to begin the day school at the mission in Hays. She was the first Franciscan Sister to arrive in the community, to replace the Ursilene Sisters who left in the early 1930s due to a fire which destroyed the boarding school. She has lived in Hays for almost fifty years.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs provides contemporary studies and information on the Fort Belknap Reservation and tribes. Research conducted by agricultural economists (McCullough and Runyan 1948), contracted by the Bureau, and Bureau economists (1963, 1972, 1977), provide information from Fort Belknap pertaining to socio-economics, demographics, housing, development programs and policies, land use and resources, tribal enrollment and degree blood, and employment and income. These investigations are conducted both through the initiative of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and at the request of the Fort Belknap Community Council. The studies are conducted through the use of government documents, census data, observations, interviews, and the administration of socio-economic questionnaires on the reservation.

The following discussion of Gros Ventre acculturation lacks cultural depth and detail. This is the result of a large gap in the culture history of the Gros Ventre tribe, preceding their way of life as equestrian
hunters, and between the time of the extinction of the buffalo and the Gros Ventre of the mid-twentieth century. The present dissertation research was able to fill in only some of these gaps, and this material will be treated in the following chapter.

From the Saskatchewan River Valley to the Fort Belknap Reservation

The Gros Ventre and Arapaho tribes were politically affiliated before the eighteenth century. Ewers (1974:53) places the Arapaho and Gros Ventre in the Red River Valley region of northern Minnesota around 1650. Before their migration onto the Plains, they were a sedentary and agricultural people. The Gros Ventre and Arapaho separation most likely occurred just prior to or during the early 1700s. The Arapaho migrated west and south, and the Gros Ventre moved northwestward to the Saskatchewan River Valley.

The Gros Ventre's first contact with Whites took place in this area; in the present provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan. Prior to their contact with trappers and traders, the Gros Ventre had formed a close alliance with the Blackfeet tribes. The alliance was formed as a result of the pressures and conflict with their shared enemies, the Assiniboine and Cree.

The Gros Ventre, and their Blackfeet allies, had adopted the horse and firearms before the first contact with Whites. While equestrian buffalo hunting represented a marked shift in culture from their earlier sedentary and agricultural way of life, this change is traced to contact with other Plains Indian tribes, and not to direct White contact.

Their earliest contact with Whites was with French and British trappers and traders in the mid-eighteenth century. Before the end of the century the French and British established trading posts in the
Saskatchewan region. A short time later, American trappers and traders entered the Gros Ventre-Blackfeet territory. These early contacts with trappers and traders resulted primarily in changes in material culture, and not in social or ideological change. The Gros Ventre culture remained basically unchanged. In fact, the tribe maintained their preference for hunting buffalo, rather than shift to trapping for beaver pelts, as was encouraged by the traders.

By the last decade of the eighteenth century, the Cree and Assiniboine had gained a position of superiority in the Saskatchewan territory through their domination of trade. As they increased their acquisition of firearms, they exerted great pressure upon the Blackfeet and Gros Ventre. Warfare between these tribes intensified, and the Gros Ventre and Blackfeet began to retaliate against the traders, who were the source of Cree and Assiniboine superiority. Warfare with the Cree and Assiniboine began to force the Blackfeet and Gros Ventre further south from the Saskatchewan River Valley.

The Gros Ventre's and Blackfeet's hostility toward the traders finally culminated in their attacking trading posts in the 1820s. Fearing retaliation some of the Gros Ventre and Blackfeet retreated south, spending five years with their Arapaho kinsmen. While some of the Gros Ventre moved south to hunt and trade with the Arapaho, about half of the tribe remained on the northern plains (Flannery 1953:17). With their reuniting in the 1830s, the tribe inhabited the region north of the Missouri River.

With their return, the Gros Ventre entered a new era in their relations with Whites. Intertribal warfare was to continue throughout the nineteenth century, with the Gros Ventre involved in numerous skirmishes with various tribes on the plains. Conflict with Whites, on the other
hand, came to an end. This peaceful relationship with White traders, and later with the United States government, began to take shape. While other plains tribes continued to fight the Americans, particularly with regard to forced settlement on reservations, the Gros Ventre began a period of cooperation with Whites on the northern plains and the United States government. For the Gros Ventre, who willingly settled on the Fort Belknap Reservation, accepted the trust status with the federal government, and relied on the government for their economic development, this cooperation proved to be both a blessing and a curse.

The long alliance between the Gros Ventre and Blackfeet ended in the 1860s when these tribes became avowed enemies. The Gros Ventre formed an alliance with the Assiniboine to bolster their defenses against their common enemies, the Blackfeet tribes and the Sioux. There was, in the late 1860s, no formal agreement with the federal government to place the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine in the same territory; this was an arrangement negotiated by the tribes themselves.

The Gros Ventre-Blackfeet territory was an area of intense intertribal warfare throughout most of the nineteenth century. As the buffalo became scarce on the northern plains, the frequency of warfare increased. Tribes, such as the Sioux, began to move into the Milk River and Missouri River region, as buffalo in their own territories decreased in number. The competition for resources, both from hunting and trading, the close proximity of these tribes, and the intrusion of Whites, promoted the conflicts which continued well into the reservation period. The Gros Ventre country had become a battleground.
According to Ewers (Ibid.:133), the Governor of the new Montana Territory, in 1864, began to pressure for the Indians of the area to open their lands for settlement by Whites. Until the early 1860s, the Gros Ventre and Blackfeet lands were free of White settlements, and few Whites, save the trappers and traders, entered into this territory. With the discovery of gold in 1862 in the Gros Ventre territory, the region was invaded by miners, and later by ranchers and settlers.

The early 1870s marked a major change in the federal government's Indian policy. The government had treated the tribes as independent, autonomous, foreign nations, and negotiated treaties with the tribes, as such. Tribal leaders and tribal practices were only interfered with minimally. The tribes on the northern plains were free to roam over vast areas of land, continued to hunt buffalo, and engaged frequently in inter-tribal warfare.

The ultimate goal of the government was the assimilation of these peoples into the American society. Throughout the 1860s the government, and particularly the Congress, which was responsible for the appropriations of funds for the Indian programs, began to realize the ineffectiveness of the treaty system, the annuity system, and the Indian agents, who were charged with administering the government's policies among the tribes. On March 3, 1871 the Congress passed an act which ended the treaty period. The tribes were no longer to be treated as sovereign and independent nations, but rather, were considered as dependent tribes who were wards of the federal government.

By the mid-to late 1870s, the great buffalo herds of the northern plains were rapidly dwindling. In 1879 the buffalo in Canada were completely exterminated, forcing the British American Indians south of the
49th parallel to compete over the remaining herds in Montana. In 1869, the Union Pacific Railroad was completed in Montana. The railroad split the two main buffalo herds, one in the Yellowstone Valley, and the other in the Gros Ventre country, in the Milk River Valley. While the presence of the last remaining buffalo, among the Gros Ventre, increased the intensity and frequency of intertribal warfare, it also meant that the Gros Ventre were able to cling to their traditional subsistence practices and the traditional culture, which was built upon the equestrian buffalo hunting way of life, longer than most of the other tribes on the northern plains. Tribes from all over the northern plains moved into Gros Ventre country to compete for the last remaining buffalo (Burlingame 1957:20; Ewers 1974:36; Flannery 1953:23). In 1882 most of the great northern herd was located in Gros Ventre country, between the Milk River and the Bear Paw Mountains. By 1884 the buffalo were extinct.

With the extermination of the buffalo, the Gros Ventre became entirely dependent upon the government's weekly rations of food for their survival. Starvation became a serious problem for the tribe, and lives were lost before the government could adapt to the needs of the Indian people. The Gros Ventre were forced to settle near the agencies to accept the weekly provisions of food. The locations of the agencies took on primary significance in determining the inhabitance of the tribe (Ewers 1974:37, 49-50). The Gros Ventre and Assiniboine no longer had much use for the large tract of land they had roamed while hunting buffalo. They took up residence, although not in permanent settlements, a few miles around the Fort Belknap Agency on the Milk River.
The earliest Indian agents among the Gros Ventre reflected the policies of the federal government. The primary goal of the government was the assimilation of the Indian people into the dominant society to be achieved by their private ownership of land and the adoption of agriculture, western education, and Christianity. This policy influenced the government's administration of Indian affairs well into the twentieth century.

In 1853 the Gros Ventre population was estimated at 2,520. After smallpox epidemics, intertribal warfare, and starvation, the population dwindled to about 970 in 1883. The population decreased to 596 by 1895 (Flannery 1953:23-24). By the 1880s, the tremendous loss of tribal members had a serious disruptive influence upon the Gros Ventre which contributed to culture change. The tribe had been reduced to poverty by the loss of their food supply, and they became almost entirely dependent upon the government for their existence.

With considerable pressure from settlers, stockmen, miners, and politicians to open the lands, combined with the tribes' dependence upon the government for rations, the path was set for the negotiations to have the Blackfeet and Gros Ventre cede their lands (Ewers 1974:229). An agreement was finally reached with the tribes in January 1887, and the Blackfeet and Gros Ventre Reservation was reduced in size. The boundaries of the Fort Belknap Reservation were established as follows:

Beginning at a point in the middle of the main channel of the Milk River, opposite the mouth of Snake Creek; thence due south to a point due west of the western extremity of the Little Rocky Mountains; thence due east to the crest of said mountains at their western extremity; and thence following the southern crest of said mountains to the eastern extremity thereof; thence in a northerly direction in a direct line to a point in the middle of
the main channel of Milk River opposite the mouth of People's Creek; thence up Milk River, in the middle of the main channel thereof, to the place of beginning (Ibid.:180).

The cessation of land, the establishment of the reservation, and the obligations of the federal government, in compensation for the tribal lands, were formally accepted by an Act of Congress passed on May 1, 1888.

Missionaries Among the Gros Ventre

The Jesuit missionaries began their work among the Gros Ventre in the 1840s. When the Gros Ventre settled on the southern end of the Fort Belknap Reservation, the Jesuits received approval from the government to establish a permanent mission in the present community of Hays, near the Little Rockies. The mission was built in 1887. In the summer of 1887, arrangements were made between the government and the Catholic Indian Mission Bureau for the Jesuits to establish a contract school for the Indians. The Ursiline Sisters opened the boarding school in September 1887.

The school offered both academic and religious instruction. Children attended classes for half a day and then worked half a day, performing various tasks to support the operation of the mission and school.

Father Palladino's comments regarding the student's work reflect the early missionaries' perception of the Indians, and their justification for this work policy in the Catholic Indian Schools.

These Indian children are good-natured, docile and quick to learn; but, like unto all the rest of the race, a second nature with them is laziness and a deep dislike for any manual labor. Their training is, consequently, made to suit their wants, as in every other Catholic Indian School, and consists of a plain English education going hand in hand with varied manual exercise (Palladino 1922:233).

The Ursiline Sisters operated the boarding school until the mid-1930s when a fire destroyed the girl's school. The Ursilines left the mission
and the boarding school was closed. The School Sisters of St. Francis arrived at the mission and began a day school for the Indian children in 1936. The school and St. Paul's Mission have serviced primarily the Gros Ventre and French-Chippewa-Cree of Hays.

The goals, policies, and programs of the Catholic Indian Missions remained fairly consistent during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. An article published by Tennelly (1943), from the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions in Washington, D.C., articulates the missionaries' objectives. He explains that the primary objective of the missions has been to convert the Indians, and while the missionaries have worked to improve the social and economic conditions of the Indian people, these latter goals have been subordinate to their spiritual concerns. Tennelly states:

Man's spontaneous inclination is to try to make others over into his own image and likeness. The Church's policy, however, in making men in Christ is to respect the human personalities, including the language, the customs, and the institutions of the various people with whom she deals. She comes, not to destroy, but to fulfill. As a matter of principle she strives to plant and root Christianity in native soil. Even in religious matters this has an application. Here her missionaries have been guided by the principle enunciated by Gregory the Great, namely, to eradicate only what is specifically pagan and to leave everything useful undisturbed (Ibid.:82).

Tennelly argues that the Catholic missionaries have encouraged the use of native languages through prayer and in preaching, and have incorporated native ceremonies and symbols, where possible, into the Catholic service. He does explain that the practice of this philosophy "had been at times delicate and difficult" and that "No doubt occasional mistakes have occurred in the one direction or in the other" (Ibid.:83).
The Catholic missionaries were instrumental in changing the way of life of the Gros Ventre people. Many Gros Ventre would dispute the claims made by Tennelly, that the missionaries attempted to preserve the traditional culture of their charges. This subject will be treated in some detail in the next chapter. The fact is that the Catholic missionaries were responsible for a great deal of culture change among the Gros Ventre tribe. There are differing perceptions, however, as to the benefits, and the disadvantages which have accrued from this change. On the one hand, it can be argued that the missionaries contributed to the destruction of the traditional Gros Ventre culture. On the other hand, it can be argued that the process of change for the Gros Ventre was inevitable, and that the changes promulgated by the missionaries, particularly in the area of education, better prepared the Indian people, and facilitated a more successful adaptation to their present environment in the modern American society. It is most likely the case that both perceptions are valid. At the same time that the missionaries were contributing to the change in Gros Ventre culture, they were providing the Indians with some of the necessary tools to adapt to those changes.

The Loss of Traditional Gros Ventre Culture

Even before contact with Whites, the Gros Ventre had experienced acculturation as a result of contact with other tribes. There had been an extensive exchange of elements between tribes throughout the Great Plains. The Gros Ventre had experienced tremendous change with their westward migration onto the plains. Their adoption of the equestrian, nomadic, buffalo-hunting culture marked a major shift from the more settled agricultural way of life it is believed they had practiced before
their migration west. The Gros Ventre's contact with Whites, and the resultant acculturative experience, was qualitatively different, however, from any of their previous contact situations. Never before had the Gros Ventre experienced acculturation in which they were so subordinate to, and dominated by, the contact group.

Much of the change, and the loss of traditional elements, outlined in this section, took place at dates which roughly coincide with the extinction of the buffalo. It can be assumed that the end of the traditional Gros Ventre subsistence pattern resulted in the loss of many aboriginal Gros Ventre patterns. As the buffalo herds began to dwindle in size, the last great herd remained in the Gros Ventre territory. Their lands became a great battleground for intertribal warfare between tribes who came to hunt the last remaining buffalo. The intensity and frequency of this warfare had to have had a disruptive impact upon the Gros Ventre way of life. In addition, as a result of the warfare and the smallpox epidemics which plagued the area, during the early contact with Whites, the Gros Ventre population began a fairly rapid and steady decline. The loss of leaders, warriors, and hunters also created disorganization in the subsistence practices, and concomitantly in the political, economic, and social system of Gros Ventre society.

The early Gros Ventre contact with trappers and British, French, and American traders brought about material changes in Gros Ventre culture, but the social and ideological patterns remained, for the most part, unchanged. With the arrival of government officials, missionaries, settlers, miners and ranchers, combined with the extinction of the buffalo, the changes to Gros Ventre culture became much more extensive.
The extermination of the buffalo, and the end to the seasonal subsistence pattern, created serious problems for the Gros Ventre; problems for which the Gros Ventre had no adequate or immediate response. They became dependent upon the government for rations, and were forced to settle near the agencies. They finally lost most of their mobility when pressured onto reservations, which were considerably reduced in size from their original lands. The end to the subsistence pattern, the loss of mobility, the population decline, and the Gros Ventre's dependence upon the government, had far-reaching effects upon the social organization and religious patterns of the tribe.

The government officials and their policies undermined the traditional leadership of the Gros Ventre. The tribal leaders had fewer decisions to make as the culture rapidly changed, and the government representatives, particularly the Indian agent, took control of the significant issues and decisions for the tribe. In addition to the impact of the federal government's policies and practices, the traditional system of leadership must have been altered considerably by the end of buffalo hunting and intertribal warfare. Hunting and warfare were two major activities through which a man could achieve distinction and honor, and had significance for the Gros Ventre definition of status and prestige. Tribal leadership was developed through this pattern. The loss of these practices not only undermined the leadership pattern, it must have created instability in the traditional value system, and serious conflict in the self-esteem of the Gros Ventre men.

This section will provide a broad outline of some of the losses of traditional elements that are described in the historical record. The
cause of change in most instances, however, is rarely made explicit, and one is forced to speculate upon the source and motives for change.

The Flat Pipe and the Feathered Pipe were the most important sacred objects to the Gros Ventre people. The Pipes were the focal point of ceremonial life. Each of the Pipes had a Keeper, a Co-keeper, who was the Keeper's wife, and a Pipe-Child. The Keeper was the caretaker of the Sacred Pipe, and was central to the ceremonialism which surrounded the Pipes.

Hartmann (1955:36) and Cooper (1957:35-36) describe the succession of Flat Pipe Keepers over a hundred year period, extending from about the 1850s to the 1950s. Horse Capture was the last ritual Keeper of the Pipe, at about the turn of the century. The subsequent Keepers were only caretakers; they did not receive the appropriate training and instruction in the ritual surrounding the Pipe. Through time the knowledge of the Pipe and the associated ritual diminished, until the present time when only a handful of people have the most rudimentary knowledge of the Flat Pipe and Flat Pipe ritual.

The final formal uncovering of the Flat Pipe Bundle took place in February 1945. The Boy performed the ritual as a thanksgiving gesture upon the return of the Gros Ventre men after World War II. The Boy announced, at the time, that this would be the last ritual with the Flat Pipe, since he was the only member of the tribe who could perform the appropriate ritual.

Cooper (Ibid.:119) explains that anyone could make an offering to the Flat Pipe, at any time, and that it was usually done in the fulfillment of a vow. The vow was made in association with a relative or
friend's recovery from illness, or safe return from a dangerous experience. The offering was most often a covering of the Pipe Bundle with flannel, calico, shawls, blankets or with a black textile, the "color the Pipe liked best" (Hartmann 1955:34). Between 1976 and 1978 there was only one covering of the Pipe Bundle, and this by an elderly Gros Ventre man. These offerings, therefore, occur to the present, but are very rare. During Cooper's research in the 1940s, he observed that:

Offerings for the Pipe have become increasingly infrequent; offerings are now usually made instead by the Gros Ventre, all of whom are Catholics, to the Mission Church or at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Little Rockies on the Mission grounds (Cooper 1957:120).

Hartmann (1955:75) explains that the Pipes are no longer an integral part of the Gros Ventre religion, and that Christianity has replaced the ritual that was once the focus of their spiritual life. While the Gros Ventre display great respect and reverence toward the Pipes, by the turn of the century, the major rituals and the primary role of the ritual Pipe Keeper had disappeared.

Cooper (1957:131-133) describes the final succession of the Feathered Pipe Keepers. Sitting High was the Pipe Keeper from about 1880 until his death in 1905. Cooper explains that a Keeper was not permitted to care for the Pipe for more than twelve years. The long term held by Sitting High was most likely caused by the disruption and disorganization of Gros Ventre culture experienced after the extermination of the buffalo. Curly Head was the last Pipe Keeper, caring for the Feathered Pipe from 1910 until his death in 1937. Iron Man II began to take instructions from Curly Head on the Feathered Pipe ritual, but his training was never completed. He cared for the Pipe after Curly Head's death. Hartmann
describes the reason for Iron Man II's abandonment of the traditional ritual surrounding the Pipe:

One night he had a vision in which he saw Our Lord, Jesus Christ, with a crown of leaves upon his head. An angel flew by. When he saw this he became afraid and discontinued the care of the Pipe as the Medicine Men had done. He now merely performs the duty of taking care of the Medicine Pipe (Hartmann 1955:68-69).

In the summer of 1951, Iron Man II and The Boy conducted a ceremonial unwrapping of the Feathered Pipe Bundle. A biology professor from Northern Montana College, Dr. Louis B. Hagener, was present at the ceremony, and he made the following comments regarding the event:

Since the young people were so apathetic over the Bundle, its significance, and the ceremony, Iron Man and his wife resolved not to open it again. They were debating as to whether it should be given to a museum or whether the tribe would outfit Iron Man and his wife for a journey and permit them to dispose of it somewhere in the mountains (Cooper 1957:133).

Before his death, Iron Man II discovered that the Feathered Pipe was missing from the Bundle. Iron Man II and others speculated that the Sacred Pipe had returned to the place from which it had come. They believed that the Great Spirit had taken back the Pipe, because it was no longer being used by the Gros Ventre people in the manner for which it was intended (Hartmann 1955:68-69).

There were eight sacred dances in the Gros Ventre religious system. The sacred dances were not a part of the seasonal cycle, but rather, were associated with men's societies (age-graded societies), and were held in the fulfillment of a vow made by an individual to the Supreme Being (Cooper 1957:174). The concept of the vow is central to the native Gros Ventre religion.

Most of the Sacred Dances were last held at about the time of the buffalo's extinction. The Sacrifice Dance or Sun Dance was the most
important of the Sacred Dances. Thicks father was the last man to hold a Sacrifice Dance in the fulfillment of a vow in 1884. Cooper provides one explanation for the end to the Sacrifice Dance, as told to him by one of his informants:

The Gros Ventres considered their Sacrifice Dance a much more severe ordeal in the way of self-torture and fasting than were the Sun Dances of neighboring tribes and to this severity they attributed the early abandonment of the rite (Ibid.:196).

The end of the Sacrifice Dance may have been, in part, self-motivated by the Gros Ventre, but the missionaries and government officials also discouraged the practice of the Sacrifice Dance.

The following list provides the other sacred dances, in their order of importance in the Gros Ventre religious system, and the dates when the dances were last held: Drum Dance, 1830s; Kit-Fox Dance, about 1870; Dog Dance, late 1870s; Old Men's Dance or Law Enforcer's Dance, about 1880; Crazy Dance, about 1884; and the Fly Dance, about 1907. Since 1907, none of the Gros Ventre Sacred Dances have been performed (Ibid.:174).

Gros Ventre curing practices slowly declined, and while there were vestiges of traditional curing into the 1930s and 1940s, for the most part, it had disappeared in the early twentieth century. Cooper attributes the decline in curing and "native doctoring" to the missionaries, government officials, and to the White man's education, all of which discouraged the practice. Cooper describes the experiences of informants which demonstrate the influence of the missionaries in discouraging these practices. One medicine man, who was still alive in the early 1940s, declined to join the Catholic Church, because he believed that this would take away his curing powers. Another medicine man, who died in 1932, was said to have abandoned his doctoring powers after becoming a Catholic,
and then a catechist in the Church. Some of Cooper's informants described opportunities to receive doctoring power, but declined due to the Catholic Church (Ibid.:363).

The Gros Ventre Ghost-summoning, tent-shaking rite, and the use of ancestral helpers or ghost helpers began to decline in the 1860s. Since then, there have only been a few people who have had ancestral helpers, and none in recent times. An individual acquired an ancestral helper by keeping a possession, or a tooth, or lock of hair from a deceased relative. In only rare instances, the deceased would return as a ghost to become an ancestral helper. According to Cooper (Ibid.:260-261), this individual had the power to summon his ancestral helper. The function of the ghost helper was to answer questions, to reveal knowledge about the past, present and future, to give advice in cases of illness or danger, to describe the location of a lost person and the enemy, to foretell the outcome of an impending battle, to describe the location of a stolen article, and to provide the places to go for buffalo hunting.

The Gros Ventre political system deteriorated much more rapidly than did traditional religious practices. White Eagle was the last formally selected leader of the entire Gros Ventre tribe. He held this position at the end of the 1700s. After White Eagle, the tribal leaders gained their status by means of an informal recognition of personal characteristics and achievements. Lame Bull was a tribal leader during one of the most difficult periods of Gros Ventre history. During his tenure, the buffalo were exterminated, and his people were forced to settle on the reservation. Most likely as a result of the disruption to the subsistence cycle, and the subsequent loss of mobility and autonomy, the
band system and the camp circle disappeared during Lame Bull's leadership (Flannery 1953:36).

After Lame Bull's death, the Gros Ventre tribe no longer had a formally recognized tribal leader. Once the traditional political system had disintegrated, the Indian agents assumed more power in the tribe than any of the local community leaders.

There is little historical documentation regarding the changes in the social organization and kinship system of the Gros Ventre. Flannery (1953:171) notes that the institution of the child-bride and the practice of polygyny were on the wane by the 1880s. It may be inferred from the drastic changes brought about by the extinction of the buffalo, that there were major changes in both the social organization and kinship system of the Gros Ventre beginning in the 1880s. The combined impact of population decline, loss of subsistence practices, loss of mobility, and the influence of the government and Catholic missionaries, must have resulted in significant transformations to these patterns. The substantial difference between the traditional system, and that which exists in the contemporary Gros Ventre culture, is a further indication that changes were underway, at least by the turn of the century.

The Indian agents on Fort Belknap and the government and mission boarding schools took active roles in the erosion of the traditional Gros Ventre culture. According to Rodnick (1938:9-19), the agents used the reservation police to suppress the practice of traditional culture. In the 1890s polygamy became a violation of reservation law, and the police were used to report cases. The Indian agent had full power to exact punishment for this offense, and could withhold a couple's rations
for not practicing monogamy. The police were also instructed to report any ceremonies or dances that were also forbidden by the agent.

In 1902 the short hair rule went into effect. The agent required that all Indian police, judges, and agency employees must have short hair, if they were to retain their jobs. Braids had become "a symbolic badge of the aboriginal culture," and the agent considered the wearing of short hair an acceptance of White culture and assimilation. Rodnick (Ibid.:11) states that the young people at this time wore short hair. After the short hair rule went into effect, the wearing of braids became an act of defiance and a demonstration against assimilation.

In 1904 the government established a policy which defined Indian offenses. The Indian offenses were the practice of traditional customs that the Indian office considered contrary to the Gros Ventre's and Assiniboine's adoption of the White man's way of life. The customs described by Rodnick (Ibid.:13) as falling into this category were the Sun Dance and other religious ceremonies, polygamy, and the practice of medicine men. The Indian agent had the power to withhold rations or even to incarcerate people who participated in these practices. There is no record of anyone ever being punished for an Indian offense. While legal sanctions against the Indian offenses were never enforced, they do reflect the policy adopted by the federal government, and the government's attitudes concerning the native culture.

According to Barry (1974:73-74) and Rodnick (1938:8, 117-118), the educational system on Fort Belknap was instrumental in the breakdown of traditional Gros Ventre and Assiniboine culture. By the early 1890s there were two boarding schools on the reservation, St. Paul's Mission
School in Hays, on the southern end of the reservation, and the Fort Belknap Industrial Training School near the agency, on the northern portion of the reservation.

The acculturative impact of the boarding schools was considerable. The children were not permitted to speak their native tongue, and most traditional cultural practices were discouraged. The boarding schools were designed to separate the children from their parents, so as to "prevent the acquisition of Indian ideas, habits, manner and language" (Barry 1974:73). Parents had no choice but to send their children to the boarding schools. The reservation police were used to round up the children, and bring them to the schools. If parents demonstrated any resistance, their rations were withheld.

The separation of children from their parents was an explicit policy of the Indian Agency on Fort Belknap. It was believed that the children's exposure to their parents and elders was a "barrier to the progress of the young" (Ibid.:70). The schools instilled a sense of inferiority in the children. They learned, through the school's policies and philosophy, that their native language and culture were inferior to that of the White man's. The schools discouraged the Indian from competing in the White man's world, at the same time that they were attempting to impart the skills for them to compete in this world. Rodnick explains that:

No effective substitutes were given for the psychological satisfactions received from the old culture. Instead, the result of the building up of an attempted white frame of reference resulted in much discouragement and the inception of what would easily be termed an acceptance of a status of inferiority among many of the school children (Rodnick 1938:118).
While the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine have shared the same reservation since its inception in the 1880s, the Gros Ventre have experienced more extensive acculturation than the Assiniboine. The Assiniboine, while undergoing significant changes in their culture, were able to retain more elements of their traditional way of life. The differences in the acculturative levels of the two tribes appeared early, by at least the 1920s and 1930s. Rodnick describes these differences:

It was also my feeling that the Gros Ventre were more acculturated to white patterns than the Assiniboine. The Gros Ventre are more fervent Catholics and have had a longer contact with whites, with the result that there are more Gros Ventre mixed bloods than Assiniboine mixed bloods. The Gros Ventre lost their Sun Dance; the Assiniboine still perform theirs. More vestiges of aboriginal culture remain among the Assiniboine than among the Gros Ventre. Moccasins and braids, as examples, are more commonly seen among the Assiniboine old, than among the old people of the Gros Ventre (Rodnick 1938:72).

There are two acculturative agents that have had a significant impact upon the Gros Ventre, and may account for the differences between the Gros Ventre and the Assiniboine. These agents are the Catholic Church and the French-Chippewa-Cree in Hays. The Gros Ventre have lived near the mission in Hays since the 1890s. The mission and church have become central to the lives of the Gros Ventre. The Assiniboine in Lodge Pole and the Agency have been less influenced by the Church. The presence of the highly acculturated landless Indians in Hays, and their intermarriage with the Gros Ventre, also accounts for changes that were not experienced by the Assiniboine.

For both the Assiniboine and the Gros Ventre a powerful stimulus for culture change was the willingness of the older, respected people, and the leadership to accept the changes and the adoption of White cultural patterns. Many people wanted their children educated in the schools,
for they believed that their children would benefit from the adoption of the White culture. They also believed that the changes would bring about economic recovery on the reservation.

The contemporary Gros Ventre culture bears no resemblance to their traditional, equestrian, buffalo-hunting culture. Rodnick describes the results of Assiniboine acculturation in the 1930s.

The Assiniboine can be said to have virtually lost the culture that was theirs in pre-reservation days. The aboriginal culture has been overtly lost by the group forty years and under who form the vast majority of the reservation's population. The resultant subcultures formed may not be those found either among the urban or the rural dwellers of Montana, yet it would be difficult to say that they were Assiniboine in origin (Rodnick 1938:preface).

Rodnick's description also applies to the Gros Ventre. The Gros Ventre have adopted many elements of Anglo-American culture, but they have not assimilated into the dominant American society. On the other hand, acculturation has progressed so far that there is very little that is uniquely Gros Ventre about the Gros Ventre.

Federal Government Policy and the Fort Belknap Reservation

Federal government policy and programs have had a significant acculturative effect upon the Gros Ventre tribe. The programs that have had the greatest impact are the Allotment Act, the Indian Reorganization Act, Termination, Relocation, and Self-Determination.

The Allotment Act, or Dawes Act, was enacted on the Fort Belknap Reservation on March 3, 1921. The objective of the Allotment Act was to break up the land on the reservations in the United States, and to distribute the land to individual tribal members. It was believed that individual families, through the ownership of property and their own homestead, would more readily adopt farming and ranching, and would assimilate into White society. The White value of individualism formed
the basis of the Allotment Act. The government intended that the policy would encourage the significance and dominance of the individual and family over the importance of communalism and the tribe among the American Indians. Assimilation and the end to reservation life was the ultimate goal of the allotment policy.

Rodnick (1938:20) describes the provisions of the Allotment Act as it was carried out at Fort Belknap. The reservation land was divided and distributed among the Indians who were eligible to receive land on the reservation. Trust patents were issued to each Indian with a choice of either forty acres of irrigated land, or 230 acres of grazing land. The trust patents were theoretically to be held by the government, and then after twenty-five years, a patent-in-fee would be issued, with ownership then being turned over to the individual. The government believed that after twenty-five years the individual would have achieved complete independence and self-sufficiency.

As a part of the Fort Belknap Allotment Program, town sites were established for Lodge Pole and Hays, and lots were sold in the town sites. The French-Chippewa-Cree who had lived for years on the reservation, were not placed on the allotment rolls, were not allotted lands, and were declared non-wards with no reservation rights. Most of these people remained on the reservation and settled in Hays. The town site was not tribal land, and most of the landless Indians either purchased or rented lots and homes on the town site.

The Allotment Act at Fort Belknap did little to bring the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine out of poverty. Some people were forced to sell their allotted lands. Most others were forced to lease their lands for
grazing or agriculture due to the conditions created by the heirship land problem. Allan Harper, the Director of Technical Cooperation in the United States Soil Conservation Service of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, wrote in 1943 describing this problem:

"the inheritance and re-inheritance of the original trust allotments has fractionated the interests of the heirs into smaller and smaller equities. As physical partition of an average trust allotment of 160 acres into legal shares is impractical in most cases, the heirs have naturally preferred to leave the allotment intact, and to secure the benefit of their equities by having the government lease it to others. The government has had to face increasingly the alternative of selling the land and dividing the proceeds among the heirs, or of retaining it in trust status - and going into the real estate business (Harper 1943: 177-178)."

The Allotment Act was intended to protect the Indian lands from exploitation by Whites. The program, however, resulted in the loss of Indian lands, and increased the poverty of the Fort Belknap peoples. Before the allotment program was initiated on Fort Belknap, the conception of the private ownership and use of land was foreign to the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine peoples. While the tribes slowly became accustomed to individual, as opposed to communal, ownership and use of land, the government rarely gave the tribes any responsibility in making decisions about the use or sale of their land. The Bureau made these decisions and, consequently, the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine were not given the opportunity to develop the skills or experience to manage their own land.

The Allotment Act did not succeed in its objectives regarding the self-sufficiency and assimilation of the Indian people. Allotment did, however, result in a significant change in Gros Ventre values. As a result of the private, rather than communal, ownership of land, the Gros Ventre began a shift in their values away from communalism and toward
individualism. In addition, the combined emphasis of individualism and private property encouraged the attachment to material possessions.

John Collier was appointed as the Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1933 by the Roosevelt Administration. Collier had been active in the Indian Reform Movement, and brought years of experience in Indian affairs to his new office. Collier's twelve years as a Commissioner was the longest term of any individual to hold this position. His new philosophy and policy were reflected in the Indian Reorganization Act.

The Indian Reorganization Act represented a major shift in the Indian policy that had existed until the 1920s, and was embodied in the Allotment Act. The I.R.A. signified the government's recognition of the importance of the tribe, communalism, and the integrity of tribal leadership and native culture. The new government policy proposed that the tribes should be controllers of their own destiny, and that tribal leadership should have real authority. This policy encouraged the restoration of tribal governments. Collier also encouraged the revitalization of traditional tribal cultures. Collier set in motion a program that encouraged native elements, including language, religion, and arts and crafts. The government's ultimate policy goal remained the assimilation of the nation's tribes, but the route to assimilation had been modified. Collier's Indian administration believed that assimilation would occur after the tribes became independent and self-sufficient, and this process would be facilitated through his policy.

The Indian Reorganization Act, or Wheeler-Howard Act, was passed by Congress in June 1934. Tribal self-government was a central provision
of the Act. The government initiated the new policy by allowing and encouraging the tribes participation in the formulation of their own program, and made the acceptance of the Act, in each case, dependent upon the vote of the members of each tribe.

Barry (1974:233-236) describes the process of developing and voting on the I.R.A. by the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine on Fort Belknap. In November 1933, two lawyers from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Felix S. Cohen and Melvin H. Siegal, came to Fort Belknap, and presented and explained the I.R.A. to the Indian people. Meetings were held in 1934 to discuss a Fort Belknap Constitution, and a program for tribal self-government. Barry (Ibid.) states that the B.I.A. did much of the work for the tribes, drafting the constitution, as well as the charter for the business council. The I.R.A. was accepted by the Fort Belknap tribes on October 19, 1934. The constitution and by-laws were approved on October 27, 1935. The first councilmen were elected to the tribal council on February 29, 1936.

In addition to the provisions for self-government, the I.R.A. promoted a wide range of economic programs. The Act fostered the conservation and development of reservation lands and resources, granted the right for Indians to form businesses, established a credit system, provided for vocational education and established a fund of $250,000 for tuition at vocational training schools, established a land acquisition program for the tribes, organized the tribes as chartered corporations, and established a revolving credit fund for the tribes to use for economic development projects.
Rodnick (1938:22) and Barry (1974:232) agree that the Fort Belknap Indians did not expect the I.R.A. to revitalize the native cultures. Barry explains that acculturation had been so extensive by this time that much of the traditional culture, encouraged by the I.R.A. had already disappeared. The primary stimulus for the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine adoption of the I.R.A. was the revolving credit fund. The tribes felt that the funds would help to make possible the economic independence they had hoped and worked for since their movement onto the reservation. While the I.R.A. did not result in a revival of Gros Ventre culture, it may have had a significant influence upon the maintenance of Indian identity and the borrowing of Pan-Indian elements.

By the 1930s the traditional ceremonial dances had disappeared. The Indian dances performed by the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine were dances that had been adopted from other tribes. This Pan-Indian borrowing which began early for the Fort Belknap tribes, would continue and become more significant through time. One possible stimulus for the increased borrowing and adoption of Indian elements by the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine may have been the Collier administration's policy of encouraging native culture. From the time of settlement on the reservation, until the end of the 1920s, the Fort Belknap people had been discouraged from practicing their traditional culture, and particularly with regard to the children, who were instilled with the notion that their culture was inferior to the White man's way of life. With the commencement of the Collier administration in the 1930s, this negative atmosphere began to give way to a more relativistic notion concerning traditional Indian culture. While Collier was encouraging the revival and practice of
native culture, the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine cultures had already diminished considerably. The Fort Belknap tribes were now living in an environment that encouraged the practice of Indian culture. The borrowing of Pan-Indian elements proceeded gradually for the Gros Ventre, and the tribal identity was never lost.

During the 1940s Congress grew exceedingly more skeptical of the Bureau of Indian Affairs' programs designed to foster the self-sufficiency of the Indian people. Their criticisms of Indian programs and concerns regarding the expense of funding the Indian programs and the Bureau, led to discussions about terminating the wardship status of the Indian people and the responsibilities of the federal government. Congress was of the opinion that this was the most expedient route to self-sufficiency for the American Indian.

The Bureau established a formula to determine a tribe's readiness for termination (Tyler 1973:163). The variables of this formula included:

1. the degree of acculturation;
2. the economic resources and the condition of the tribe;
3. the willingness of the tribe to be relieved of federal control; and
4. the willingness of the state to take over.

All of the tribes were classified on the basis of this formula, and they were assigned to one of three groups:

Group 1: could be released immediately from federal supervision;
Group 2: could be released from federal supervision in ten years;
Group 3: release from federal supervision would occur in an indefinite time.

The Fort Belknap Community was assigned to Group 2 (Ibid.:163-164).
House Concurrent Resolution 108, or the Termination Act, passed Congress in 1953. Only a few tribes were ever terminated. The reaction from the tribes in the United States was so overwhelmingly negative, and the effects upon the terminated tribes so devastating, that the Congress backed down from carrying out the policy.

The 1950s were a time of concern for the Fort Belknap people. The introduction of termination caused a great deal of anxiety among the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine tribes. The years of paternalism, fraud, and mismanagement, and consistent failures of programs and policies led to the tribes' resentment, distrust, and bitterness toward the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The tribes, however, understood the implications of termination, for they realized just how far they were from self-sufficiency. The people feared termination, and they became even more distrustful of the Bureau and the government. The special status of the Indian people was considered a right determined by treaties, not a privilege, and the government was attempting to back out of its responsibilities to the American Indian. Even after the threat of termination subsided, the fear and resentment remained.

In the early 1950s, the Bureau of Indian Affairs initiated the Relocation Program. Relocation was established in response to the poor economic conditions on the reservations, and the prospects for Indian employment in urban areas. The Bureau set up offices in Chicago, Los Angeles, Salt Lake City, and Denver, and encouraged the Indian people to come to these urban areas to find permanent employment. The Relocation Program was perceived by some Indians as "individualized termination" (Tyler 1973:159). In response to the program's negative image, and its
association with termination policy, the Bureau changed the name of the program to Employment Assistance in 1962. The Bureau of Indian Affairs expanded the program to include Employment Assistance Offices in Chicago, Cleveland, Dallas, Denver, Los Angeles, Oakland, San Jose, and Washington, D.C. The Bureau helped to find employment for individuals, provided job training programs, financial assistance, and services directed towards facilitating the adjustment of reservation Indians to the urban environment. The Employment Assistance Program also provided job placement and training programs near the reservations (Ibid.:202).

The Gros Ventre have participated in both the local placement and urban employment programs of Relocation and Employment Assistance. Some remained in urban areas, while many returned to the reservation. The program has had an acculturative impact upon the reservation Gros Ventre. For those who left the reservation for employment, and later returned to Fort Belknap, they returned with a greater understanding and acceptance of the dominant American society.

During the 1960s and into the 1970s, the Bureau's Indian policy made another significant change of direction. The new policy was called "Self-Determination without Termination." The Bureau attempted to dissipate the fears that had been so pervasive as a result of its termination policy. The distrust of the Bureau remains, but the Self-Determination program has had a positive impact on the Fort Belknap Reservation. The new policy encourages the tribes to take control of programs that were being administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and other federal agencies. Self-Determination provides for the tribes to control their own programs and development, in a partnership with the Bureau, and without the government rejecting its trust responsibility.
The Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act was passed by Congress in 1975. According to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (1978:20-21) the Act provides for:

1. self-determination grants for tribes;
2. authorization for the tribes to contract for Bureau and Indian Health Service programs;
3. tribal planning of government operated programs; and
4. access to federal personnel.

The Fort Belknap tribes have taken advantage of Self-Determination by contracting for Bureau and Indian Health Service programs. For instance, the Fort Belknap Community Council now contracts for, and independently operates, the reservation’s law and order office, a responsibility once held by the Bureau. The self-determination policy has expanded the control the community has over its own development and programs.

During the past century, the Gros Ventre tribe has experienced tremendous change. Their struggle to make a successful and satisfying adaptation to the contemporary social and economic environment is only understood against the background of Bureau of Indian Affairs and federal government policy, which so strongly determined the way of life of the Gros Ventre people. Acculturation progressed throughout these decades, with the disappearance of many of the traditional culture elements. The inconsistent and frequently changing government policy, at times making drastic shifts in direction, as with termination, placed great stress upon the Gros Ventre tribe. It is remarkable, and an indication of the resiliency of the Gros Ventre people, that they have maintained their tribal integrity, sustained their tribal identity, and have continued the struggle for their self-sufficiency and autonomy,
in the face of this chaos and adversity.
CHAPTER FOUR  ACCULTURATION: THE GROS VENTRE PERSPECTIVE

The present chapter will treat Gros Ventre acculturation from the perspective of the contemporary Gros Ventre of Fort Belknap and focuses upon general impressions, and the perceived effects of the acculturation process. In addition, this chapter will provide the Gros Ventre's conception of the primary acculturative agents, and their influence upon culture change.

Culture change, and the disappearance of traditional culture, were frequently discussed topics during the fieldwork, and this due only in part to the influence of the researcher. The Gros Ventre display a serious concern with culture change, and therefore, the topic was often raised in conversations without the need to elicit the information. The subject of culture change may also have been discussed frequently due to the researcher's association with the Catholic mission, one of the primary acculturative agents on Fort Belknap.

The quotes selected for presentation in this chapter are representative of a major portion of the Gros Ventre people on the reservation. Only the sex and approximate age of the speakers will be provided in order to ensure the anonymity of informants. In addition, several quotes have been slightly altered to protect the identity of informants. While the alterations help to protect an identity, a deliberate attempt was made to maintain the integrity of the speaker's ideas and perceptions.
There is general agreement among the Gros Ventre of Fort Belknap that their traditional culture is gone, and that for all practical purposes, the Gros Ventre language is extinct. There is great remorse about the loss of the traditional culture and language, and a general feeling of helplessness regarding the revival of the traditions. At the same time, there is the realization that the Gros Ventre people must move forward. The concept most often expressed is that the people cannot return to the past, because that life is gone forever. They realize it is important to know the traditions, and to have respect and appreciation for the native culture, but the Gros Ventre people cannot live in the past, and do not wish to do so. The Gros Ventre recognize that they live in a modern world; the "White man's world." Their efforts are directed toward acquiring the skills and experience to adapt to this contemporary environment, and to compete with the White man "on his terms." The Gros Ventre strive to control their own lives. Their ideal goal is to instill an awareness, respect, and appreciation of the traditional Gros Ventre culture in the young people, and maintain an identity with, and the integrity of, the Gros Ventre tribe, and, at the same time, provide the children with the skills and experience to compete in the White man's world.

It's too late to be asking us about Indian ways; they are gone, and we don't have the answers about the way things used to be. We started to ask questions about the Gros Ventre way of life, but it's too late. The old people today don't know anything (female, 50s).

It is the older Gros Ventre who display the greatest remorse concerning the loss of the traditions. Most of them are old enough to remember their parents' and grandparents' participation in the
traditional culture. They observed the changes experienced by these generations, and it is their generation that did not learn the traditions. The belief is often expressed that their parents made a conscious decision not to teach them the traditional ways. It is also felt that these preceding generations experienced the most extensive change in their lifetimes. It is frequently remarked that those were very difficult and confusing times for the people.

Many reservation people assert that the Gros Ventre elderly do not know the traditions. It is true that the majority of the older people never learned the native culture, but many of them observed, as children, the native customs of the preceding generations. They do not, for the most part, participate in the traditional way of life, but they do have some understanding of the native Gros Ventre culture. One middle-aged Gros Ventre man expressed the opinion that culture change has resulted in a diminished prestige and respect for the Gros Ventre elderly. When the Gros Ventre practiced their native way of life, the culture was passed down as an oral tradition. The people relied upon the knowledge and experience of the elderly to learn their way of life. They were the bearers of the Gros Ventre culture. With the disappearance of the native customs and language, they no longer play this crucial role, and there has been a concomitant reduction of the value on old age.

Many of the middle-aged Gros Ventre want to learn about the traditional culture, and express some frustration regarding the inability to obtain the information they seek. Either the elderly do not know a particular answer to their questions, or they display a reluctance to discuss the old ways. This is particularly true of the religion and
Sacred Pipes. People were taught that this is a very specialized knowledge, and if a person does not know the subject, they should not even try to talk about it.

Although there is general recognition that the old ways are gone, many Gros Ventre still want the young people to learn something about the traditional culture. There are no expectations that the native culture will be revived, but they realize that the children must have some knowledge of the Gros Ventre culture to instill in them a pride in their traditions and heritage. Both old and middle-aged Gros Ventre express some remorse and frustration with the lack of interest, on the part of the young people concerning the Gros Ventre culture. Most of the young people have had no direct exposure to the traditions, but rather, have only seen minor remnants of the old way of life.

It's very hard to pass the Indian traditions down to the young people. The children aren't interested in the old ways. They don't want to sit and listen to the Indian ways. So they just won't learn it, and the Indian ways won't get passed down. There's hardly any of the Gros Ventre culture left. There wasn't much of the Gros Ventre culture to pass down to them to begin with; we had already lost so much. But now the young people are learning even less about the Gros Ventre culture. It's disappearing and they're not even interested (male, 40s).

Most Gros Ventre consider the boarding schools to have been one of the major acculturative agents on the reservation, and a primary reason for the loss of the traditional Gros Ventre culture. The St. Paul's Mission Boarding School in Hays, and the Fort Belknap Industrial Training School at the Agency, operated from around the turn of the century until the 1930s. The Catholic mission in Hays is considered the more important influence on Gros Ventre culture, since it was located in this predominantly Gros Ventre community. It is the Gros
Ventre perception that the mission has made a direct contribution to the loss of the Gros Ventre language and culture.

The contemporary Gros Ventre have ambivalent feelings toward the Catholic mission. They express resentment and bitterness concerning the mission's instrumental role in the loss of the Gros Ventre way of life. At the same time, the Gros Ventre are almost all Catholic, and they have a strong attachment to the Church, as well as an appreciation for the social services provided in the community and for the educational opportunities provided by the mission's grade school and high school.

There were numerous and detailed accounts offered during the course of the fieldwork research of the physical punishments by the boarding school personnel for a child's use of the Gros Ventre language. These descriptions came both from middle-aged people who had heard the stories, and from the elderly who had observed or experienced this punishment. The young Gros Ventre at the boarding school were discouraged not only from speaking their native tongue, but also from wearing native dress or hair styles, and from participation in their parent's way of life.

The Gros Ventre believe that they had no choice but to send their children to these schools. They felt they were forced to send them, and their children were forced to make the changes required by the school. The early education at the boarding school was not considered very useful or effective. Most of the time was spent teaching the catechism, and the children attended school for only half a day. The other half of the day the children worked at the mission, and the work was very hard on the young people.
Many contemporary Gros Ventre also express resentment toward the mission for the loss of the traditional religion. It is felt that the Gros Ventre had their own religion before the missionaries arrived, and that the Gros Ventre were a very religious people. They are bitter that the missionaries considered the Gros Ventre "pagans" and their religion "savage." The older and middle-aged Gros Ventre retain strong feelings toward their traditional religion, and particularly with regard to the Sacred Pipes. They lack the knowledge, however, to practice the ceremonies or to handle the Pipes. The belief is universal that for someone to handle the Pipes without the appropriate knowledge and instruction, terrible things would happen to them, their families, or the whole Gros Ventre community.

The Gros Ventre realize that when the Jesuits first arrived, their ancestors accepted Catholicism willingly. Important tribal leaders adopted the religion, and became the stimulus for the tribe to accept Christianity. Some became catechists, teaching their people about Catholicism, and translating the priest's mass and sermons for the Gros Ventre people. The tremendous changes that accrued from the influence of the Church, however, are considered to have been forced upon these people.

In recent times, the Catholic Church has made an attempt to incorporate various Indian elements and symbols into the service. For example, the Church has been decorated with "Indian symbols," sweetgrass has been used as incense, and on a few occasions, a pipe has been used in a service. The use of Indian symbols and paraphernalia has occurred at many Indian missions across the plains, and is not unique to St. Paul's Mission on Fort Belknap.
We had numerous opportunities to discuss this process of indigenization with the Diocesan, Jesuit, and Franciscan Priests from the Fort Belknap, Crow, Northern Cheyenne, Blackfeet, Flathead, and Rocky Boy Reservations. It was explained that the incorporation of Indian culture into the ritual of the Church was a response to the Vatican II proclamations. The priests interpreted the Vatican II documents as the need to consider and integrate community traditions into the local Church. The priests from Montana's Indian Missions expressed a commitment to this policy and, therefore, encouraged the use of Indian culture in Church ritual.

The schools have also attempted to incorporate Indian studies into the curricula, and have begun to foster an appreciation and awareness of Indian culture in various ways in the classroom. Some of the middle-aged Gros Ventre have reacted negatively to these attempts to "revive" the Indian culture in the Church and schools. They are angry and bitter that those institutions which were instrumental in changing the Indian patterns are now making an attempt to restore those patterns in this environment. Their opinion is that these elements have disappeared, and it is futile to try to revive them today.

The loss of the Gros Ventre language is most often associated with the Catholic mission. While in the boarding school, the children were forbidden to speak Gros Ventre, and were often punished if they used their native language. The children learned English, and it rapidly became the first language for the Gros Ventre.

It is a matter of speculation as to whether the Gros Ventre language would have been retained had it not been for the efforts of the
Mission Boarding School. The people in the community identify the Mission as the primary force accounting for the loss of the native language, because they have either heard about, observed, or experienced the harsh punishments that were delivered by the Missionaries for speaking Gros Ventre. It is quite possible that had the children learned English in the boarding school without the negative reinforcement for speaking Gros Ventre, that they could have become bilingual.

What is certain is that the Gros Ventre would have learned English regardless of the Mission's influence in the community due to the other acculturative forces operating among the Gros Ventre, such as the government boarding schools. English most likely became the primary language for those children who attended the boarding schools between the 1890s and the early 1930s. Subsequent generations then learned English as a first language in their homes. Only a few children, who were raised by grandparents, ever learned Gros Ventre after the boarding school period.

While the loss of the Gros Ventre language is a tragedy for the Gros Ventre people, and they recognize it as such, their early use of English did facilitate their adaptation to the rapidly changing environment. Their use of English made them more adept at dealing with the federal government and with the dominant American society.

A few people referred to the relationship between language and culture, explaining that as the Gros Ventre language began to disappear, that the Gros Ventre culture also was soon to be lost. Culture and language are so inextricably bound that without the native language, the traditional culture had little chance to survive. This is particularly the case in tandem with the pressures exerted by the missionaries and
government officials to abandon traditional customs.

The Gros Ventre contend that the Catholic mission is instrumental in explaining the acculturative differences between the Assiniboine and the Gros Ventre. While the Gros Ventre only have a few native speakers, and have lost most of their traditional culture, the Assiniboine have been able to retain more of their language and culture. It is believed that this is due largely to the fact that the mission's influence was more intensive with the Gros Ventre than the Assiniboine. The Catholic Church has been located in Hays since before the turn of the century, and has played a significant role in their lives since that time. The Assiniboine have been physically removed from the Church, and the mission, until very recently. The mission made few attempts to work among the Assiniboine in Lodge Pole and the Agency.

The Fort Belknap people have experienced many different government programs promising independence and self-sufficiency. The Gros Ventre complain that they are still wards of the government, they do not have the freedom that has been promised to them, and that the Bureau of Indian Affairs has not provided the support and assistance they are supposed to offer the Indian people. It is believed that the Bureau has not been sufficiently concerned with the Indians' needs and interests.

The Gros Ventre are very bitter and frustrated with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. They believe that the Bureau still considers the Indians incompetent, and incapable of controlling their own lives. Most Gros Ventre perceive that the Bureau exists to perpetuate their own jobs, and that the Bureau does not want the Indians to become self-sufficient, because that achievement would put Bureau employees out of a job. The
Bureau receives money from Congress to operate various Indian programs. It is felt that too much of this money is used to pay the salaries of a "top-heavy" bureaucracy, and not enough filters down to the Indian people for whom it was intended. This is one reason given for the failure of programs to improve the conditions of the American Indian.

The ineffectiveness of Government programs, and the continued fear of the termination policy, has created a great distrust of the B.I.A. and the federal government. Many Gros Ventre believe that the B.I.A. was a major contributor to the loss of the traditional culture, and that the B.I.A. was responsible for taking away their freedom.

There is, however, an ambivalence concerning the B.I.A. While the Gros Ventre have little faith in the Bureau, they are adamant about the government ensuring its existence. The B.I.A. represents the special relationship the Indian has with the government. The government put this relationship into jeopardy during the termination period, and this experience remains fresh in the memories of the Gros Ventre. The people, for the most part, do not believe they currently possess the skills or experience to compete in the White man's world, and therefore, would not fare well if terminated. The Gros Ventre, as much as they complain about the problems with the B.I.A. want the Bureau, require its assistance, and would fight to ensure that it continues to exist.

People complain that their tax money is going to all these Indian programs, and they don't see good results from the programs. Well, I have news for them, and you. The Indians don't get this money. If I wanted to sell someone a piece of land, or even give someone land, I would have to submit this request to the B.I.A. Office at the Agency. It would then go to the B.I.A. Area Office in Billings, and they would send it to the B.I.A. Office in Washington. In each office they would check to make sure that the land rightfully belonged to me, and that I had the right to sell it or give it away. Then this paper would go back
the way it came. All these people who handle the paper are getting paid from your tax money. The B.I.A. is too top-heavy. By the time the money gets down to the Indian people, it's nothing like what it was allocated. And then people wonder why the programs don't work (female, 60s).

The Gros Ventre feel that the government has not had much concern for the Indian people. They recount numerous stories to demonstrate the government's neglect of the Indian. They often talk about the early reservation period, when the government gave them various types of materials and rations, but never took the time to explain how these items were to be used.

The Gros Ventre explain that during the early years on the reservation, and through the 1930s, there were few government programs, and that times were very hard. The people had to fend for themselves, because the government offered few opportunities and support. People had to travel off of the reservation to find jobs, and had to resort to their own resourcefulness in order to survive. Both food and jobs were scarce.

My grandfather went up to get his government rations when they first started coming out. He was given wagon grease, but he was never told what to do with it. Just, go grease your wagon. He went home, and was outside for a couple of hours. He came in and told his wife that would need more grease. He had literally covered the whole wagon with grease. They were also given pig by the Government for bacon. They were given a whole pig with the outside skin on it. The skin was pink with hair. They thought it was dead Whites, and they just threw it out (female, 60s).

The most serious complaint levelled against the government and the B.I.A., by the Gros Ventre, concerns their dependence, which they believe was created by the government's philosophy and policies directed at Indian affairs. The Indian Reorganization Act, and the Self-Determination policy, both had goals of self-government and economic
self-sufficiency. The Gros Ventre believe that too little has been accomplished toward these objectives.

There is a general feeling that the contemporary social programs are "handouts," which make the Indian dependent on the government, and strip the pride, integrity, and self-esteem from those who participate in these programs. The people are still controlled by the B.I.A. and the hopes of independence have been beaten down, resulting in frustration and depression in the community.

The government is supposed to help the Indian people, but it doesn't. The rules used to be strict to get any money. It was sure bad. Now it's almost just the other way, and it's really no better. Now they can get money without doing anything for it. This is just as bad as before. They give too much without doing anything for it. They are taking away all the pride and integrity of these men and women who get this money without working. They should find these men jobs, and let them get back their motivation and self-esteem. They're not helping these people by just giving them this money. The government hasn't done much to help the Indian people (female, 60s).

Some Gros Ventre participated in the Relocation Program in the 1950s, and many of them returned to the reservation. Many have also worked off the reservation in the Employment Assistance Program. The Gros Ventre have worked in urban areas all over the country, and this experience has provided them with a broader and deeper understanding of the modern world. The Gros Ventre have become more experienced and skilled in their relationship with the White man's world.

There are people who complain that the B.I.A. 's handling of the Relocation Program was too similar to the ineffective programs operated on the reservation. Many of the jobs found for the people in cities were not satisfying, and the Indians found themselves living in ghetto conditions, little better than the poverty on the reservation. Others
found the urban experience to be too foreign and difficult to adapt to, and missed their families, friends, and the special attachment to their homeland.

We could make it off the reservation, but we don't like to live in the city. Me and my family lived in Denver for three years, but we didn't like it. We went on the Relocation Program, another government program. You should have seen the place they tried to put my family in. A dirty, rat-infested place. And they put all the Indians together. I wouldn't live there. After I would drive my husband to the factory, I would go up and down the streets looking for a place, until I finally found one. We weren't happy there. I made $10 a day washing and cleaning White people's homes. That was in the 1950s. Then we came back to the reservation to live (female, 60s).

The Allotment Act has had as great an impact on the Gros Ventre as any government program enacted on the Fort Belknap Reservation. While the Act was passed in Congress in 1887, it did not go into effect on Fort Belknap until 1921. The postponement of allotment on Fort Belknap did help to minimize some of the problems that accrued from its operation on other reservations. For instance, on Fort Belknap, surplus land was not sold to Whites, and the Fort Belknap tribes have been able to retain control of almost all of their land. One of the more significant changes brought about by the Allotment Act was a modification of the Gros Ventre value system. With the distribution of parcels of land to tribal members, and the individual ownership and use of land, the communal and tribal-oriented values of the Gros Ventre were dealt a severe blow. It is true that the Gros Ventre maintain a strong tribal identity, but they have become very individualistic in their orientation. Most Gros Ventre like the idea of owning their own property. The notion of returning to a communal or tribal way of life would meet with strong disapproval. The goal of the allotment program was assimilation, and with regard to the value of individualism, the government accomplished this goal.
During an interview with one of the tribal leaders, he discussed the Allotment Act, and the impact it has had on the reservation and its people. His concerns for the heirship land problem and the early misunderstandings of the Fort Belknap people regarding allotment reflect a general opinion on the reservation. His approach to economic development and tribal and communal values, on the other hand, are not representative views. The individualism instilled in the Gros Ventre, through the Allotment Act, is the very reason most reservation Gros Ventre would disagree with this position.

The biggest mistake that was made in dealing with the Indians, and the most destructive thing that the government did was the Allotment Act. Before the Allotment Act, the land was owned and used by the tribe communally. But the Allotment Act changed this relationship. It changed the land relationship from the tribal ownership with individual use to individual ownership of land with individual use of the land. It changed the tribe. People have become individualistic. It used to be communal and tribal-oriented here. When the Allotment Act was passed here in 1921, the people didn't really understand what it was all about. Individual ownership of the land was foreign to them. When they died, they had no will, and they didn't designate heirs for the land. They just assumed that all the land they used would go back to the tribe. But the land didn't revert to the tribe like they thought it would. Since they owned the land as an individual, the land was passed on to all their heirs. The land was sometimes split up between 40 and 50 people. There were times when all these people would split up just one acre. They didn't understand that they owned the land. I have a solution to the land problem that I'd like to see done. But I don't think the government would go for it, and I don't think the people here are ready for it. We could start an economic development project that would bring in an income for the tribe, and would provide jobs for people. We would develop agriculture and ranching on the reservation. But there would have to be tribal control of the land to do this. To make it economically feasible, we would have to go back to communal ownership of the land and use of the land. It's the only way we're going to make it with ranching and agriculture here. We'd have to go back to socialism; the way it used to be for the Indian. If the government would give the tribe one billion dollars, the tribe could buy back all the land from the individual owners. This may sound like a lot of money, but it's not at all, if you consider all the appropriations of money the government makes. The government has rebuilt
Japan and Germany after they defeated them militarily, and the government built them back into world powers. The Indians were defeated by the Government militarily, but they won't give the Indian enough money to rebuild the society to self-sufficiency. The government would never invest that much money on the Indians (male, 30s).

The following view reflects a more generally accepted opinion expressed by the contemporary Gros Ventre.

I thought allotment was good. I want my own land. I couldn't have lived the old way. It would be like communism. I never thought we'd have a home like we do. I'd be bringing all these new things into my log house or tipi with me. I couldn't live without them (female, 50s).

The social organization and kinship system of the Gros Ventre has also undergone dramatic change. The traditional society was organized into clans. These clans were somewhat autonomous politically and economically, coming together for the major religious ceremonies, and particularly those involving the Sacred Pipes. Today there are only a few families who remember their clan affiliation. There are no remnants of the clan system in the contemporary Gros Ventre culture. There are some people, in fact, who have no knowledge of the clan system at all.

The Gros Ventre family has changed considerably. One of the most significant changes has been in the role and perception of the elderly. The elderly are treated with a great deal of respect, but there were many people who noted that this respect had diminished. Some people feel that the Gros Ventre used to take better care of their old people, and would always take grandparents into their homes. In the traditional Gros Ventre society, the elderly had a special status. They used to make major decisions in a household and were active participants in the education of the young people. These roles have become less important.
People just don't want to help their parents and grandparents these days. It sure wasn't like that when I was young. It's sad to see what's happening today. The respect for the old people is gone. They just get put aside now; they are no longer important. The family is really disintegrating. There were always grandparents and grandchildren taken into the home and cared for. Everyone lived together. Now, they still take the grandchildren, but they don't take the grandparents. The grandparents were always the ones in the family who made the decisions. We didn't always agree or like what they had to say, but it didn't matter; you would go along with it anyway, or you would get a cane over your head. I had some of that in my family. We had grandparents live with us and I didn't dare cross them, even if I didn't agree with what they were saying. I feel sorry for the old people today. All they really want are people around them to listen to them tell stories about what has been, what they have seen in their life, and show a little respect. They want to be important (female, 50s).

The acculturative process has created significant changes in the roles of Gros Ventre women. In the traditional society, there were few women in leadership positions, because the avenues to these positions were most often the exclusive prerogative of men, or were at the least, more readily accessible to men. Outstanding deeds as a warrior and hunter were instrumental qualities in achieving Gros Ventre leadership, neither of which were readily available to women.

The changes for women were not often discussed by the people, but the dramatic alteration of their roles was apparent. Some of the traditional roles for women were cooking, preparing meat for drying, tanning hides, preparing lodge covers, packing and transporting the family's belongings, and caring for children. Gros Ventre women may have experienced an easier adjustment to acculturation than the men, during the early stages of change, because their roles were not altered as drastically as the men's roles. With the extermination of the buffalo, and the end to intertribal warfare, the traditional measures of male skills and prestige had diminished considerably. It took at least a few
generations before the Gros Ventre men adopted the dominant society's measure of prestige and self-worth, but in the interim, these times must have been most difficult for the males of Gros Ventre society. For the women, on the other hand, their roles did not change to any great extent. The value of their skills and worth could still be measured in terms of the traditional roles they held in pre-contact and early contact Gros Ventre society.

Today, women's roles have made an extensive and qualitative shift from the roles held in traditional Gros Ventre society. Women are very active in tribal government and politics, and they hold important leadership positions on the reservation. There are women on the Gros Ventre Treaty Committee, they are active in tribal business and politics, they hold positions on the school board, and they hold administrative positions in some of the important agencies and departments on the reservation.

Women have also made great strides in education. There are a number of women who have received college degrees, and hold positions teaching in the public grade school. Some work as nurses and staff at the Public Health Service Hospital and clinics, and some have become government employees at the Agency. For the most part, their jobs are more secure than the seasonal employment which is most often available to the men.

Hays has undergone tremendous physical changes, which have significantly improved the standard of living and have had far-reaching effects upon the life style and culture patterns of the Gros Ventre. Many of these changes have come recently to the reservation. Before the 1950s,
the Gros Ventre people were fairly isolated from the dominant society.

Hays was not serviced with electricity until the 1950s. Before the Rural Electric Association brought electricity to the homes, there were a few lamp houses and wind generators. People relied upon kerosene lamps to light their homes. Before the 1960s, there was no indoor plumbing in Hays. Families had to haul their drinking water from wells or a spring. There are homes today on the Hays town site that are still without indoor plumbing. People get their water from a well at the Public Health Service clinic, also located on the town site.

A good road system was not built on the reservation until the 1950s. Until then, travel was very slow. In the winter, the snow made travel difficult; in the spring, the gumbo made travel almost impossible. The forty mile trip to Harlem from Hays was not made often. At the time of the fieldwork, the only paved road in Hays was the main road running through the town. All other roads were gravelled, and frequently in poor condition.

During the 1960s, the government began a program to build better housing on the reservation. Before that time, people lived either in log homes, plank frame homes, or tar paper homes. In the 1960s, the government began a mutual-help home program. The people who were given these homes helped each other to build their houses. They did most of the construction, and their labor was used as equity toward the purchase of the house. Almost all of the enrolled Gros Ventre and Assiniboine live in modern frame houses. Today, the homes are built by contractors.

Television came to Hays in 1959. A transmitter was installed in the foothills of the Little Rocky Mountains overlooking Hays. There is a
television club, and the community people pay dues to gather enough money for the maintenance of the transmitter. As in the dominant American society, it is difficult to accurately assess the impact that television has had upon the Gros Ventre community. Almost every home does have a television, and there has been some impact on the community. The people are exposed to more of what is happening in the world around them, and the television, along with improved transportation, has chiseled away the isolation which characterized the Hays community and the reservation into the 1950s.

The French-Chippewa-Cree live almost exclusively in Hays. Their history and culture are beyond the scope of this paper, and will not be treated in much detail. Their relationship to the Gros Ventre, and their influence upon culture change, has been considerable, and must be at least mentioned in this regard.

The landless Indians of Fort Belknap are part of a large group that are a mixture of Chippewa, Cree, Sioux and French. There is no single origin of these people. Some descended from Chippewa and Cree women who married French trappers and traders, some came from Canada, some lived on reservations in the United States, and some were descendants of Riel's group. There are thousands of these people living in the Canadian provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan, and they live both on and off reservations across the northern plains of the United States.

The landless Chippewa-Cree are Roman Catholic, and many were drawn to Hays to be near the mission. Many of them attended the mission boarding school, and then later, the day school. Times were also very hard on these people, and some moved onto the reservation to receive the
government assistance that was being given to the Gros Ventre and the Assiniboine.

When the Dawes Act was accepted on Fort Belknap, it was determined that the Chippewa-Cree could not receive any allotments, since they were not enrolled members of the Gros Ventre or Assiniboine tribes. Thus, they became "landless Indians." Also, as non-enrolled Indians, they are not eligible for many of the benefits that the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine receive. With the adoption of the Allotment Act, the town site in Hays was established. Many of the landless Indians moved onto this land, purchasing or renting a home, and some remain on the town site.

Over the past fifty years, there has been a high incidence of intermarriage between the Gros Ventre and Chippewa-Cree. They have shared the same community for years. The Chippewa-Cree were and are much more acculturated than the Gros Ventre, and have been a strong acculturative influence on the Gros Ventre. They have not encouraged the elimination of traditional elements; there were other forces operating to these ends. The Chippewa-Cree did practice a way of life, however, which was much more like the dominant American society, and these customs were often adopted by the Gros Ventre spouse and their children. There has been far less intermarriage between the Chippewa-Cree and the Assiniboine, although in recent times, its incidence is increasing.

There has been some degree of hostility directed toward the landless Indians by some of the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine. Some people express the opinion that they do not belong on the reservation. A certain amount of the hostility is translated into the issue of degree blood, and
some prejudice is demonstrated in terms of their lack of "Indianness." They are sometimes referred to as "half-breeds." The landless Indians, however, are very proud of their heritage, and also display a strong group loyalty. Their situation has improved on Fort Belknap, and to some extent, this is due to the frequency of intermarriage that has occurred between their group and the Gros Ventre and the Assiniboine.

The Gros Ventre value system has demonstrated some resistance to the effects of acculturation. Even in this area, however, the changes are taking place under the pressures of White society. For instance the traditional conception of time, which the Gros Ventre refer to as "Indian time" has changed. Indian time was that something was done when people were ready to do it, or felt like doing it; not because it was time to do it. A frequently used phrase was that "Indian time is any time." Today, people must be at work on time, children must be to school on time, there are appointments that must be kept with doctors and dentists at the Public Health Service hospital, mass begins at a certain time, stores, banks and, movie theaters must be attended at appropriate hours, and thus, the contemporary Gros Ventre must conform to this new conception.

The traditional concept of communalism has also diminished. Few activities are conducted in the name of the tribe. Individualism has superseded the traditional concept of communalism. The family, not the tribe, is the primary economic unit. There are no longer communal economic activities, as there were in the past. The tribes may be involved in several business ventures, in the name of the Fort Belknap Community, but these are not exclusively Gros Ventre, and there are never enough
participants in these ventures to consider them a communal activity. Ownership of land, homes, and property is individualistic, as it is in American society. Communalism has almost entirely disappeared.

Perhaps the single most important traditional value is generosity. Traditionally, a person's measure of prestige and standing in the community was strongly based on their generosity. A person might have other good qualities for leadership in the society, but could never be considered for these positions, if they were not considered generous.

The Gros Ventre remain a remarkably generous people; remarkable because of the intense pressures of the dominant society to behave otherwise. There were numerous displays of this generosity during the research, some formalized in such occasions as feeds and giveaways, and some informal, as in the assistance given to an individual or family in times of need. A feed is a feast sponsored by a family or group, such as a dance committee, and is often held in association with a giveaway to honor an individual. A description of the feed and giveaway will be provided in the ethnography in Chapter Five. By American standards, the contemporary Gros Ventre remain a very generous people. By the traditional Gros Ventre standards, however, this value, too, is on the decline. The measure of a successful person in American society is often based upon how much a person has, how much is saved, how much is conspicuously consumed, and how many material possessions can be accumulated by an individual. The measure of success in traditional Gros Ventre society was the ability and the willingness to be generous. The generosity went beyond the giving away of material possessions. If a person came to visit, they were always fed, regardless of the scarcity
of food. People were expected to help the elderly, orphans, or anyone in need. The Gros Ventre value of generosity is declining, because the Gros Ventre are adopting the values of the American society. The Gros Ventre standard of living is steadily improving, and people are developing greater expectations. Material possessions, including the ownership of land, homes, cars and trucks, are becoming more and more important. As the concern for money and possessions become more significant, the importance of generosity will likely decrease.

Many of the older Gros Ventre recognize this decline in generosity, as well as the other traditional values.

People are always worrying about money. Long ago, one Indian would help another do something, and then if they had something they needed help with, they would help each other. But today, you ask someone to help you out, and they say, what's in it for me. They want money. That is bad. There used to be a charity feeling here; it was good. But now people are fighting among themselves. It's no good (male, 70s).

The Gros Ventre are very concerned about the loss of the traditional culture, values and language. They realize that it will require a great effort to stem the flow of change, or to at least slow it down.

The Indian is different from what he was 20 years ago, and he'll be different 20 years from now. There was a common bond that allowed us to call ourselves Indians, but we're losing this common bond. It will continue to be lost, too, and it will be this way until somebody stops this movement away from the Indian ways. Until somebody presents it as a life and death thing for the tribe. Some day the Fort Belknap Reservation is just going to be a place; an area of land where individuals live. There won't be tribes to identify with or belong to, just individuals. If it doesn't stop, they'll have a county commissioner government, not a tribal government. We're losing our values, too. Our value system is what makes the Indian unique. The non-Indian world is so regimented, and now we're going that way (male, 30s).
Chapter Five will present an ethnography of the Gros Ventre on the Fort Belknap Reservation. The Hays community is the focus of this ethnography. Much of the cultural description that follows, however, also applies to the Gros Ventre who live at the Agency. Unless otherwise specified, the ethnography treats the White-oriented, Indian-oriented, and Pan-Indian-oriented as a single entity, for most of their culture is the same. All three categories of Gros Ventre are highly acculturated and have integrated much of the American culture into their way of life.

The dissertation is a study of ethnic identity, acculturation, and Pan-Indianism. It is these concepts and processes that determine the cultural material included in the ethnography. The following list of social institutions and culture elements serve as the guiding principles for the inclusion of material in this chapter:

1. Contemporary social institutions, such as the Roman Catholic Mission and federal government agencies and their programs, that have been most influential in the acculturation of the Gros Ventre.

2. Cultural elements and institutions that demonstrate the quality and quantity of culture change experienced by the Gros Ventre.
3. Cultural elements or institutions that are either retentions from the traditional culture, such as the value of generosity, or that have undergone change, but have retained some of their Indian character, such as the mourner's complex.

4. Cultural elements and institutions that have been factors in accounting for the maintenance of the Gros Ventre tribal identity, such as the Gros Ventre Treaty Committee.

5. Cultural elements and institutions that are significant to understanding the contemporary Gros Ventre culture and, therefore, provide the context for an analysis of the ethnic identification process as it operates among the Gros Ventre.

The Fort Belknap Reservation is located in northcentral Montana. The northern boundary of the reservation is the Milk River, and the southern boundary is in the Little Rocky Mountains. The distance between the northern and the southern borders is about forty miles, and the eastern and western boundaries, about twenty-five miles.

There are approximately 650,000 acres on the reservation. The Fort Belknap tribes also own almost 29,000 acres outside of the boundaries of the reservation. Most of the reservation is located in Blaine county, with only a narrow strip running north and south in Phillips county.

There are three major population centers on the reservation: Hays, Lodge Pole, and the Milk River or Agency. Lodge Pole is located about ten miles northeast of Hays and is predominantly Assiniboine. The Agency was traditionally Assiniboine, but due to the availability of housing, has become a mixture of Assiniboine and Gros Ventre. It is
located about forty miles north of Hays along the Milk River. Hays is the traditionally Gros Ventre community on the reservation and is located on the southern part of the reservation at the foot of the Little Rocky Mountains. With the emigration of French-Chippewa-Cree into Hays, primarily after the allotment of land in 1921, and the subsequent intermarriage between these people and the Gros Ventre, Hays has become a mixture of Gros Ventre and French-Chippewa-Cree. Through the increasing intermarriage of all three groups on the reservation, the communities are slowly becoming mixed.

The only store in Hays is situated in the middle of the town on the only paved road running through Hays. This building serves as a small grocery store, a dry goods store, a gas station, and the Hays post office. The store is owned by a White man, and he and his family live above the store. Across from the Hays store is the Christian Missionary Alliance Church and the minister's residence. The Hays/Lodge Pole Public School and the Public Health Service clinic are located on the town site, as is the Intertribal Education Center.

A community hall is located off of the Hays road, at the southern end of the community. The hall is used primarily for senior citizen activities, but also functions as a meeting and social hall. St. Paul's Mission is across the road from the community hall, tucked against the foothills of the Little Rocky Mountains.

Economic Organization

There is no distinction between the Gros Ventre economy and the reservation economy. The Gros Ventre share in the same economic system as the Assiniboine. Also the federal government's economic programs
treat both tribes as a single entity, the Fort Belknap Community. The Gros Ventre, or reservation economy is intimately tied into the wider American economy. The unique features of the reservation economy are the trust status of the tribes and their land base, and the dependence of the reservation people upon the federal government and its economic programs.

The reservation's educational system and programs provide one of the largest sources of employment. The Hays/Lodge Pole Public School and St. Paul's Mission Grade School employ a comparatively large number of community people as cooks, bus drivers, maintenance men, and secretaries. There are about ten women who have earned degrees in elementary education, most of them from the Intertribal Education Center, who have been hired to teach in the grade schools in Hays and Lodge Pole. Several women, with elementary education degrees, have also been hired as tutors in the Title I program and as teacher's aides. There is no tax base in the community to support the public school system. It is funded entirely through federal program dollars.

There are a significant number of Hays residents who are employed in some facet of the educational system. A primary benefit of these jobs is the security which is often lacking from most other types of employment. During the winter months, when so many people are unemployed, the jobs in the educational field provide steady and secure employment. More women than men hold these positions, and they provide an important source of income to their households, at a time when men are often laid off from their seasonal jobs.
The Public Health Service employs people on the reservation, and offers comparable security to those positions found in education. The Agency hospital employs nurses, dental assistants, secretaries, clerks, maintenance men and cooks. There is also an administration and staff managing the Fort Belknap Tribal Health Department.

The Fort Belknap Community Council operates numerous programs providing employment on the reservation. The following is a partial list of some of these programs and departments administered by the tribes, and offering jobs to the reservation's enrolled residents: tribal planners, the Housing Authority, the detoxification center, Office of Native American Programs, Tribal Forest Department and saw-mill, Law and Order Office, Education Department, irrigation program, road crews, Manpower and Indian Action program, and recreational programs. The tribe also employs administration, staff, and secretaries in most of their programs.

The Department of Labor's Manpower Program provides employment on the reservation. There is an Indian Action Program offering on-the-job work experience and training in several areas, such as heavy equipment operation. Due to the large number of women entering the work force, a day-care cooperative was established in Hays, and the teachers are paid by the Manpower Program. Most of the Manpower jobs, however, are seasonal and labor-oriented.

Manpower also provides summer work programs for youths. The Youth Conservation Corp and the Summer Program for Economically Disadvantaged Youth employ middle school and high school students during their summer vacations. Adults are hired from the community as "foremen" to
supervise crews that perform a variety of jobs ranging from repairing fences, to painting buildings, to cleaning parks and other public areas on the reservation.

The B.I.A. hires administration and staff to operate its programs on Fort Belknap. They also hire a road crew to maintain and build roads on the reservation. These jobs are highly seasonal, but they do provide jobs to non-enrolled residents, since it is a B.I.A. and not a tribal program.

The Forest Department and the Bureau of Land Management provide jobs as fire fighters during the summer and early fall. Many of the reservations's residents, both men and women, participate in this program. Anyone over eighteen years of age, who passes the physical exam, is eligible to join a firefighting crew. They are on call, and leave for days at a time, to fight forest fires in Montana, Wyoming, the Dakotas, Washington, Oregon, and California. It is a good source of income for the reservation people, although the work is dangerous and of short duration.

Ranching and farming are the economic foundation on Fort Belknap. Agricultural production and its associated activities provide the major economic base of the reservation. About seventy-one percent of the land within the boundaries of the reservation is held in trust status for the Indians. Of this amount, one-fourth is in tribal trust status and about three-fourths is in allotted trust status. Ninety percent of the total Indian land base on the reservation is used for grazing cattle. The remaining 65,535 acres are used for field crops. Of the field crop acreage, approximately one-sixth is watered from an Indian irrigation project (Bureau of Indian Affairs 1978:61).

While ranching and farming make up the basis of the reservation economy, there are only eighty-five operators on Fort Belknap. Most of the operators are ranchers. The operators are also small by Montana
standards. Most of the ranches have between eighty and one hundred cattle, and the largest has three hundred head. No one is fully supported by their ranching operation, primarily because the price of beef is too low. In response to this problem, Fort Belknap's ranchers are beginning to diversify, also raising grain and hay. There are many serious problems faced by the reservations's operators. The dry summers and the extremely cold winters, with frequent blizzards, make ranching a most difficult pursuit, especially with the small ranches operated by the reservation people. The ranchers also face serious obstacles with obtaining financial support. Many of the Ag-lending institutions in the area are reluctant to serve the reservation's ranchers, because they do not like dealing with the trust lands on the reservation. The trust status of these lands makes financial negotiations and lending extremely complex and cumbersome.

While ranching is an insecure and sometimes unprofitable venture for many of Fort Belknap's operators, they pursue this career, because they enjoy the work. Since the earliest days of the B.I.A.'s administration, the superintendents recognized that ranching offered the most satisfying employment for the reservation's people.

Unfortunately, while much of the reservation is open and fenced for grazing, a large portion is being leased to off-reservation ranchers. The lease agreements are arranged by the B.I.A. and the lessors receive their payments from the B.I.A. The average lease charge for grazing is about $7.00 per head per month, but some people receive as much as $9.00, and as little as $4.50, depending upon the quality of their land.
There are frequent complaints that the reservation people are not
benefitting adequately from these lease agreements. The contention is
that the off-reservation cattlemen make more money by leasing grazing
land on the reservation, because they put their own land into a land
bank in the spring and summer, and get paid for the acreage that is not
being grazed. Then in the winter they move their cattle back to their
own land. On the reservation they are overgrazing the Indians' land.
One Indian rancher complained that they were making a "desert" out of
the reservation.

The people who lease their land are under considerable pressure to
make these arrangements. The more cattle on their land, the more in-
come they receive from these lease permits. Most employment is seasonal,
and there are limited opportunities for jobs. Consequently, many turn
to the lease agreements as an extra source of income.

There are few jobs on the reservation that are not operated or
controlled by the Community Council, the B.I.A., or some other federal
agency. Consequently, the landless Indians have a difficult time find-
ing employment on the reservation. They compete with tribal members
for jobs, and the enrolled members, themselves, have difficulty finding
employment.

There is no private industry on the reservation, but there are a
few small businesses. One family started a company selling propane gas
and also a small liquor store. The trading post in Hays employs a few
community people as clerks. There are others who have started small
businesses with loans from the Small Business Administration, and loans
from the tribe's revolving credit fund. One man has made a living at
fur trapping, selling the furs to companies for resale in the open market. He also tans hides, and sells some of these to people in the community who use them to make traditional dancing outfits for pow wows. In addition, there are a few artists and Indian craftsmen, who make a living from these pursuits.

The Community Council started a small shopping center at the Agency on Route 2. The space is leased out to individual owners who operate a grocery store, cafe, bar, toy store, clothing store and an Indian crafts store. The shopping center has generated a few jobs, but most have gone to people from the Agency, not Hays.

There are resources on the reservation that could be exploited for income, and would provide jobs for the reservation's residents. There have been studies of the reservation's coal and uranium deposits and timber acreage, but there is a great deal of debate over the benefits of these projects weighed against the possible adverse effects to the land. In addition, there is some question as to whether the proved reserves, and possible short duration of the projects, warrant their development. No major projects have, as yet, been undertaken. Port Belknap is a member of CERT, the Council of Energy Resource Tribes.

The depressed reservation economy, and scarcity of permanent employment, has forced many people off of the reservation. Many of Port Belknap's people participated in the Relocation Program, and later, the Employment Assistance Program, finding jobs in urban areas. Many returned to the reservation, but others have permanently settled in cities.
Others escape the depressed reservation economy by entering one of the branches of the military. Some enlist to receive training in a particular field, while others make it a permanent career. Many Fort Belknap men, after leaving the military, moved to cities to find employment.

Enrolled members of the Fort Belknap tribes, who are employed on the reservation do not have to pay state income tax. They are also exempted from having to pay the state tax on the purchase of license plates. This is due to the fact that the State of Montana does not have jurisdiction on the reservation. The reservation is under federal trust status. The people do pay federal income tax, although with the predominantly low incomes, their taxes tend to be small. The landless Indians are required to pay state taxes, because they are not enrolled members of the Fort Belknap Community.

Many of the reservation jobs are seasonal, only offering employment in the spring and summer. The winter unemployment rate in Hays is very high; at times as high as eighty to ninety percent. Most people are, therefore, dependent on government programs to receive the necessities of life. The reservation's residents participate in many social programs including the USDA's commodity food program (there are about 170 households on the reservation receiving commodities), Women, Infants and Children (WIC), food stamps, unemployment, and General Assistance. Many depend on hunting, primarily deer and antelope, to put meat on the table. The people are able to hunt on the reservation throughout the year, and also obtain licenses to hunt off of the reservation during Montana's hunting season. Many gather wild berries, and freeze or dry
them for use during the fall and winter. Some also put in gardens, and can and freeze produce for their families.

Unemployment is high on the reservation, but it is particularly severe in Hays, where even fewer jobs are available than at the Agency. The extensive and persistent unemployment situation has created serious problems on the reservation. The inability to support their families, has fostered an erosion of self-esteem, pride, and self-respect for some of the Gros Ventre men. There is considerable depression, family discord, and alcoholism that are directly tied to the precarious economic environment in Hays. Financial problems place a tremendous burden upon the families in the community.

In the winter, many have difficulty paying their utility bills or purchasing propane, and are forced to use woodburning stoves to heat their homes. The companies will not deliver propane unless they are paid in advance. With the persistent unemployment, unpaid bills have become a way of life for too many of Hays' residents. Loan payments, utility payments, and credit accounts are in constant jeopardy, because many people in the community are either periodically or frequently unemployed. As a result of this instability, many people purchase products on credit, further exacerbating their financial problems.

There are comments made by the reservation people that there is a need for some instruction in household budgeting and savings. Unfortunately, the financial situation for most families is not conducive to either budgeting or savings. Most incomes are only temporary and insecure, and it is difficult for families to anticipate a particular income throughout the year. This makes budgeting difficult to
accomplish. Savings require that a family's expenses are less than their income. This is not always the case for many households on the reservation.

The poverty in the community has fostered some unique ways of obtaining money, such as the extensive borrowing system or "hocking system" that developed to make available emergency cash. An individual will offer an item to a second party in exchange for cash. The possessions included rifles, beadwork, and many other items. They agree upon an interest rate, and also a set date upon which the cash must be returned. If the money is not returned by the designated date, with the prearranged interest, the item becomes the property of the lender.

There also exists an extensive network of borrowing in the community. Anything from tools, food, cars, and favors are borrowed often between family, friends and neighbors. People are fairly responsive to a request for help, because they realize that they may need the same help some day.

The reservation economy is depressed, jobs are scarce, and consequently, the reservation standard of living is poor. There are few reservation jobs that are not tied into the federal government, and its labyrinth of agencies and programs. Even the permanent jobs on the reservation offer only qualified security. As federally subsidized jobs, the reservation economy is at the mercy of the Congress and the President. A budget cut in social programs in Washington often results in the loss of employment on the reservation. The result is a persistent and pervasive feeling of helplessness, dependence, and insecurity.
To the reservation people, the government in Washington is perceived as remote and insensitive. These perceptions are unfortunately founded upon years of experience with the federal government, observations of the government's policies and programs, and the government's lack of success in improving the reservation economy. No one federal agency or department controls or administers all of the reservation's programs. The programs and funding have become so compartmentalized, that no one agency can possibly comprehend the relationship the government has to the reservation and its people. Even the Bureau of Indian Affairs lacks a comprehensive understanding of all the federal programs, for some fall outside of their jurisdiction.

There are complaints made by many Whites off of the reservation, that the Indian people are too dependent upon the federal government and its programs. The reservation people also acknowledge this dependence. The arguments regarding the adverse impacts from direct and work relief programs upon the initiative and motivation of the reservation people, has existed from the time of the government's earliest administration of Indian affairs. The fact remains, however, that without the economic programs provided by the federal government, the reservation would have practically no economy.

The federal government's programs and policies have undermined the economic development on the reservation. The reservation people have been subjected to many shifts in the economic programs implemented on the reservation. From the time of the settlement on the reservation, the government has shifted between programs of dry land farming, irrigation agriculture, cattle raising, sheep raising, and sales of leasing
permits. Fort Belknap's people were not exposed to any one practice long enough to allow the development of the skills and experience to master that particular program. The individual parcelling of land during allotment so divided the reservation land base, that a large ranching industry would be impossible. Also, there is not enough land to support all of the reservation's residents by ranching and agricultural ventures.

The argument is often made by government officials, and by some reservation people themselves, that employment could be found off of the reservation. The Gros Ventre do, however, have a tie to their land. It is the most significant factor distinguishing them from all other minorities in America. No other minority negotiated treaties with the government, has trust status with the government, or has a land base as a result of this process. They also recognize that the survival of their tribal heritage and identity can only be accomplished on the reservation. The dispersion of the Gros Ventre to urban areas would likely result in the disappearance of the Gros Ventre Tribe. There are forces of assimilation operating on the reservation, but none that compare to the experience that would result from life in urban areas. The Gros Ventre will remain on the reservation, for their love of the land, and the ties to their culture and heritage will always attract some people to remain on Fort Belknap. Their economic independence and security, however, will never be founded upon federal programs. They must become independent of the federal government, if economic self-sufficiency is to be achieved. They will require government assistance, but they must take control of their own lives in order
to achieve a standard of living comparable to the dominant American society. Some large tribal enterprise, for instance in ranching and farming, tourism, or the timber industry, or the attraction of an outside industry to the reservation, each of which could provide permanent, and year-round jobs to most of the reservation's residents, would be a positive step in this direction.

**Political Organization**

The primary political institutions on the Fort Belknap Reservation are the Fort Belknap Community Council and the Assiniboine and Gros Ventre Treaty Committees. There is no formal political structure in each of the reservation communities. Each community has at least one representative on the council, but there is no recognized community leader in Hays, Lodge Pole, or the Agency. There are individuals who are informally recognized due to their personal attributes. These people tend to serve on education and political committees, and run for office in various organizations, but they do not represent the community in any formal manner.

The Fort Belknap Community Council was established by the Indian Reorganization Act, which was accepted by the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine in the 1930s. The Fort Belknap Community Council has a constitution and by-laws which were also formulated and approved with the Indian Reorganization Act. The Community Council is composed of twelve elected members, six of whom are Gros Ventre and six Assiniboine. There are three districts on the reservation, Hays, Lodge Pole, and the Agency, and each district has representatives on the council. The councilmen, however, are elected at large. Therefore, the councilmen
representing a particular district are elected by the entire reservation.

Representation on the council is determined by an enumeration conducted by the council in the three reservation districts. The population census is taken of all eligible Assiniboine and Gros Ventre voters in each district. Eligibility is determined by membership in the Fort Belknap Community. An individual must be at least one-quarter degree Assiniboine blood, one-quarter Gros Ventre blood, or a mixture of Gros Ventre and Assiniboine blood which is greater than one-quarter in total. To be eligible to vote, an individual must also be twenty-one years of age or older. There are 913 eligible voters in all three districts on the reservation.

There are three officers on the council, the chairman, vice-chairman, and secretary-treasurer. The officers are elected by the councilmen after the general election. There are only two salaried positions on the council, the chairman and the secretary-treasurer. The remaining councilmen are paid a per diem for their attendance at meetings.

The council holds periodic meetings to conduct business. There are complaints made by some of the councilmen, as well as reservation residents, who believe that the council should meet on a more frequent schedule, due to the importance and complexity of tribal business. The council also conducts quarterly meetings which are open to the public. These meetings are held on a rotating basis in each of the reservation's districts to encourage the community's attendance. Attendance at these meetings, however, has been poor, and there has been little community
interest. Councilmen have expressed some frustration over the situation. They field numerous complaints from the reservation community on a variety of issues, and they are disappointed that people do not come to the meetings to share their concerns and opinions. Councilmen are also frustrated by the lack of interest in tribal business, on the part of the community, since their work has such a direct and pervasive impact on the lives of all the reservation's residents.

The Fort Belknap Community Council assumes tremendous responsibilities on the reservation. They operate and control programs and funds affecting almost every aspect of reservation life, including education, housing, employment, health services and facilities, social services, youth programs, recreation, law and order, forestry, land use and development, and numerous programs and projects developing and maintaining the physical structures on the reservation. The Fort Belknap Community Council has an income of about $100,000 but it has an operating budget of about 2.5 million dollars. The largest single source of funds is the Manpower Program of the Department of Labor which allocates about $500,000 annually to Fort Belknap.

In addition to the governmental functions of the Fort Belknap Community Council, the council is charged with, under the provisions of the Indian Reorganization Act, economic development on Fort Belknap. The council has a revolving credit fund, operates a land acquisition program, and makes numerous investments and plans for development.

The community generally does not display a great deal of confidence and trust in the council. They complain that the councilmen are too often on the council to help themselves. It is believed that their
positions on the council give them advantages in obtaining land, cattle, or other possessions and benefits. There is also a concern expressed that councilmen give too much preference to their own families, providing them jobs over others on the reservation. Some contend that the council is too large and this tends to hinder progress on tribal business, because council members spend too much time arguing among themselves. The people in Hays also complain that the council ignores the needs of the community, and gives preferential treatment to the River District. When a recreation complex was built at the Agency, the Hays people complained bitterly that a similar facility should be built in Hays. The councilmen argued that there was not enough tribal land in Hays on which to build a facility.

Based upon observations and interviews with the B.I.A., and other government agencies, the complaints against the council appear to be exaggerated. The council is effective in many ways, and while mistakes have been made, most councilmen work hard to improve conditions on the reservation. Past errors and mismanagement by councilmen has formed the present conception of the council by Port Belknap's residents. The Port Belknap people do not trust the council, they allege that the council members give preferential treatment to their own families, and they believe that the council ineffectively manages the reservation.

The council recognizes the importance of changing these perceptions to facilitate the operation of an effective and progressive government. The council has instituted various policies and practices in response to the criticisms, and to improve their image. The quarterly council meetings have been designed to open communications
with the public, and to make the council more accessible and open to the community. The council has worked to become more accountable to its constituents by reporting on tribal business at the quarterly council meetings. Also, on important issues, the council takes a roll-call vote, and identifies the votes of the councilmen on the minutes. The council is making a concerted effort to improve its relationship with the community.

The Gros Ventre Treaty Committee is the only political body exclusively associated with the Gros Ventre Tribe. The treaty committee was established to handle the tribal claims filed with the Indian Claims Commission. There are six elected members on the treaty committee. They hold lifetime terms, although there are provisions for removal. The Assiniboine had their own treaties with the government, and have their own treaty committee.

Over the course of the fieldwork research, there were several treaty committee meetings. Through observations of the meetings and interviews with treaty committee members and other Gros Ventre people the treaty claims process, the significant issues, and the major problems became evident. The Gros Ventre won their settlement claim with the government, and were awarded a sum of money to compensate them for insufficient payments made by the government for the lands ceded in their various treaties. The tribe then decided to take the money as a per capita payment. Per capita payments were made to eligible tribal members. To qualify for the per capita payment, an individual had to be an enrolled member of the Gros Ventre Tribe; one-quarter degree Gros Ventre blood. In 1974 a per capita payment was made of about $900 to
each eligible Gros Ventre. In the Distribution Agreement, the government approved a per capita payment of eighty percent of the total claims with the stipulation that the remaining twenty percent would be programmed for community development projects.

The treaty committee has attempted to invest this money in community projects. Their failure to get a project approved demonstrates some of the factional disputes that have surfaced during the treaty settlement. The treaty committee initiated a program to invest the money in an office building that would have leased space to the B.I.A. Another planned investment was the purchase of land for the Gros Ventre Tribe. Both projects were eventually rejected, because the community council did not want the Gros Ventre Tribe to make this type of investment on the reservation, exclusive of the Assiniboine. The committee decided that there was no community project that would derive benefits exclusively for the Gros Ventre. Pressure began to be exerted by the Gros Ventre people to have this money distributed as a per capita payment, and the treaty committee frustrated in its attempts to develop a community project, agreed. The treaty process has accentuated the differences between the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine on Fort Belknap.

The treaty claims have also created serious factional disputes between the reservation Gros Ventre and the off-reservation, urban Gros Ventre. Many of the urban Gros Ventre are well organized, and have used their organizations to exert an influence on the use of the treaty funds. The urban Gros Ventre do not want the treaty money used for a community project because they do not believe that it is fair for the
money to be used for a program for which they cannot share in the
benefits. This feeling surfaced when the Gros Ventre Treaty Committee
granted matching funds to build a gymnasium at St. Paul's Mission. A
private foundation donated the rest of the money. The urban Gros Ventre
complained bitterly about this use of the money. They argued that they
were not properly consulted in this matter, and that they would not
share in the benefits accruing from this project. The reservation Gros
Ventre do make extensive use of the gym in educational activities,
sports, social activities, pow wows, wakes, feeds and giveaways, and
other purposes.

The urban Gros Ventre have sent representatives to the treaty
committee meetings, and have pressured for a per capita payment of the
remaining funds. There are about five hundred Gros Ventre living in
Seattle, Spokane, and Portland. The Seattle Gros Ventre are incorpor­
ated, and have formed the Port Belknap Association of Seattle. They
came to a meeting to present a petition with 350 signatures asking for
a per capita payment. The Gros Ventre living in Havre and Billings
also sent petitions to the committee asking for the per capita payment.

Another dispute has arisen, during the treaty claims process,
involving the issue of degree blood. A decision was made early in the
process to limit the eligibility for receipt of settlement benefits to
those Gros Ventre with at least one-quarter degree blood. During the
per capita payment in the early 1970s, about 175 Gros Ventre, who were
at least one-eighth degree blood, filed suit in federal court against
the treaty committee, arguing that they should be eligible to receive
the per capita payment. The one-eighths won their case in Billings,
but the treaty committee has appealed, and a final decision is pending.

The factional disputes between reservation Gros Ventre and urban Gros Ventre, and between the one-eighth Gros Ventre and one-quarter Gros Ventre, has created a serious devisiveness among the tribe. One reservation Gros Ventre man described his bitterness and frustration by complaining about having to spend some of the treaty money to hire lawyers to fight amongst themselves. The schism is between factions, and the positions they represent, and not between individuals. There is not a single reservation Gros Ventre who does not have a close relative living off of the reservation. Also, there are households on the reservation that have one-quarter Gros Ventre living under the same roof with one-eighth Gros Ventre. In many instances, there are one-quarter Gros Ventre parents with one-eighth Gros Ventre children. The problem surfacing in response to the treaty claims, are limited to arguments over these issues, and do not enter into relationships, to any great extent, in day-to-day Gros Ventre life.

Most meetings on the reservation are conducted using Roberts Rules of Order. This includes council meetings, treaty committee meetings, as well as school board meetings, P.T.A. meetings, and most others. The reservation political system is fashioned after that found in the dominant American society. Political organizations, positions, elections, and meetings are characteristically American in nature. There is one feature that characterized all political meetings held on the reservation. Everyone in attendance has an opportunity, and is encouraged, to express their opinions on a matter. Consequently, all meetings tend to be very long.
Factionalism is inherent in the political structure of Fort Belknap. Every political institution on the reservation, save the treaty committees, is composed of both the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine people. While the two tribes share a long history of political alliance, they remain two completely distinct tribes. This continues to be the case, even after extensive intermarriage between the tribes. The two tribes are very competitive, and they jealously guard against any preferential treatment displayed to one tribe over the other. For example, there has been some debate in the community over establishing a three-person council to make the conduct of tribal business more effective and efficient. Most object to this proposal, because it would mean that one tribe would have one more councilman than the other tribe. This constant surveillance for impartiality occurs in every program and organization involving both tribes on Fort Belknap.

The Assiniboine and Gros Ventre have worked out an equitable process for handling their political affairs on Fort Belknap. They tenaciously guard their self-interests, and are very competitive, but the animosity that was once more explicit between the tribes, has diminished considerably. The Assiniboine and Gros Ventre have developed a cooperative relationship to achieve their common goals of economic progress, self-sufficiency, self-government, and the improved welfare and standard of living of all of Fort Belknap's people.

**Education System**

There is no other aspect of reservation life that receives more attention than the educational system. Most everyone recognizes the importance of education for children and adults, and a great deal of
effort is expended in maintaining and improving the reservation's system. Many reservation people are employed in the educational field, and therefore, there are many who deal with the system from both the perspective of staff and teachers, and of parents of children in the schools. In addition, there are more community organizations associated with education than any other area of reservation life.

Formal education begins with preschool in the Headstart Program. Each community has its own Headstart class for children who are four and five years old. The reservation program is a part of the National Headstart Program. The director and all of the instructors are Fort Belknap residents.

There are two major public school districts serving the reservation. The Harlem School District serves the northern half of the reservation, while the students in the southern half attend the Hays/Lodge Pole School System. The children in Hays and Lodge Pole have a choice of attending either the Hays and Lodge Pole grade schools, each community has its own school, or the St. Paul's Mission Grade School.

The decision to attend the public school or mission school is made by parents, but with the children having a substantial voice in the matter. The selection is based on such factors as the qualities and reputation of a particular teacher, available programs, and facilities, and for the children, where close friends will be going to school. Parents who send their children to the mission school often do so for the religious education.

Most of the students at the mission grade school are from Hays. Only a few students from Lodge Pole come to the mission school. The
enrollment ranges anywhere from fifty to seventy students. The mission and public school operate a cooperative bus system, and all but a few children take the bus to school. Both the mission and public school offer similar academic curricula, except that the mission school provides religious instruction to each of its classes as one of the subjects presented during the school day. The teachers at the mission are Franciscan and Dominican Sisters and lay volunteers, usually from the Jesuit Volunteer Corp. Most of the Franciscan Sisters have been at the school since the 1930s and 1940s. In most cases, they were the teachers for the parents of the present-day school children. It is this longevity, and the concern the Sisters have for education in the community, that has made the mission school so significant in the community.

The mission grade school has a school board composed of three community representatives, the mission priest, and the school principal. Most decisions and the primary operation of the school are handled by the principal. The mission operated a high school until the early 1970s. It was the only high school in Hays. A fire destroyed the school building, however, and the public school took over the high school system. When a new mission school building was constructed, the mission opened with only a grade school.

The Hays/Lodge Pole public school system offers education from kindergarten through high school. Hays and Lodge Pole each have their own grade school, while the high school in Hays serves both communities. Some of the grade school teachers in Hays and Lodge Pole are graduates of the Intertribal Education Center, and are from the community. Most
of the teachers in the public school are White. They live in housing on the school grounds provided by the school system.

The public school has an all-Indian school board elected by the community. There are also various committees, composed of community people, charged with overseeing the special Indian education programs provided to the school. There are two major sources of Indian program funding. The Title IV Indian Education Act is administered on the federal level, and Johnson O'Malley funds are administered on the state level. The Title IV money is designed to meet the special educational needs of Indian children, such as for cultural enrichment, medical and dental care, and food and clothing where necessary. The parent committee for Title IV grants has direct involvement in developing projects in the schools, and monitors the projects as they are carried out.

The Fort Belknap Indians enjoy few positive choices in their lives. In the area of education, they do have numerous alternatives and opportunities available to them. Parents can send their children to the mission school or the public school, and some send their high school aged children to boarding schools. There are several government boarding schools for Indian children. The Flandreau Indian School, in South Dakota, has the highest Fort Belknap enrollment. During the 1976-1977 school year, there were about twenty-five students from the reservation attending Flandreau.

The public school system is plagued with serious problems. Parents complain that there is little communication between the school and the community, and that the administration is insensitive to the needs of the children. There is a high rate of drop-outs, and discipline
problems are serious and disruptive. One of the more significant problems in the public school is the high turnover rate of teachers. Most of the teachers spend one or two years in the school and then leave. The mission does not have as serious discipline problems, due in large part to the longevity of the Sisters who teach in the mission school. Another concern voiced by parents in the community is that the public school system is not providing an adequate college preparatory program for the students. Some parents have complained that the school places too much emphasis on the vocational needs of the students, and does not provide sufficient curriculum to prepare the children for a successful career in college.

In response to these problems, and to improve the relationship between the community and school, a Parent-Teacher Association was established in Hays and Lodge Pole. The Association was initiated primarily by those parents who are also teachers in the school system. Meetings are held to discuss the problems in the school, and the P.T.A. often offers recommendations or solutions to the school administrators. The P.T.A. also presents speakers who explain various educational programs to the parents, such as Title IV and Johnson O'Malley. The P.T.A. also provides a forum for debate and discussion with those people running for school board positions before the elections.

For those people who do not finish high school, the Tribal Education Department offers a high school equivalency exam program. The department has hired several teachers who provide preparatory instruction to help people pass the exam. Some of the teachers are graduates of the Intertribal Education Center. People of all ages are
encouraged to take the exam, and there are many middle-aged and elderly who take and pass the high school equivalency exam.

Many of Fort Belknap's students graduate from high school and go on to college or vocational school. During the 1976-1977 school year there were about 160 students enrolled in college. A small college was established in Hays by people in the community. The college, the Intertribal Education Center, is associated with the College of Great Falls. It offers a degree in elementary education, and the degree is conferred by the College of Great Falls. The school is operated by a manager and School Community Council, all members of the reservation community, and is located in two trailer homes adjacent to the public school in Hays.

The school receives its funding from the Urban/Rural Program and the section of the Title IV Indian Education Act for adult education. The federal Urban/Rural Program was established to provide opportunities for college education to adults living in isolated rural areas without having to leave their families and communities. The Hays/Lodge Pole Public School is the formal recipient of the grant money, although the public school has only minimal involvement with the college program. There were more than thirty students enrolled in the college during the 1976-1977 academic year.

One of the most significant functions and benefits of the college program is the model provided to the reservation children by the students and graduates of the college. The reservation children observe their parents, relatives, and neighbors working toward an advanced degree, graduating from college, and then successfully finding
employment in a field that pays comparatively well, and offers some financial security. These positive models have a great influence on the children, who often question the value of education, living in an environment with endemic unemployment and economic depression.

Most of the college students leave the reservation to attend an off-reservation university program. There are various sources of educational financial assistance through the B.I.A. and other federal programs. The B.I.A. has an education specialist who advises students in their academic pursuits, and provides assistance in obtaining financial aid. Fort Belknap’s students are making tremendous progress in education, with a significant number graduating from college. Some are also obtaining advanced graduate degrees. There have been five Fort Belknap students who have received degrees in law, and one student has recently received her Ph.D. in education from Harvard.

In addition to college education, there are numerous vocational training programs for students. Some attend the Haskell Junior College in Kansas, a government operated Indian School. There are also vocational training programs both in and outside of the state offering instruction and experience in many areas, including health care services, business, welding, heavy equipment operation, mechanics, secretarial training, and many others. In addition, there are vocational training programs offered on the reservation through the Manpower Program.

The Fort Belknap people place a tremendous emphasis upon the value of education. There are numerous occasions on which students are formally recognized for their academic achievements. Education is
perceived as the solution to both individual and reservation-wide economic problems.

**Kinship, Marriage and the Family**

There are only remnants of the traditional kinship system existent in contemporary Gros Ventre culture.

The strongest vestige of traditional kinship behavior occurs in the mother-in-law and son-in-law avoidance pattern. Traditionally a mother-in-law and son-in-law would not speak to each other, and would avoid, where possible, being in the same room together. If they had to refer to each other in a conversation, they would never use each other's names. There are only a few older women who continue to practice this avoidance behavior, although adherence to strict avoidance has diminished considerably, even in these cases. For example, a mother-in-law will ride in the same car with a son-in-law, or will occasionally sit at the same table. They do, however, avoid eye contact, and do not engage in conversation. If something needs to be said, it is kept short and to the point, or a third party is sometimes used to convey a message. Most mothers-in-law and sons-in-law do not practice this pattern. When these few older women are gone, the practice will entirely disappear.

There were, at times, two kinship systems operating simultaneously, but the distinction between the two systems was always made. This was often the case when people were making reference to the reckoning of kinship. In reference to a relative, or in response to an inquiry concerning a particular relation, many middle-aged and older people would describe the relationship in American terms, and then would provide the
relationship according to the traditional pattern. For example, a woman in describing her relationship to another woman, referred to her as a great aunt, but then went on to explain, "in Indian way, she's my grandmother." The traditional pattern was almost always referred to as the "Indian way." There were a few middle-aged and older people who described particular relatives and addressed them using the traditional Gros Ventre reference, but using the English translation. The kinship behavior in these instances also reflected the traditional pattern. For the most part, however, people used the American kinship terminology and the corresponding behavioral pattern. The young people, except on rare occasions, never made reference to the traditional pattern. The American kinship pattern and the Gros Ventre pattern, or "Indian way," were kept distinct, with the American pattern being used most often.

With few exceptions, the contemporary system is principally the American kinship system. Relationships and behavior are characteristically those of the dominant American society. This shift is reflected in the relationship between husbands and wives, and the changing role of Gros Ventre women, as described in earlier sections of this paper. Their role in the family has begun to move in the direction of equality with men. The contemporary role of women, and relationship between men and women, and husbands and wives, represents a dramatic change from the traditional Gros Ventre pattern. While men are most often head of the household in the Gros Ventre family, the women have achieved a much greater degree of authority and independence in the family and household.

The contemporary marriage pattern bears almost no resemblance to the traditional Gros Ventre system. Traditionally, a couple could not marry
if they could trace a relationship, regardless of how distant. As one man explained, "you couldn't marry a relative, even if they were a fourth or fifth cousin. This was very strict. In the old times, a person wouldn't even marry someone belonging to the same clan." While older and middle-aged Gros Ventre retain this attitude, about not marrying a relative, the young people do not strictly adhere to this practice. There are cases where distant cousins have married, and while they are recognized as departing from the accepted custom, the couples are not ridiculed. These marriages are occurring with increasing frequency.

There are no preferred marriage partners. People independently decide on their future spouse based upon the same factors used in American society, and families play about the same role in this process. Parents and grandparents may approve or disapprove of their child's particular choice for a mate, but the individual makes their own selection of a spouse.

The marriage ceremony is almost identical to that of the typical American pattern. Wedding showers are held for the bride by her family and friends. The bride and groom select a wedding party, including a best man and a maid of honor. The ceremony is often held in the Catholic Church, and includes most of the standard features of an American wedding service, including a ring ceremony. A reception follows in the mission gym or Hays community hall, and often includes a buffet, a wedding cake, music, photographer, and gifts. There is nothing particularly Indian about the contemporary Gros Ventre wedding ceremony.

Almost all of the middle-aged and older Gros Ventre were married in the Catholic Church. Marriages in the Church are beginning to taper off,
however, due primarily to two factors. The Diocese of Great Falls established a four month waiting period before a couple can be married in the Church. During this period, the couple attends counselling sessions with the priest in an attempt to sensitize the couple to the responsibilities of this commitment, and to discourage any impulsive decisions to marry. The Church program is designed to lessen the likelihood of divorce. There were several cases in which couples did not want to wait the four months to marry, and either began living together, or were married by the Justice of the Peace. In one instance, the couple was married by the tribal judge.

The other major factor responsible for declining Church marriages for young people, is the Church policy relating to divorce, combined with the prevalence of divorce and separation on the reservation. In order to avoid divorce, and the consequences resulting from the Church's rejection of divorce, an increasing number of young couples are living together, rather than marry. They want to be more certain that the relationship will succeed before making the formal commitment in the Church. In some instances, a couple will have a civil marriage, and then will have the marriage blessed in the Church after they are more certain that the relationship is the right one for them. This arrangement seems to be accepted in the community, and there is no stigma attached to those couples who engage in this practice. Often times there are children involved, and likewise, there is no stigma attached to the children.

Premarital sex is fairly common, as are teenage pregnancies. Parents do not endorse this behavior. On the other hand, the parents
willingly accept their grandchildren. The young mother and newborn child often live in their parent's household. The incidence of premarital sex is similar to the trend occurring in American society, and only seems particularly accentuated by the fact that this is a predominantly Catholic community. Due to the Church doctrine regarding birth control and premarital sex, parents are often faced with a serious dilemma. This dilemma was made explicit during a conversation with a middle-aged woman regarding these issues. She was worried about her daughter, and expressed a concern that she not become pregnant before she was ready for the responsibilities of marriage and children. The woman recognized the prevalence of premarital sex among the young people in the community, and the pregnancies that sometimes resulted. She also realized that her daughter could be influenced by the behavior of her peers, and that, if she was involved in premarital sex, she hoped her daughter would use birth control. Her dilemma was that she wanted to talk to her daughter about birth control, but she did not want to appear to condone behavior of which she did not approve. Birth control, while also not approved by the Church, is often viewed as the lesser of the two evils. Parents in the community often face the same conflicting issues described by this woman.

The increasing frequency of separation and divorce on the reservation, reflects the same trend occurring in American society. Contrary to the formal doctrine of the Church, most everyone considers divorce an acceptable alternative. The most frequently mentioned justifications for a divorce were repeated cases of adultery, neglect, wife beating, alcoholism, child abuse, and incompatibility. A few
people explained that divorce is sometimes necessary for the benefit of the children. If the parents's relationship is not worked out and there is constant fighting, the children suffer with the emotional distress of their parents. These factors were expressed by women, who are most often the initiators of a separation. Most women felt that people should not get married until they are absolutely certain about their future mate, but that if it does not work out, people should be able to start a new life.

After divorce, the children almost always remain with the mother. Sometimes either the maternal or paternal grandparents will take the children. This may be temporary, while the couple works out their personal problems, or it can be a permanent arrangement. Grandparents willingly accept these children. Another common alternative is for the divorced woman to move into her parent's household with the children. Occasionally, after a divorce, a woman, living off of the reservation, will return to Fort Belknap with her children, and live with her parents or in a separate household, if a home is available.

Few people remain single. Remarriages are common for people who are divorced and also for widows and widowers. Children from previous marriages are most often willingly accepted by the new spouse, and are sometimes legally adopted. One of the results of the fairly high incidence of divorce and remarriage, is that, in a small community where many people are related, relations are even further extended.

There are few people who give much consideration to tribal affiliation in deciding upon the selection of a spouse. There is a very high incidence of intermarriage between Gros Ventre men and women and
members of other tribes. Most of the intermarriages are between Gros Ventre and Assiniboine and French-Chippewa-Cree. There does not appear to be any difference between the incidence of intermarriage for men and women. Intermarriage has become so prevalent, in fact, that there are more Gros Ventre men and women married to Whites and non-enrolled Gros Ventre and non-Gros Ventre Indians, than there are marriages between two predominantly Gros Ventre.

Some of the previously discussed trends and practices in the Gros Ventre family and marriage are reflected in the demographic data collected from observations and from intensive interviews conducted in Hays during the spring of 1978. Hays is a tremendously fluid community, with its number and composition changing often. Consequently, the demographic analysis more accurately indicates general trends than specific details. The demographic analysis describes the entire Hays community, and does not distinguish between tribal affiliation.

There are twenty-two single-parent households in Hays, or 16.4 percent of the total 135 Hays households. Of the single heads of household, thirteen are the result of a divorce, while nine are widows. Most of the heads of households are mothers; there being only two fathers, one aunt, and one grandmother. The trend seems to be for middle-aged and older single parents to remain in their own household with their children, after a divorce or the death of a spouse. The median age of these single parents or guardians is 44.7 years, and only four of the twenty-two are under thirty years of age. Younger single parents tend to remain in the households of their parents after their child is born, or move in with their parents after a divorce or death of a spouse.
Fifteen of the 135 Hays households are extended families with single mothers and their children. Two of these fifteen households contain two single mothers. All but one of the single mothers is a daughter of the head of the household. As was previously mentioned, these single mothers living with their parents are typically very young. Only one of the women is thirty years of age; the rest are younger. Eight of the seventeen women are under twenty years of age. The median age of the seventeen single mothers, living in an extended family household is 21.3 years old.

The primary social and economic unit among the Gros Ventre is the nuclear family. There is, however, considerable variation practiced upon this basic theme. Of the 135 households in Hays, forty of them, or thirty percent, are extended family households. The causal factors accounting for extended families are in part cultural, but also social and economic in nature. There are extended families created by the limited available housing on the reservation. Most newly wed couples would prefer to live in their own households, but this is not always possible. There is a waiting list for obtaining a home, and much depends upon when and how many new homes are built, and older homes vacated. There are also single parent families who would live in their own household if housing were available. This latter group is also pressured to live in an extended family by the economic burden upon single parents. For those who do not work, they rely upon their parent's income for their own and their children's support. When they do have jobs, their parents help them to care for their children.

In all cases, the extended family members contribute to the support
of the household. If a member is employed, they contribute income, and when unemployed, they contribute through unemployment or general assistance checks. There are also contributions of food made through the USDA's commodity food distribution program or food stamps.

Extended families are, in some cases, an accommodation to unwed mothers. Extended families are also formed to help a relative who would like to live closer to their place of employment or to allow a child to attend a school outside of their parents' school district.

There are a significant number of cases in which children are being raised by persons other than their parents. There are seventeen children being raised by grandparents, fourteen being raised by aunts and uncles, and seven raised by brothers and sisters. The role of grandparents in child-rearing has a basis in the traditional Gros Ventre culture. It was a common practice for grandparents to raise a few of their grandchildren, and a large number of middle-aged and older people on the reservation were raised by their grandparents. Those people caring for their grandchildren, nieces and nephews, or brothers and sisters, often do so after the children's parents are separated or divorced. In some cases, one or both of the parents will remarry, but the children remain in the care of their grandparents or other relatives. Many grandparents look forward to raising grandchildren. As one seventy year old woman stated, "I raised most of my grandchildren. It's hard when you get old. If you don't have kids to raise, there's not so much to do."

There are 135 households in Hays. The median size of these households is 4.7 persons. Hays is also a very young population. The largest segment of the population is under twenty years of age. Of the
total Hays population of 634 people, 350, or fifty-five percent, are under twenty years. In this age range, 190 are males (fifty-nine percent of the male population) and 160 are females (fifty-one percent of the female population). The largest single segment of the population is found in the age interval of 15-19 years of age. There are 115 people or 18.1 percent of the population represented in this age range. It is the largest segment of the population for both males and females. There are sixty-four males, or twenty percent of the total male population, and fifty-one females, or sixteen percent of the female population represented in this age interval.

The Hays population drops off considerably among the middle-aged segment of the population. There are only five males between the ages of thirty to thirty-four years. This decline reflects the unemployment problem in the community. The lack of jobs on the reservation, and particularly in Hays, has forced many of the working age males off of the reservation. There is a similar decline in the middle-age female population, but it is not as dramatic as that found among the males. There is less pressure for women to leave the reservation, in part due to the greater opportunity for jobs for females year-round, such as in education and nursing, and also due to the fact that women are able to function within the roles as wives and mothers on the reservation. There are more satisfying roles on the reservation for middle-aged women than there are for men.

The exodus from the Fort Belknap Reservation can also be seen in the number of children from each household who have left the reservation. From the 135 households in Hays, there are 198 children who have
emigrated from the reservation. There are fifty-six households with children living off of the reservation, or forty-one percent of the total number of households in Hays. The number of children leaving the reservation will continue to increase. In most of the households in which there are no children living off of the reservation, the parents are under forty years of age. This indicates that the children are not old enough to consider leaving Hays. Of the fifty-six households with children living off of the reservation, fifty of those households, or eighty-nine percent, have parents who are older than forty years of age, and therefore, have children who are independent, and old enough to leave Hays on their own.

The family is of primary significance in the social structure of the Gros Ventre community. Families are generally very close, and in a community where economic hardships are commonplace, it is the family that provides mutual support to its members. The increasing number of people leaving Fort Belknap is having an effect upon the strength of the family. It is not unlike the process taking place in the American society. Off-reservation relatives keep contact with their families on Fort Belknap, but these relationships do become more distant. Grandchildren raised off of the reservation have only minimal contact with their grandparents.

Religion and Rites of Passage

The contemporary Gros Ventre have accepted Christianity as their primary religion. Even for those individuals who participate in Indian religious ceremonies, they retain a Christian identity, and some association with the Church. For example, almost everyone in the community has their funeral in the Church. The Gros Ventre are almost one hundred
percent Roman Catholic. There are some Gros Ventre who belong to the Christian Missionary Alliance, a Protestant denomination with a Church in Hays, but they represent a very small minority.

Many of the Gros Ventre do not attend the weekly mass, but attendance at the mission Church is very high for Midnight Mass and for the holy days. The Gros Ventre are, for the most part, a very conservative Catholic community. Many of the people prefer the ceremony and practices of the Church that preceded Vatican II. There is a general resistance to any changes that are initiated in the Church. Two significant changes were instituted during the fieldwork period, the taking of communion in the hand, and the alternative of saying confession in front of the priest, rather than in the confessional. Few people adopted either of the alternatives, preferring to continue the traditional practices.

Often times people in the community reminisced about the Latin Mass, and many expressed the desire for the priest to return to saying the Mass in Latin. These comments are made exclusively by middle-aged and elderly Gros Ventre, who have the strongest attachment to the mission Church. Most Gros Ventre teenagers and young adults do not actively participate in the Church.

The mission organized a Christian Mother's Society, and it has been an active group in Hays over the past several decades. The Christian Mothers were both a service organization for the mission and Church, and are also involved in social and spiritual activities in the community. Today the membership has declined with few young women joining or participating in the organization.
During the mid-1970s, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal was introduced on the Fort Belknap Reservation. The Charismatic movement began at the mission with the introduction of weekly prayer meetings. The prayer meetings were attended by some of the mission personnel, and a core group of about ten to twenty community residents. Throughout the mid-1970s, the movement spread in the community and reservation. Eventually, there were a significant number of reservation people involved in the Charismatic movement. The movement evolved from the weekly prayer meetings at the mission, to the emergence of spiritual leaders in the community who held meetings in their homes independent of the mission. The meetings focused upon prayer, particularly healing prayer, and bible study.

During 1976 the mission and the community's participants in the movement began to organize a Catholic Indian Congress or Indian Charismatic Prayer Conference to be held in Hays in June, 1977. The major planning and organization for the conference was assumed by those people on Fort Belknap involved in the Charismatic movement and the Catholic Mission in Hays. The planning and fund raising activities for the conference involved tremendous amounts of time and effort in the community.

After the Charismatic conference, interest and participation in the Charismatic Renewal increased on the reservation. The majority of reservation residents, however, did not participate in the Charismatic Renewal. As was mentioned earlier, the Hays community is a conservative Catholic community. Many people did not like the changes in the Church that were precipitated by the Charismatic Renewal, and most did
not attend the prayer meetings. Most of the Hays residents attended the conference due more to the excitement and interest in the event than to an involvement in the Charismatic Renewal.

The Gros Ventre are strongly attached to St. Paul's Mission Church. For years, the people in the community found comfort in the ritual of the Church. The ritual played a significant role in the early Gros Ventre's acceptance of Catholicism. There was a mystique surrounding the Latin Mass, and the ritual and symbolism in the Church. The changes that have occurred since Vatican II may be a contributing factor to the decreasing involvement of the people in the Church in recent times. People have been moving away from the Church for other reasons, as well, and particularly the young people of Hays. The Church has had an increasingly more difficult time dealing with the complex problems which exist in Hays. There are people who have expressed some frustration at the inability of the Church to provide concrete solutions to marital and family problems, alcoholism, and the psychological and emotional problems affecting some people experiencing long-term unemployment.

There are also those in the community, and particularly the teenagers and young adults, who find the Church's doctrine regarding birth control and divorce to be unrealistic and out of touch with the real needs of the community, and with the serious social problems prevalent in the community. These are problems the Church faces in communities across the country and around the world, and are not unique to the mission in Hays.

In spite of the problems, the Church remains of central importance to the lives of the Gros Ventre people. The mission provides essential
services to the community. While there are problems between the community and Church, the majority of Gros Ventre identify as Catholic, and have their spiritual needs met by the Church.

The rites of passage among the contemporary Gros Ventre are intimately tied to the Roman Catholic Mission and Church. Reservation children are born either at the Public Health Service Hospital at the Agency, or at the hospital in Havre. Either before or just after the birth, the mother's family and friends usually have a baby shower giving the mother gifts of materials and clothing she will need for the baby upon its arrival.

Usually a few weeks after the baby's birth, the parents have the baby baptized in the Church. The parents select Godparents for the baby. Godparents are typically either relatives or close friends of the parents. The Godparents are responsible for the spiritual and religious development of the child. The practice is, however, principally a formality. It is considered an honor to be selected as Godparents, but they do not actively participate in the role prescribed by this position.

First communion and confirmation are almost exclusively limited to the children who attend the St. Paul's Mission Grade School. The children are prepared for the first communion with instruction they receive in the first and second grades at the mission. The children are prepared for confirmation in the seventh and eighth grades at the mission school. Marriages and weddings were described in the previous section.

Upon a person's death, funeral arrangements are made by the deceased's close relatives with the Church and with a funeral home.
Many people who live off of the reservation are brought back to Hays for their funeral, and to be buried on the reservation. If there are close relatives living off of the reservation, and there almost always are, they are notified and arrangements are made for them to return to Fort Belknap for the funeral.

A wake precedes the funeral service. Most wakes last for three days and nights, but the length usually varies depending upon the time it takes for close relatives to get back to the reservation for the funeral. If a close relative must travel a long distance to Fort Belknap, and money and travel arrangements have to be made, the wake may last longer than three days.

The wake is held either in the mission gym or in the home of one of the deceased's close relatives. It is the nuclear family that assumes primary responsibility for conducting the wake and other funeral arrangements. Other relatives, however, do assume a vital role in the preparations and ceremony.

The body of the deceased is brought to the wake by the funeral home. The casket is often covered with a star quilt or blanket, and is surrounded by flowers sent by family and friends. Close family remain at the wake the entire time, taking breaks only to catch some sleep or to spend some time with their own families at home.

Most guests begin to arrive in the evenings. Friends and other family members bring food for the feed, or sometimes give money or blankets to the family that will be used for a giveaway at a later time.

Upon entering the home or gym, the guests shake hands with the relatives in mourning, and give their condolences. They sit and visit
with the family and other guests. All guests who come to the wake are fed by the mourning family and their friends.

The arrival of guests and visiting continues throughout the evening, and some people stay with the family through the night. At some time during each evening of the wake, the priest comes from the mission to say the rosary with the family and attending guests.

While the wake is a period of great sorrow for the family, it is also a happy occasion. More than any other event, the wake and funeral bring entire families together. With so many Gros Ventre living off of the reservation, opportunities for families to get together are quite rare. When a relative dies, people return to the reservation from all over the country. The wake, therefore, also serves as a family reunion. For a few days, families are reunited and there is constant visiting and "catching up" on the latest news about family and friends.

The wake functions as a demonstration of respect, on the part of the family and friends, for the deceased. The wake is also a means by which the family does penance. Finally, the wake provides an opportunity for people in the community to show their respect for the family in mourning.

At about the time the wake is being organized, the date and time of the funeral is set and arranged with the priest and mission. The family also selects six pall bearers and six honorary pall bearers who are most often family or close friends of the deceased.

The funeral home picks up the casket and the family, and brings them to the Church in a limousine. The priest says a Requiem Mass and
occasionally someone will sing an honor song during the service, at the
request of the family. When the service is completed, the pall bearers
take the casket back out to the limousine, and the guests file out of
the church. People walk to the mission cemetery about two hundred
yards from the church, while the limousine takes the casket and family
to the grave site. The priest says a short service at the grave site
and an honor song may sometimes be sung at this time. Then the casket
is lowered into the grave. The family returns to the mission or a
household where a feed is held. Everyone is invited to attend the feed.
As with the wake, family and friends donate food for this occasion, and
help to prepare and serve the food to guests.

The ideal period of mourning, for the close relatives of the
deceased, is about one year. In reality, there is a great deal of
variability in the duration of mourning. Traditionally, and in the
recent past, mourning was very strict. The family did not attend any
social activities in the community, and spent most of their time at
home. Today there is less adherence to the avoidance of all social
activity, and mourning does not always last for as long as a year.

At some time during the year, one of the dance committees on the
reservation will hold a mourner's feed. The dance committee invites
all family members who have been in mourning during the year. The
committee usually has the mourner's feed just before a pow wow on the
reservation, so that the mourners may attend the dance. The feed is
held at the mission gym, community hall, or at the recreation complex
at the Agency. The committee provides the food, and is responsible for
preparing and serving it to the mourners.
The mourner's feed functions to welcome the mourners back into the community, and to end the period of mourning. There is a master of ceremonies who gives a short speech before the feed. He usually gives condolences to the mourners, and then tells them that it is time to return to the community, and the day-to-day activities of life. A prayer is offered to the Great Spirit for the families and for the community. The food is then served by the dance committee.

At about a year, or longer, from the time of the funeral, the family of the deceased may have a feed and giveaway in honor of the deceased. It either takes place at a pow wow, in which case the family makes the necessary arrangements with the dance committee putting on the pow wow, or it may be held as a separate event. Family and friends donate food, money and blankets, and other materials for the giveaway. Whether the feed and giveaway are held at the pow wow or independently, it typically follows this procedure. Women who are either family or close friends, begin to prepare the food for the feed early in the day. Everyone in the community is invited to attend. The family selects an announcer and singers who will sing the honor song or brave heart song preceding the giveaway.

At a pow wow, the regular dancing and singing stop, and the family goes to a table in the front of the room. The "goods" to be given away are stacked next to the table. The announcer stands next to the family who are standing in a row in front of the announcer's table. The announcer then says a few words about the deceased individual in whose honor the giveaway is being held. If the giveaway is held at a pow wow, one of the drums will begin an honor song, and the family will begin to
dance holding a picture of the deceased person. As the song continues, other family, friends, and community people will file in behind the immediate family to dance around the floor. Dancing in this fashion is a demonstration of respect for the deceased and his or her family who has been in mourning. If the giveaway is held independently of a powwow, an honor song is sung by a few singers without the dancing.

When the song is completed, the family returns to the fronts of the room, and the announcer begins to call the names of the people to come up to receive something from the family. These names are provided to the announcer by one of the family members. Blankets and star quilts are the most common materials used for the giveaway, but people also give away money, towels, dance outfits and other goods. When the announcer calls a person's name, they go to the front of the room, and receive a gift from one of the family members. They shake hands, and then the recipient walks down the line of family members shaking hands and thanking each individually.

The giveaway serves several important purposes. Gifts are given to family, friends, and people in the community to honor the deceased person. It also serves as an opportunity to thank those people who helped the family during the wake and funeral, and to show how grateful the family is for their support. This includes those people who donated food, blankets, and money, those who helped prepare and serve food at the wake and the feed which followed the funeral, the pall bearers and giveaway, and the priest and others in the community who helped the deceased person during his or her lifetime, and did good things for that person. The giveaway also serves as a sign of respect for the elderly
in the community, for they are typically the first to receive gifts at the giveaway. Given the extensive network of generosity in the community, this usually means that about everyone at a giveaway receives a gift from the family, and the procession takes at least a couple of hours to complete. When all of the names have been called, and the gifts given away, the feed begins.

At some feeds, all of the food is brought to the center of the floor, and while a prayer is being offered, each container is lifted up to the Great Spirit. Other times, the food is passed out from the kitchen either prepared on plates, or served from large containers, and a prayer is offered after the food is distributed to all in attendance. The most typical foods used for this purpose are beef, beef soup, crackers, fry bread, potato salad, beans, fruit, chips, bread, juneberry soup, cookies, pies, cakes, and coffee and tea.

When held at a pow wow, after the feed is completed, the pow wow continues. When the giveaway and feed are held independently, the guests begin to leave after the feed is completed.

Conclusion

The ethnographic data indicates that the Gros Ventre are very highly acculturated. The vast majority of the Gros Ventre way of life does not distinguish the tribe as Indian or as Gros Ventre. There are few traditional Gros Ventre elements that remain in the contemporary culture. There is, therefore, little that is uniquely Gros Ventre about the contemporary Gros Ventre way of life.

The high level of Gros Ventre acculturation is also demonstrated through the results obtained in the administration of Spindler's (1955)
acculturation questionnaire. In addition to the variables measured in the questionnaire, these results are confirmed by observations of the society over a two-year period. The use of such measures as language, education, literacy, and religion provided results which were all on the high end of the acculturation continuum. Almost all of the Gros Ventre fell into Spindler's highly acculturated category. The acculturative level of the Gros Ventre was such that the questionnaire was not sufficiently sensitive to distinguish between groups on the basis of acculturation. All of the Gros Ventre could be classified as highly acculturated.

The ethnography presented in this chapter describes the way of life for the White-oriented, Indian-oriented, and Pan-Indian-oriented Gros Ventre. There is little about the routine way of life that distinguishes these groups. The differences among the three categories of Gros Ventre are based upon elements that extend beyond the cultural data described in the ethnography.
CHAPTER SIX  THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PAN-INDIAN ELEMENTS TO GROS VENTRE TRIBAL IDENTITY.

It is apparent from the Gros Ventre ethnography that there is little of the tribe's contemporary culture that distinguishes them as Gros Ventre. While the reservation Gros Ventre are highly acculturated, culture change has not progressed at a uniform rate among the tribal members. As a result of the differential rates of acculturation, three groups can be identified among the Gros Ventre.* The three classes of Gros Ventre are the White-oriented, the Indian-oriented, and the Pan-Indian-oriented.

This paradigm is an analytical tool which facilitates an understanding of the relationship between acculturation and ethnic identification as exemplified by the Gros Ventre case. This classification and analysis also contributes to our understanding of Pan-Indianism and its relationship to tribalism. It is significant, however, that these groups do not represent social classes. The White-oriented, Indian-oriented, and Pan-Indian-oriented categories are etic terms. The

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*This discussion of Gros Ventre acculturation and ethnic identification, and the incorporation of Pan-Indian elements, by a particular segment of the tribe, is limited to the reservation Gros Ventre. The research included only minimal observations of the off-reservation Gros Ventre, and these observations were primarily of those people who returned to the reservation for funerals or to visit relatives.
classification is based first upon the orientation of an individual's identity, and second, upon the means used to sustain and confirm that identity. The Gros Ventre, themselves, do not formally recognize these categories; nor do they consider individuals as members of one of these groups.

The Gros Ventre do acknowledge the differences between those individuals that are oriented toward the Indian way of life and value their Gros Ventre identity, from those people who are disinterested in ethnic identity and make little effort toward being Indian. This recognition, however, is made in a much less formal manner than is represented by the classification scheme described in this dissertation. Rather than classify individuals into distinct groups, the reservation Gros Ventre tend to discuss the differences in terms of degrees of Indianness. The Pan-Indian-oriented and Indian-oriented Gros Ventre consider the White-oriented as Gros Ventre, but often make reference to the fact that they rarely engage in Indian activities or demonstrate much interest in their membership in the tribe. Comments such as "that person is not very Indian" or "that person is just like a White man," are often made as an expression of this perception by the Pan-Indian-oriented and Indian-oriented Gros Ventre. The White-oriented also acknowledge their disinterest in Gros Ventre or Indian activities and their lack of concern for ethnicity.

Likewise, the Gros Ventre recognize the existence of individuals who are active in Indian activities and demonstrate a great interest in their ethnic identity. To this extent, the Gros Ventre acknowledge a difference between those individuals oriented toward being Indian and
those who are not. They do not, however, refer to the people as Indian-oriented or White-oriented. This reference to orientation is inferred from their comments made about people in the community.

Formal distinctions are also not made between those individuals who are Indian-oriented and Pan-Indian-oriented; nor is any reference term used to identify these groups. They do, however, informally recognize these differences. They refer to the old timers who still can speak the native language, who have some first-hand knowledge of the traditional culture, and who still attempt to do some things the old way, such as older women who avoid being in the presence of, or communicating with, a son-in-law. The Pan-Indian-oriented are recognized as people who are interested in the Indian way, who lack the knowledge and experience to practice traditional Gros Ventre culture, and who value their Gros Ventre identity.

In summary, the reservation Gros Ventre recognize diversity in their community based upon the orientation of identity and also the means employed to confirm that identity. The differences are important in reservation life for they determine, to a large extent, the activities and behavior engaged in by individuals in the community. For example, it would be highly unusual for a White-oriented family to sponsor a feed and giveaway in the honor of a deceased relative. On the other hand, it would be equally unusual for an Indian-oriented or Pan-Indian-oriented family not to hold a feed and giveaway for a deceased relative. The recognition of this difference of orientation in the community determines the expectations that people have of one another in terms of behavior and values, and to this extent is a guide to behavior
in the community. The use of reference terms or a classification scheme, however, is not found in the community. This paradigm has been developed in the dissertation as an analytical tool to explain a process in a manner that reflects the social climate on the reservation, but in a more formal sense than is present in Hays and on the reservation. The emic distinctions are much less formal than are indicated in this analysis.

The closest the Gros Ventre come to using a classification scheme in a manner approaching the paradigm presented here is through their perceptions of the degree blood issue. The association is often made by people in the community between the lack of Indianness and the dilution of blood quantum. When an individual notes that another person is "not very Indian" they often mean this in a biological as well as a cultural sense. Degree blood does have some bearing upon ethnic identity and participation in Indian culture, but not to the extent perceived by some community residents. More often than not, the perception of the association between degree blood and Indianness and the classification of people into various levels of blood quantum are more a stereotype than a reflection of biological and cultural reality. The relationship between degree blood, ethnicity, and participation in Indian activities will be explored in more detail in Chapter Seven.

While the Gros Ventre do not use the classification scheme presented in this dissertation, the paradigm does have a basis in the social facts of the Hays community. The paradigm applies a formal designation to distinctions that are made on an informal basis by the people themselves. The Gros Ventre perceive differences in the community based
upon certain attributes that they define as meaningful. These attributes or characteristics are also the basis upon which the three categories of Gros Ventre have been developed in this paradigm. These characteristics are degree blood, tribal affiliation, value orientation, degree of adherence to, or knowledge of, traditional customs, and participation in Indian activities.

There is a tendency for an entire family to exhibit characteristics of the same category due to the influence of socialization. From the perspective of the analytical paradigm developed in this dissertation, it is often possible, therefore, to classify entire families into one of the three categories. This is a tendency, however, rather than a strict rule. Within a single nuclear family there are sometimes children who are Pan-Indian-oriented and have White-oriented siblings. To some degree, the three categories do reflect the social environment on the reservation. Each of the three groups participate in activities that reflect their level of acculturation, value orientations, and ethnic identity. Thus, people who share similar values and identities tend to congregate at similar activities. Again, this is a tendency and does not strictly delineate the activities or behavior of particular individuals.

The following discussion will present the characteristics of the three categories of Gros Ventre and the factors which appear to be most significant in determining the identity orientation of the individuals in the Hays community. Socialization, intermarriage, and generation are the major causal factors accounting for the development of either a White-oriented, Indian-oriented, or Pan-Indian-oriented Gros Ventre.
All three categories of Gros Ventre share basically the same culture, as described in the ethnography. This discussion, therefore, will focus upon the differences between the three classes, rather than their similarities.

**White-Oriented Gros Ventre**

The enrolled Gros Ventre who are White-oriented, are Gros Ventre by virtue of degree blood, rather than through an active participation in, or identification with, the tribe. They do maintain an interest in the tribe, but their interest relates to the tribal government and economy, and not to tribal heritage or identity. They are concerned with tribal benefits, such as the per capita payments resulting from treaty claims, and programs involving housing, employment, health care services, and social programs. Were it not for the tribe's association with these benefits and reservation programs, the White-oriented Gros Ventre would have almost no interest in the tribe.

The White-oriented consider themselves Gros Ventre and are considered by the Indian-oriented and Pan-Indian-oriented as Gros Ventre. The White-oriented, however, place little or no significance upon this ethnicity. They do not adhere to the value on being Indian and do not often participate in Indian activities. Their ethnicity and membership in the tribe has little bearing on how they live their lives.

The White-oriented have little interest in maintaining their Gros Ventre identity. Their day to day lives are much the same as the Indian- and Pan-Indian-oriented. These latter groups are distinguished from the White-oriented by participation in those activities, and adherence to those values, that are an extension from the routine way of life of the
highly acculturated Gros Ventre. Thus, for the White-oriented, it is not so much their participation in a particular way of life that distinguishes them from the Indian- and Pan-Indian-oriented, as it is their lack of participation in those activities which are characteristic of these other groups. Their culture and values are typically American, and there is little that distinguishes the White-oriented from the people of the small, rural, western towns off of the reservation. The Indian- and Pan-Indian-oriented acknowledge their distinction from the White-oriented, and sometimes characterize the difference as "those who attend fiddle-dances, not pow wows." The fiddle-dance is a popular social activity of the landless Indians and White-oriented Gros Ventre. The White-oriented also participate in such activities as rodeos and Four-H Clubs, with greater frequency than the Indian- and Pan-Indian-oriented.

Many of the White-oriented Gros Ventre are not one-quarter degree Gros Ventre blood, and are therefore, not eligible for membership in the tribe. Their ineligibility for tribal benefits discourages an interest in tribal affairs. There are also individuals with Gros Ventre blood who are a mixture of so many different tribes that they tend not to identify with any particular tribe.

Most of the White-oriented Gros Ventre are married to French-Chippewa-Cree and to Whites. The White-oriented were raised by both White- and Indian-oriented parents and grandparents. Those who were raised by Indian-oriented have become White-oriented through intermarriage. Intermarriage supercedes the significance of socialization as a determinant of the White orientation.
For those White-oriented who are enrolled in the Gros Ventre Tribe, there are several factors which operate to discourage their Gros Ventre identity. Most of these enrolled White-oriented are married to a French-Chippewa-Cree Indian spouse. Often times their children are not enrolled in the Gros Ventre Tribe. They are inclined, therefore, to lose interest in the tribe, and often adopt the orientation of their spouse. Their marriage to a landless Indian also encourages a more active rejection of their Gros Ventre identity. They are influenced by the Assiniboine's and Gros Ventre's perceptions of the landless Indians. The landless Indians have historically been considered as "outsiders," and have not always been welcome on Fort Belknap. This negative image of the landless Indian has, at times, been translated into prejudice and discrimination, on the part of the enrolled Gros Ventre and Assiniboine. The French-Chippewa-Cree, who have great pride in their heritage, are bitter over this perception. For those Gros Ventre who are married to a landless Indian, they are often compelled to reject those who are the source of this prejudice, and consequently are less likely to have a strong Gros Ventre identity.

The off-spring of White-oriented Gros Ventre are also White-oriented. With the increasing incidence of intermarriage among the Gros Ventre, and the concomitant dilution of Gros Ventre blood quantum, there is a significant increase in the White-oriented group. There are many more young people who are White-oriented than Pan-Indian-oriented, and consequently, this group is growing much more rapidly than the Pan-Indian-oriented group. The White-oriented are the largest group of Gros Ventre, making up more than two-thirds of the reservation population.
Blu (1980), in her study of the Lumbee, explains that ethnic identity may be a conscious choice. People may choose to maintain a strong ethnic identity, they may ignore their ethnic identity, or assume a position between these alternatives. The White-oriented are Gros Ventre and they are Indian. As in the Blackfeet case (McFee 1972), when the White-oriented Gros Ventre's identity is threatened, for instance, in an act of discrimination in one of the White towns off of the reservation, they are hurt and angered due to their identification with the tribe and their status as an Indian. The White-oriented Gros Ventre, however, have not internalized the value on being Indian, or have relegated this value to a minor role in their lives as a result of inter-marriage. Consequently, the White-oriented Gros Ventre, for the reasons cited above, choose to give little significance to their Gros Ventre identity. Their culture and values are oriented towards the dominant White society.

**Indian-Oriented Gros Ventre**

Being Indian is a significant value of the Indian-oriented. They are, however, first and foremost Gros Ventre. The Indian-oriented also have the strongest adherence to the traditional value system. The Indian-oriented do participate in Pan-Indian activities, but they do not need to rely upon these activities for their Gros Ventre identity to the extent demonstrated by the Pan-Indian-oriented. While most of the traditional elements exist as memories for these people, rather than as practice, the Pan-Indian elements are not satisfactory replacements for what was lost of the traditional culture. Their memories, their experience, their knowledge, and their pride in their heritage, are
enough to sustain their Gros Ventre identity.

The Indian-oriented are the smallest category of Gros Ventre. There are about fifty Indian-oriented people on the entire Fort Belknap Reservation. The Indian-oriented Gros Ventre are almost exclusively older than fifty years of age. Many were raised by grandparents who spoke the Gros Ventre language, and were the last participants in the traditional culture. While the Indian-oriented are also highly acculturated and practice only minimally elements of the native way of life, they have the greatest knowledge of, and participation in, this culture. People who remember the Flat and Feathered Pipe Ceremonies are classified in this group. Some of them, on very rare occasions, will still make offerings to the Flat Pipe. The Indian-oriented adhere most strongly to the traditional kinship system, and while they have adopted the American-English pattern in both behavior and terminology, they also use some aspects of the traditional system. For instance, some of the women continue to practice mother-in-law and son-in-law avoidance, although not in as strict a form as was found in the traditional system. What few Gros Ventre speakers remain, belong to this group. It is also among the Indian-oriented that there is the strongest adherence to traditional Gros Ventre values. This is particularly the case with the value on generosity. The feeds and giveaways, hospitality, and the various other forms of the display of generosity are practiced most frequently by, and hold the greatest significance for, the Indian-oriented.

The Indian-oriented generally have more Gros Ventre blood than the White-oriented and Pan-Indian-oriented groups. This is due principally to the fact that when intermarriage did occur among the Indian-oriented,
it was primarily with enrolled Assiniboine members. Consequently, their concern with tribal affairs was not affected to the extent that it was for those who married landless Indians.

No one is being socialized into the Indian-oriented group. When this group of people is gone, there will no longer be an Indian-oriented class on Fort Belknap. The language, and most of what remains of the aboriginal culture, will also disappear with this group.

**Pan-Indian-Oriented Gros Ventre**

While Pan-Indianism is not a new phenomenon to the Gros Ventre, the use of Pan-Indian elements as the symbols of their tribal identity is a fairly recent occurrence among some members of the tribe. As long as traditional elements existed in the Gros Ventre culture, their identity was a function of their participation in this way of life. As the native culture disappeared, new cultural elements were required to replace the native elements to confirm and sustain their tribal identity.

The Pan-Indian-oriented are primarily middle-aged Gros Ventre, and some young adults. The value of being Indian, and the importance of the Gros Ventre heritage and identity are being passed on to the next generation from Pan-Indian-oriented parents. Along with this value, the young Gros Ventre are learning the cultural elements by which this identity is confirmed and maintained. The Pan-Indian-oriented Gros Ventre currently number less than one-third of the total reservation population.

There is little about the contemporary culture of the Pan-Indian-oriented that distinguishes them from the White-oriented. They, too are highly acculturated. The identification process that operates among the
Pan-Indian-oriented, and that distinguishes them from the White-oriented, is an extension from the routine way of life. Motivated and guided by the underlying value upon being Indian and Gros Ventre, this group has adopted the use of Pan-Indian elements to confirm their tribal identity. The definition of Pan-Indian elements as the symbols of their tribal identity is an adjustment and response to their high level of acculturation.

The Pan-Indian-oriented are not differentiated from the White-oriented on the basis of traditional Gros Ventre elements; neither group practices the traditional culture. Rather, the Pan-Indian-oriented are distinguished from White-oriented by their "Indianness." They have incorporated Pan-Indian elements into their way of life as an expression and symbol of this Indianness. While the symbols are Indian, the identity is Gros Ventre.

Some of the Pan-Indian elements borrowed by the Gros Ventre were imported generations ago, and have been retained. Some have been introduced repeatedly, and have gained only minimal acceptance, but continue to be introduced at various times. Some of the elements borrowed were, in fact, similar to traditional Gros Ventre elements that had long since disappeared. The Pan-Indian elements borrowed tend to be primarily material culture, religious rituals, and social or recreational activities. In the case of religious rituals, not only are the rituals adopted, but often times the religious practitioners from the donor tribe, as well.
The Pan-Indian elements adopted by the Gros Ventre do not replace the existing culture. The contemporary culture remains basically the same, with the imported elements existing side-by-side, and in addition to the routine way of life. For example, those Gros Ventre who participate in the Pan-Indian religious rituals still identify themselves as Catholic, and maintain their association with, and participation in, the Church. On one occasion, a middle-aged Gros Ventre man said a prayer for the health of his family. He smoked while he prayed, so that his words would be aided on their way to the Great Spirit; he sang a brave heart song to honor the Great Spirit; he asked for the Great Spirit to have pity on him, and he gave a long and very spontaneous prayer. After this very characteristically "Indian" prayer, he continued, "I'm on the fence, and I do these things both ways." He went on to say an "Our Father," a "Hail Mary," and an "Act of Contrition."

The Pan-Indian-oriented were socialized by Indian-oriented parents and grandparents. For reasons previously discussed, they did not learn the Gros Ventre language nor most of the traditional culture. They were, however, instilled with the value of being Gros Ventre, and a pride in their heritage and identity.

The Pan-Indian-oriented have also experienced extensive intermarriage, and, in fact, most are mixed-bloods. The Pan-Indian-oriented are enrolled members of the Gros Ventre Tribe, or are, at least, members of the Fort Belknap community. Their intermarriage tends to be either

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*They are less than one-quarter degree Gros Ventre Blood, but have enough Assiniboine blood to total at least one-quarter of both.*
with an enrolled Assiniboine, or with a member of another tribe that has maintained its traditions. The Pan-Indian-oriented are also married to other Gros Ventre mixed bloods. Degree blood tends to be a significant factor as a determinant for Pan-Indian-orientation only insomuch as it qualifies an individual for enrollment in the tribe or Fort Belknap Community. Once this blood quantum is reached, more or less Gros Ventre blood appears to have no bearing upon the degree to which an individual adheres to their tribal identity or participates in the Indian way of life.

Pan-Indianism: A Literature Review

Studies of Pan-Indianism have traditionally been devoted to religious movements, and primarily to the reactive or revitalization movements. This research has focused upon the Ghost Dance (Mooney 1896; Lesser 1933), the Peyote Cult or Native American Church (Howard 1960; Barber 1941; Hart 1960; LaBarre 1938, 1957; Slotkin 1951) and more recently, the Shaker Church (Barnet 1957; Schultz 1968; 1973).

Another area of study has been Pan-Indian political movements and organizations. Major studies in this field have been Lurie's (1961) analysis of the American Indian Chicago Conference, and the analysis of reform Pan-Indian political organizations, such as the National Congress of American Indians, conducted by Hertzberg (1971). There is also a growing literature regarding the urban Pan-Indian process. Hertzberg (1971) provides an overview of this process, and specific studies have been conducted by Ablon (1964) in the San Francisco Bay Area and by Price (1968) in Los Angeles.
Given the growing significance of Pan-Indianism both among American Indians in urban areas, and on reservations, there is a surprising paucity of research concerning the function of Pan-Indianism in the process of tribal identification. Anthropologists have emphasized the persistence of tribal identities among American Indian groups, and the anti-assimilationist stance taken by many tribes (Lurie 1961; McNickle 1973). It has also been noted by anthropologists (Blu 1980; McFee 1972; McNickle 1973; Lurie 1961) that this sustained tribalism is a function of conscious preference for the tribes. During the fieldwork research on the Gros Ventre, I observed some reluctance on the part of people to identify the borrowed elements as Pan-Indian. There was a general conception that the definition of these elements as Pan-Indian somehow diminished the integrity of their tribe. This emphasis on tribalism, and the concurrent anti-assimilationism, may be one reason that Pan-Indianism has not been more prominent in research on tribal identity.

The concern for tribalism, both on the part of anthropologists and American Indians, need not minimize the significance of Pan-Indianism. Pan-Indianism is not a threat to tribalism, but rather, for tribes that have experienced extensive acculturation, it may be considered as a primary factor accounting for their persistent identities and for the survival of the tribes.

Pan-Indian elements were noted as having had a role in the maintenance of tribal identities for the Coast Salish (Suttles 1953), the Narrangansett (Boissevain 1959), the Lumbee (Blu 1980), and the Blackfeet (McFee 1972). The emergence of Pan-Indian elements as dimensions of tribal identities is receiving some attention from
anthropologists. The following review will present some of the research in this area.

Mead's study of the "Antlers," a Plains Indian tribe (1932), makes one of the earliest references to Pan-Indianism. She describes the Pan-Indian identity as the American Indian identity. Mead explains that the factors which account for this emerging identity among the "Antlers" and other Plains tribes are the contact with other tribes fostered by government boarding schools, military service, and travel to other reservations for social activities, by intermarriage with other tribal members, and by the perception of Indians on the part of Whites that is influencing the Indians' conception of themselves. Thomas (1968) defines Pan-Indianism as an identity and a social movement. In reference to identity, an American Indian identity, he describes Pan-Indianism "as the expression of a new identity and the institutions and symbols which are both an expression of that new identity and a fostering of it" (Ibid.:128-129). Howard (1955) describes Pan-Indianism as a "non-tribal 'Indian' culture" which serves as a replacement for tribes losing their distinctiveness. The elements of this Pan-Indian culture are a mixture of transformed traditional Indian culture and innovations emerging in the Pan-Indian process.

A number of authors have described the factors which account for the emergence of Pan-Indianism. Thomas (1968) and Lurie (1971) discuss the perceived commonality between American Indians. According to Lurie, Pan-Indianism was fostered by more than the contact between tribes. Lurie (Ibid.:444-448) describes a "cluster of core values and related, predictable behavior" common to American Indians and which facilitated
Pan-Indianism. Examples of this commonality are decisions by consensus, institutionalized sharing for community survival and social rewards for being generous, and the lack of emotional attachment to personal possessions. Other factors presented as fostering Pan-Indianism (Thomas 1968; Howard 1955; Lurie 1971; Hertzberg 1971) are the government boarding schools, geographic mobility, English as a lingua franca, and intermarriage. Howard (Ibid.) also discusses the White's perceptions of Indians and feelings of unity created from common poverty as factors accounting for the emergence of Pan-Indianism. Hertzberg (1971) states that mass communication, urbanization and education have facilitated modern Pan-Indianism and will account for its increasing significance in the future.

Voget (1956), Vogt (1957), and Hertzberg (1971) consider Pan-Indianism as an accommodation to American Indian acculturation. Hertzberg views the Pan-Indian movement as an adaptation for those individuals who are well-educated and have experience in western society. They want the best from both the Indian and White world, and are searching for new ways to be Indian in the modern world. The adoption of Pan-Indian dimensions creates this new way of being Indian. Vogt explains that Pan-Indianism has emerged as an accommodation for acculturated Indians. They have experience in and are moving toward the dominant society, but do not want to assimilate. The adoption of Pan-Indian elements serve as a symbol of their Indianness.

Thomas (1968) explains that among some highly acculturated tribes, Pan-Indian elements have become the distinctive features of their Indian
In ... areas, such as northeastern Oklahoma and New England, where local aboriginal traits had disappeared, Pan-Indian, or 'Pan-Plains,' as one could call them, institutions and traits became the institutions and traits of the community (Ibid.:133). The Pan-Indian elements reinforce, and become the new symbols of their Indian identity. Thomas also contends that Pan-Indian ceremonies "act out the solidarity of the local group, and the new 'Indian' identity. .." (Ibid.:137). More significantly for some tribes, the Pan-Indian activities promote tribal solidarity and identity. Lurie (1971) supports this view. She contends that the participation in Pan-Indian activities, such as pow wows, support community solidarity and reinforce tribal identity. Lurie argues that Pan-Indianism is a response to the threat to Indian identity, and that these activities afford an individual the opportunity to display their Indianness.

The studies of Pan-Indianism conducted by Ablon (1964) in the San Francisco Bay Area and by Price (1968) in Los Angeles demonstrated that Pan-Indianism was an adaptation to urban life. Ablon argues that participation in Pan-Indian activities is not a defensive mechanism for urban Indians, but rather, is a conscious preference. He also found that tribal identities were encouraged by participation in these activities, as well as Indian identities.

Thomas (1968) explains that the Pan-Indian process in the Plains area has created a "cultural leveling" of the tribes. This leveling has occurred as a result of the exchange of elements between the tribes. Most Plains tribes, for instance, have pow wows and dance committees, and these elements have become generally accepted symbols of Indianness.
In his study of Oklahoma Pan-Indianism, Howard (1955) states that for some tribes Pan-Indian elements have been borrowed and exist in addition to the retained traditional culture. For other tribes, such as the Kansa and Quapaw, the Pan-Indian elements exist as the only Indian culture. The Pan-Indian elements are pow wows, dance costumes, Indian stores that sell dance outfits and Peyote paraphenalia, and the Peyote Cult.

Howard (1955) concludes his study with the following explanation of Pan-Indianism.

Pan-Indianism is ... one of the final stages of progressive acculturation, just prior to complete assimilation. It may best be explained as a final attempt to preserve aboriginal culture patterns through intertribal unity (Ibid.:220).

Based upon the research among the Gros Ventre, Pan-Indianism does not appear to be a process leading to the complete assimilation of the Gros Ventre people into the dominant American society. Pan-Indianism may, in fact, function as a means to tribal survival for those groups that have experienced extensive acculturation. The imported Pan-Indian elements contribute to the maintenance of the tribe by providing new symbols of Indianness by which to confirm the tribal identity.

Pan-Indianism and the Pan-Indian-Oriented Gros Ventre

All of the Gros Ventre have been influenced by Pan-Indianism. What is unique about the Pan-Indian-oriented is their reliance upon the imported Pan-Indian elements to provide the "Indianness" which confirms and sustains their Gros Ventre tribal identity. There are a number of factors which have encouraged Pan-Indianism among the Gros Ventre. This Pan-Indianism includes the Indian identity, the exchange of elements between tribes, and the participation in Pan-Indian political and religious
movements.

In the past several decades the Gros Ventre have experienced an increasing exposure to the other tribes in North America. Through their off-reservation experiences in the military, in urban areas through the Relocation and Employment Assistance programs, and in government boarding schools, the Gros Ventre have increased their contacts with other Plains tribes. Travel to other reservations has been facilitated, since the 1950s, with the construction of roads and the increased ownership and use of automobiles. The result has been even greater contact with other tribes, and the establishment of a Plains Indian network which engages in a constant exchange of elements. Another result of this contact has been the increasing incidence of intermarriage, which in turn, fosters the spread of Pan-Indianism.

About half of the middle-aged Gros Ventre in Hays have lived in an urban area. Many were participants in the Relocation and Employment Assistance programs, some went to cities seeking employment on their own initiative, some lived in cities during their military service, and some Gros Ventre lived in urban areas while attending college or a vocational training program. There is no doubt that this urban experience has had a substantial effect upon the Gros Ventre in Hays. Most returned to the reservation with a far greater understanding of the dominant American society. The Gros Ventre with urban experience have also contributed to the transformation of the community from one with a narrow world view created by the extreme isolation experienced by the reservation into the 1950s into a community with a broader view of both the nation and the world.
The urban Indians returned to Hays with greater expectations of their standard of living and the belief that educating the young people of Hays was the means to achieving this goal. Through their role in modernizing the reservation, the urban Indians have facilitated the acculturative changes that have occurred on the reservation since the 1950s.

The role of the urban Indians in the importing and adoption of Pan-Indian cultural elements is far less certain. Many of the urban Indians participated in Indian activities, had contact with Indians from other tribes, and had some association with Indian centers while living in the city. The urban Gros Ventre thus gained first-hand experience with, and knowledge of, the urban Pan-Indian movement. This experience, however, seems to have had little or no impact upon the borrowing of Pan-Indian elements as it has taken place on the reservation. Many of the urban Indians returned to Fort Belknap because they had difficulty adjusting to the urban lifestyle, were dissatisfied with their jobs, or missed their relatives and the reservation. While some urban Gros Ventre were motivated to return to Fort Belknap by their commitment to their tribal identity and a need to live among other tribal members, it cannot be assumed that this was the case for the majority who returned. Most of the urban Indians currently living in Hays are White-oriented and have only minimal involvement in Pan-Indian activities.

The Pan-Indian-oriented who had urban experience did not return to the reservation with any particular Pan-Indian cultural elements that have become a part of the complex of imported elements. Also, the experience of the urban Indians does not appear to have had any discernible
influence upon the current selection and borrowing of Pan-Indian elements. Thus, while the urban Indians have had a substantial impact upon the community, they have not played a particularly significant role in the importing and adoption of Pan-Indian elements.

The Gros Ventre have had only minimal involvement in the national Pan-Indian religious and political movements. Consequently, these forms of Pan-Indianism have had little impact on the tribe. Except for a rather limited association with the Ghost Dance Movement during the 1890s and a recent involvement in the Native American Church, to be described later in this chapter, the Gros Ventre have been generally disinterested in Pan-Indian religious movements. There are also very few Gros Ventre who have become involved in national Pan-Indian politics. There is a young group of college educated Gros Ventre who have returned to the reservation and have become active in tribal government. Most of these people belonged to Indian clubs while attending college. They have an interest in national Indian politics, but this interest is almost exclusively limited to Pan-Indian organizations and activities which focus upon tribal government and federal government policies and programs. During the two years of fieldwork research, there were only a few Hays residents who participated in a Pan-Indian political organization that was not associated with the federal government, such as the National Congress of American Indians.

There are some members of the American Indian Movement (AIM) on the Fort Belknap Reservation. There are several Gros Ventre and Assiniboine families who have become active in AIM, but most of the reservation Gros Ventre display either indifference or animosity toward the AIM.
organization. Many Gros Ventre expressed the opinion that the political philosophy and tactics associated with AIM are antithetical to the traditional politics of American Indians. AIM was modeled after the Black Power Movement and was initiated by urban Indians who observed the functioning and experience of this movement. Most of the Gros Ventre felt that AIM politics, which included active protest, was too foreign to the Indian way which emphasized decisions by consensus and more passive negotiation. In addition, most people on the reservation do not become involved in politics. Even for issues that directly effect the lives of the reservation people, most of the Gros Ventre do not want to be singled out for holding a particular view. Most remain passive at meetings and do not wish to express an opinion unless they are asked to do so. Even then they state their opinion somewhat reluctantly. Consequently, AIM and other national political movements have had little impact on the Gros Ventre Tribe and the reservation as a whole.

Most Pan-Indian political activity on Fort Belknap is associated with tribal government and the governing of the reservation. The federal government sponsors most of this activity. There are numerous seminars and workshops involving tribes from all over the United States and relating to federal programs ranging from health care to education. The Fort Belknap Community Council sends representatives to these meetings. These events keep the Fort Belknap people in contact with the other tribes of the United States. The Fort Belknap Community is also a member of the Council of Energy Resource Tribes which functions to encourage the exchange of resource plans and development strategies between tribes who control energy resources on their reservations. In addition, each
of the tribes from the reservations in Montana and the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming have a representative on an Intertribal Policy Board. The board is composed of councilmen who discuss issues relating to the Bureau of Indian Affairs and federal government policy and programs.

Most Gros Ventre are not directly involved in reservation politics and government. Since most of the Pan-Indian political activity is associated with this area, there are relatively few Gros Ventre influenced by this form of Pan-Indianism.

The print and electronic media play an important role in the Pan-Indian movement in North America. For the Gros Ventre, however, the media exerts only a minor influence. Most people on the reservation read the Camp Crier, a local reservation weekly newspaper, but in two years of fieldwork I never observed a national Pan-Indian publication read in Hays. There was a weekly Indian radio program broadcast from a station in Havre. There was also a weekly American Indian television program on a station in Great Falls. Many Gros Ventre listened to and watched these programs. The primary interest in these programs was to keep informed about the social and cultural activities in the area, such as the dates and locations of upcoming pow wows. They were less interested in discussions of federal programs and Indian politics that were occasionally presented on the programs.

The following is a discussion of some of the Pan-Indian elements that have been imported by the Gros Ventre. The elements presented are by no means exhaustive, but should help to illustrate the process as it has operated among the Gros Ventre.
The pow wow is a purely Pan-Indian social activity. There are remnants of the Grass Dance existent in the pow wow. The Grass Dance was adopted by the Gros Ventre from the Assiniboine before the turn of the Century (Flannery 1947). The contemporary Plains pow wow has become so homogenized that wherever it is found, all have the same components, and it is carried out in much the same manner. The occasions for holding a pow wow have no association to traditional Gros Ventre culture. Most relate to holidays on the American calendar. For example, there are pow wows at Fort Belknap on New Years and on Memorial Day. There is also a Christmas pow wow that includes a Santa Claus who passes out candy to the children. This pow wow, sometimes referred to as a dance or Indian dance, was not held during the fieldwork period, because families who are responsible for putting on the dance were in mourning. The occasions for holding the pow wows are much the same as the other Plains reservations. In fact, I attended a Halloween pow wow at Fort Peck. Adults and children wore Halloween costumes, and there was a contest and prize for the best costume. During the summer months, most reservations on the Plains hold an annual pow wow which lasts an entire weekend. The Fort Belknap pow wow is usually held toward the end of July. There are Gros Ventre who spend the summer months traveling across the western states each weekend to attend a different pow wow.

The components of the pow wow are also Pan-Indian in character. Each reservation has several dance committees and drums or singing groups. Each of the communities on Fort Belknap has at least one dance committee and one drum. There was one singing group in Hays that was specifically associated with the Gros Ventre. There are some songs that
have been passed down from generation to generation. Each style of song is associated with a particular dance, or serves a particular purpose. For instance, a tribal "flag song" is similar to a national anthem. Some of these songs are, therefore, Gros Ventre in origin. There are also original compositions. The songs performed at pow wows are, however, being exchanged with such frequency between tribes, that they are also tending to lose their unique character. Most of the singing groups bring a tape recorder to the pow wows. If they like a particular song performed by a drum, they tape it, learn it, and add it to their repertorie.

The Grass Dance is the most popular dance performed at all pow wows. The next most popular dance is a couples dance called the Owl Dance. Both forms of dancing are performed on other reservations. The dance outfits have likewise become homogenized. There is no way to identify a particular tribe by the style of dance outfit worn at a pow wow. With some individual variation, the typical men's outfit includes a roach, tail feathers, breastplate, bustles, chokers and moccasins. Some men also wear a headdress instead of a roach. Women often wear buckskin dresses, a breastplate, moccasins, and all women dance either wearing or carrying a shawl. The other elements of the pow wow, such as the grand entry, flag songs, feeds and giveaways, and dance competitions, are Pan-Indian, and are found in about the same form on all Plains Indian reservations.

The extent to which Pan-Indian elements have been adopted on Fort Belknap, and among the Gros Ventre, is demonstrated by the Chief Joseph Dance Committee and pow wow held on the reservation. Due to their
proximity to the Chief Joseph's Battlefield in the Bear Paw Mountains, some Assiniboine and Gros Ventre at Fort Belknap have developed an interest in the Nez Perce Chief, and the events that led up to his surrender. In recognition of the Nez Perce Chief, to honor his memory, and the memory of his people, a group of Assiniboine and Gros Ventre established a Chief Joseph Dance Committee. They hold a special ceremony at the battlefield, on the date of his surrender, and then hold a pow wow in his honor. It has become an annual event. Through this ceremony and pow wow, Fort Belknap has developed a sister relationship with the Nez Perce in Idaho. The Nez Perce travel to Fort Belknap for the Chief Joseph pow wow, and the Fort Belknap tribes are guests at a Nez Perce pow wow held during the summer.

The handgame has its origins in the Ghost Dance Movement. The Gros Ventre adopted the handgame from the Arapaho sometime around the turn of the century. The Assiniboine, in turn, borrowed the handgame from the Gros Ventre. Since that time, participation in the handgame has declined among the Gros Ventre, but has been retained by the Assiniboine. The handgame represents an interesting case of Pan-Indian borrowing. The handgame originated as a Pan-Indian element adopted by the Gros Ventre. It declined in use, but was later reintroduced.

The handgame is both a religious and social event. It is not a gambling game. Each handgame set has an owner. Each set also has a set of rules and an associated ritual. When the set is passed down from generation to generation, the particular rules and ritual are also inherited. At the time of the fieldwork, the Gros Ventre did not have an active handgame set. There was at least one person who owned a handgame,
but he did not know the rules and ritual of that particular set, and therefore, could not use it.

When the Gros Ventre want to hold a handgame, they make a request to an Assiniboine owner. The Gros Ventre may sponsor the handgame, and make the arrangements for a location, invite guests, and put on the feed, but they rely upon the Assiniboine owners for the handgame itself. Each set may be used for a specific number of games. This is determined by the unique rules associated with a particular handgame set. The sponsor will often ask more than one owner, therefore, so that the handgame will last through the evening.

The handgame is held as a vow, or in the honor and memory of a deceased relative. The evening begins with the ritual opening of the handgame bundle, performed by the owner. The owner prays as a part of this ritual. After the ritual and prayer are completed by the owner, the handgame begins. The guests in attendance are divided into two teams, with the men competing against the women. Each team selects guessers who take turns guessing in which hands, of the opposing team, "the bones" are hidden. The guessing and the hiding are very stylized. While the guessing is taking place, there are singers, using hand drums, who sing until the guesser is ready to make a choice. The songs are specifically associated with the handgame. There is a feed, which is put on by the sponsors, which follows one of the handgame sets. The game is resumed after the feed, and continues until all the games from each of the sets have been played.

The Gros Ventre have been exposed to the Native American Church for years. This exposure has been primarily from the Arapaho. Some Gros
Ventre have used peyote in the past, but it was not associated with the religion and ritual, as it is found in many tribes across the west. The Gros Ventre did not accept Peyotism as a religion. During an interview with an older Gros Ventre woman, she explained one of the reasons for the Gros Ventre's rejection of Peyotism.

The Gros Ventre never had this peyote meeting, and they never wanted it to come to the reservation. They hoped that it would never come here. It was the Arapaho that had it. It was like fake religion. It just wasn't right; like false prophets that come along. This was a different religion, and it wasn't right. (female, 70s).

This woman is Catholic, and it is likely that the Mission played a significant role in discouraging the adoption of Peyotism among the Gros Ventre. Some Gros Ventre have recently become involved in the Native American Church. Peyotism was reintroduced by a middle-aged Gros Ventre man who was married to a Crow woman, and lived on the Crow Reservation. He has participated in the Peyote Meetings with the Crow and has initiated the involvement of his siblings at Fort Belknap, as well as other Gros Ventre on the reservation. They have attended Peyote Meetings at the Crow Reservation through his involvement. During the course of the fieldwork, he sponsored a Peyote Meeting in Hays. The ceremony was conducted by Chippewa-Cree from the Rocky Boy Reservation. While Gros Ventre sponsored the meeting, the Chippewa-Cree were the primary functionaries of the ceremony. They conducted the ceremony and did most of the singing and formalized praying. The Gros Ventre had some participation in the prayer and took a few turns singing and drumming, but they
were primarily passive participants.

It is difficult to determine whether the Native American Church will gain a long-term acceptance by the Gros Ventre. The people who have participated in the service have expressed their enjoyment and spiritual satisfaction with the Peyote Meetings. The meetings, however, have only been held a few times, and there was no apparent attempt for any of the reservation Gros Ventre to begin to learn the ritual, and to acquire the knowledge and skill to perform the ceremony independent of outside assistance. The Native American Church represents an example of a Pan-Indian religious movement that has been imported from other tribes. The Gros Ventre have not only borrowed the ritual and paraphernalia, they have also imported the practitioners to conduct the meetings.

During the course of the fieldwork, the same man who introduced the Peyote Meeting to the Gros Ventre, was also responsible for reintro­ducing the Sweat Lodge. The Sweat Lodge was a component of the tradi­tional Gros Ventre religious system, but had long since disappeared. The Sweat Lodge remains active among the Crow, and this Gros Ventre man has participated in their Sweat Lodge Ritual while living on the Crow Reservation. He has begun to hold the Sweat Lodge at Fort Belknap for some of the Gros Ventre. He explains that his Sweat Lodge Ritual is different from the ritual performed by the Crow, and that his Sweat Lodge is held in the same manner as was conducted by the traditional Gros Ventre. He learned the traditional Gros Ventre ritual in a dream. As such, the Sweat Lodge would not be considered an imported Pan-Indian ritual. It is being considered, at the least, as a case of stimulus diffusion.
There are Gros Ventre, as well as Assiniboine, who have acquired an interest in the Spirit Lodge. This rite was found among many of the Algonquin-speaking tribes (Cooper, 1944), and was also practiced in the native Gros Ventre culture. In the course of interviews on the subject, however, there was no one who remembered, or had knowledge of the Gros Ventre's participation in the Shaking Tent Rite, as it is referred to by Flannery (1944). In fact, there was one informant who argued that the Gros Ventre never practiced this rite.

When Gros Ventre desire participation in the Spirit Lodge, they must import the ritual, and the practitioner, a medicine man from the Rocky Boy Reservation, who performs the rite. The medicine man "calls" his ancestral helpers who come to him in order to answer questions, predict the future, or to find lost persons or possessions. There is also a curing aspect to the ritual. There are no Gros Ventre with either the ancestral helpers or the knowledge and skills to perform the Shaking Tent Rite independent of this medicine man.

Each summer the Chippewa-Cree on Rocky Boy hold a Sun Dance. The basic form and function of the Sun Dance have been retained, although the component of self-torture has been limited primarily to strenuous physical exertion and fasting. There are some Gros Ventre who attend the Chippewa-Cree Sun Dance, and there are a few who have participated in the ceremony as dancers. The Gros Ventre have not held their Sun Dance since before the turn of the century.

A final example of Pan-Indian borrowing among the Gros Ventre is the beadwork produced by the contemporary artisans. Traditionally, a tribe's beadwork could be identified through a distinctive style and
design. For example, certain tribes were known for a particular floral design or geometric pattern. In fact, Kroeber (1907) provides the Geometric designs used by the Gros Ventre.

Each tribe no longer has a distinctive style, and beadwork cannot be identified with any particular tribe. There has been a widespread exchange of designs between tribes, and the patterns, styles and techniques for beading have become Pan-Indian. There appears to be a greater degree of artistic expression in the contemporary beading styles, and today there are more pictographs produced, in addition to the floral and geometric designs that were so prominent in the past.

The influence of American material culture has also fostered the homogenization of Plains Indian beadwork. This is most evident in the objects that are beaded. In addition to the items of jewelry that are produced, the Gros Ventre, and other tribes, also bead cigarette lighter cases, key chains, and belt buckles.

There is no necessary longevity to any of the imported Pan-Indian elements. They may be incorporated into the contemporary Gros Ventre way of life, or they may have only minimal acceptance, being discarded after a short period of time. As new and different elements are borrowed, their acceptance and incorporation, or their rejection continues as a dynamic process.

There are several possible reasons as to why the Gros Ventre have selected particular Pan-Indian elements as symbols of their ethnic identity. Almost all of the imported cultural elements are either material culture or are recreational and religious elements. It may be that the Gros Ventre are importing elements that come into the least
conflict with their contemporary culture, most of which has been adopted from the dominant American society. The imported Pan-Indian elements described in this chapter, such as the handgame, Spirit Lodge, pow wow, and beading styles, do not interfere with the Gros Ventre's participation in the western cultural practices. The American economy, political system, social organization, and educational system have become an integral part of the Gros Ventre way of life. The elements borrowed by the Pan-Indian-oriented Gros Ventre represent an adaptation to their need to confirm their Gros Ventre identity through the assertion of their Indianness, without interfering with their contemporary way of life. Even those Gros Ventre who participate in Pan-Indian religious rituals have managed to maintain their association with the Catholic Church.

The Pan-Indian elements imported by the Gros Ventre are Plains Indian cultural elements. The borrowing of Plains Indian traits has been facilitated by the fact that some of these elements were found in the traditional Gros Ventre culture in a similar form. This historic reference serves to endow these elements with a special value which amplified their significance as symbols of their Gros Ventre identity. In addition, the fact that Whites and White-oriented Gros Ventre identify the Plains Indian cultural elements as Indian in nature encourages the distinction between these people and the Pan-Indian-oriented Gros Ventre.

Family relationships and friendships have played a significant role in determining which elements have been imported by the Pan-Indian-oriented Gros Ventre. In the case of the Sweat Lodge and Peyote Meeting, a Gros Ventre man who had married a Crow woman became active in these
rituals while living on the Crow Reservation. He experienced great satisfaction from participation in these activities and wished to share them with his siblings on Fort Belknap. Through his efforts his family and friends began to participate in these rituals. Likewise, the Spirit Lodge was initiated on Fort Belknap through a friendship that had developed between a Gros Ventre residing in Hays and a medicine man from a neighboring reservation. Participation in the Spirit Lodge spread through families and friends on Fort Belknap.

Which individuals are to become Pan-Indian-oriented is determined, in large part, by their socialization by Indian-oriented, and more recently, Pan-Indian-oriented parents and grandparents. The middle-aged Gros Ventre who were raised by Indian-oriented parents and grandparents internalized the value of being Indian. They developed a pride in their heritage and a commitment to their tribal identity. Lacking the traditional culture, which before acculturation was the source of their ethnic identity, they were motivated to seek new means to confirm this identity. The present Pan-Indian-oriented parents are also socializing their children with the value on being Indian, the pride in their Gros Ventre heritage, and the commitment to their tribal identity. In addition, children of Pan-Indian-oriented parents are learning the means, the participation in Pan-Indian cultural activities, by which they practice their Indianness, and thus, confirm their Gros Ventre identity. Socialization, in this regard, is not limited to the relationship between parents and children. Family relationships play a significant role in encouraging the participation of individuals in various Pan-Indian activities. Middle-aged brothers and sisters will
become involved in this process of borrowing and adopting elements through the encouragement of a sibling. They, in turn, spread this involvement in their own families. Consequently, there are certain Gros Ventre families who have become particularly active in borrowing and adoption of Pan-Indian culture.

The Pan-Indian-oriented Gros Ventre have made a conscious selection of Pan-Indian elements that symbolize their tribal identity. By importing such symbols as the handgame, the Peyote Meetings, the Sweat Lodge, beading, and pow wows, the Gros Ventre deliberately set themselves apart from the Whites and White-oriented people around them. For example, a woman sponsored a handgame, in the manner described earlier in this chapter, in the honor of her deceased son. She could have recognized the honor of her son by lighting a candle in the church or in some other manner. She wanted to express herself, however, as a Gros Ventre. The traditional Gros Ventre ways are gone and this was the closest she could come to being a Gros Ventre. The people around her, White-oriented, Indian-oriented, and Pan-Indian-oriented, all recognized her act as an expression of her being Indian, and thus, a confirmation of her being a Gros Ventre. It is this Indianness, determined in large part from their participation in Pan-Indian activities, that reinforces and sustains their Gros Ventre tribal identity.
This dissertation is concerned with the analysis of the process by which the Gros Ventre have retained a strong ethnic identity despite the extensive acculturation experienced by the tribe. The significant issues which need to be addressed in the analysis of this process are represented by the questions that were presented in Chapter One. This chapter will focus upon the answers to these five questions, and thus, will provide a description of the process of ethnic identification for the Gros Ventre. The questions to be treated in this chapter are:

1. What factors, including cultural elements, institutions, and processes, account for the persistence of the Gros Ventre tribal identity?

2. What cultural elements have been selected as symbols of ethnic identity?

3. Why are these particular elements selected as symbols of ethnic identity?

4. How do these elements serve as symbols of tribal identity?

5. What differentiates those Gros Ventre who use these symbolic elements for tribal identity from those who have not adopted these elements?
1. What factors, including cultural elements, institutions, and processes, account for the persistence of the Gros Ventre tribal identity?

There are cultural elements, institutions, and processes present in the contemporary Gros Ventre culture which serve to sustain their tribal identity and the solidarity of the tribe. These factors are the:

A. special status of American Indians and the ties to the reservation;
B. Gros Ventre Treaty Committee;
C. retention and knowledge of the attenuated traditional culture and the sense of a shared history;
D. inherited tribal membership;
E. socialization; and
F. Pan-Indian elements.

Special Status and Ties to the Reservation

As is the case for all American Indian tribes in the United States, the Gros Ventre have a special status and relationship with the federal government. While the treaty period was terminated by Congress in 1871, the federal government is responsible for meeting the obligations provided for in the treaties. The impact of the treaty claims upon the tribal identity will be treated in the next section concerning the Gros Ventre Treaty Committee. Another result of the treaty process, which also fosters the retention of the Gros Ventre identity, is the shared land base or reservation. The Fort Belknap Reservation was established through treaties negotiated between the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine Tribes and the United States Government. The treaties also established
the tribes as Wards of the federal government. This special status imposed numerous obligations upon the federal government directed at protecting and promoting the interests and welfare of American Indian tribes. Many of the programs operating on reservations and relating to such areas as economic development, employment, vocational training, health care, housing, and education derive from trust or wardship status held by American Indian tribes with the federal government.

The significance of the land base cannot be overstated and is likely the most important factor responsible for the persistence of the tribe and the strong identity sustained by some of the Gros Ventre people. Ethnic boundaries are maintained through the federal government's policy of protecting and preserving the physical boundaries of the reservation. The sale of reservation land must be approved by the Bureau of Indian Affairs which discourages the sale or transfer of land to any Whites. In addition, the Bureau has established a number of loan programs which assist the tribes in purchasing any individually allotted lands that are offered for sale. The result of these efforts on Fort Belknap have been that ethnic and physical boundaries have been well maintained. Those Gros Ventre who are concerned with maintaining the solidarity of the tribe recognize the reservation as the bastion of Gros Ventre culture.

The region between the Bear Paw and Little Rocky Mountains, and from the Canadian border south to the Missouri River, was central to the traditional Gros Ventre territory, after their migration south from the Saskatchewan River Valley. The Gros Ventre maintain a strong attachment to the land. Within and near the boundaries of the reservation, there
are constant reminders of the past way of life which fosters a pride in the unique heritage of the tribe. The strong sentiment represented by such places as battle grounds, sacred burial grounds, the mountain peaks which served as sites for the vision quest, buffalo jumps, and tipi rings, and the folklore associated with these places promotes tribal pride and identity. The strong ties to the land and the reservation are evidenced by the off-reservation and urban Gros Ventre who request that upon their death they be returned to the reservation for their burial. Were the Gros Ventre to lose their special status with the federal government and the reservation it is probable that the solidarity of the tribe would be greatly diminished. The physical boundaries of the reservation serve to protect the Gros Ventre from encroachment by Whites; it is equally true that these boundaries function to keep the Gros Ventre focusing inwards, encouraging the cohesiveness of the tribe and the persistence of the tribal identity.

**Gros Ventre Treaty Committee**

The Gros Ventre Treaty Committee is the only remaining tribal institution that has exclusive Gros Ventre membership. There are no other political or economic organizations, or religious societies having only Gros Ventre participation. All other institutions on Fort Belknap are shared with the Assiniboine tribe. The treaty committee has sustained an interest in tribal affairs, and primarily motivated by the settlement claims associated with the Indian Claims Commission cases. The treaty settlements, particularly the per capita payment negotiations, have also fostered the off-reservation Gros Ventre's concern and affiliation with the reservation and tribe.
The treaty committee, however, is more than a vehicle for settlement claims negotiations and their distribution. As a uniquely Gros Ventre institution, the treaty committee functions as a symbol of tribal identity and solidarity. The Gros Ventre recognize this function of the treaty committee. There is some question regarding the future of the Gros Ventre treaty committee. Once the treaty settlements have been completed, and the funds have been either distributed as a per capita payment or programmed for community projects, the treaty committee will lose the primary reason for its existence. In addition, the Fort Belknap Community Council and the Bureau of Indian Affairs could pressure to have the treaty committee dissolved. There are councilmen who consider the treaty committees to be unconstitutional. They contend that the Indian Reorganization Act and the Fort Belknap Constitution established the Community Council to handle the business which is presently being taken care of by the treaty committees. Public sentiment strongly favors the existence of the treaty committees, and the council has conceded on this issue. After the business of the committees has been completed, however, the council members could become more vocal in their opposition to the committees. Also, past Bureau superintendents have viewed the treaty committees as a divisive influence in the reservation community, serving to accentuate the differences between the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine. The dissolution of the committees could be viewed by the Bureau as the removal of a source of factional disputes on Fort Belknap. There are Gros Ventre who will oppose any action to remove the treaty committee. As a symbol of their unique identity, they will want the committee retained.
Cultural Retentions and the Sense of Shared History

For the Indian-oriented and the Pan-Indian-oriented there are only minimal retentions of native Gros Ventre culture, but those elements that are retained function to maintain the tribal identity. Features of the mourner's complex, fees and giveaways, minor remnants of the kinship system, music and crafts, aspects of the religious system, and folklore are retained in the contemporary culture. These elements, and the continued existence of the traditional value of generosity, foster the pride in a unique Gros Ventre heritage. The symbol of unique Gros Ventre heritage and shared culture history are most evident in the attitudes toward the Sacred Flat and Feathered Pipes. The religious system of the Gros Ventre, of which the Sacred Pipes served a central role, has disappeared.

The Sacred Pipe rituals and religious functionaries, associated with the Pipes, are gone forever. What remains is a strong respect and reverence toward the Pipes, and strong feelings of attachment to the sacred objects and the heritage they represent. The Flat and Feathered Pipes have always functioned as symbols of tribal solidarity and identity. This function is retained among the Indian-oriented and Pan-Indian-oriented Gros Ventre and serves to reinforce the uniqueness of the tribe.

The acculturation process continues among the Gros Ventre. The younger generations of Gros Ventre practice little of the traditional way of life, and have minimal knowledge of the native culture. As knowledge of traditional Gros Ventre culture declines, the ethnographic accounts of Kroeber, Cooper, and Flannery assume an increasing significance to the Gros Ventre. Most everyone is familiar with the
ethnographies, and many own and have read these works. An understanding and knowledge of the traditions is acknowledged as an important factor in their pride in tribal heritage, and the ethnographies are increasingly becoming a source for this information.

Inherited Tribal Membership

Inherited tribal membership is a factor which sustains the Gros Ventre identity although there is not a clear correlation between degree blood and tribal identity. Degree blood is the legal determinant of tribal membership, and as such, does have an influence on tribal identity. The Gros Ventre tribal enrollment requires at least one-quarter degree Gros Ventre blood. The Assiniboine enrollment is also based on one-quarter degree blood. An individual cannot be enrolled in more than one of the tribes. If a child inherits enough Gros Ventre and Assiniboine blood from both parents to qualify for membership in either tribe, parents must decide upon one tribe for formal enrollment. An individual enrolled in either tribe is eligible for a share of the claims resulting from the treaty settlements, qualifies for benefits associated with housing, employment, education, health care services, and social programs, and may run for office in tribal government and vote in tribal elections.

The tribal rolls are today kept with great care and concern for authenticity and accuracy. Tribal blood quanta are maintained by the Community Council. An individual petitioning for membership on the rolls must prove to the council, through birth certificates, that they have inherited sufficient blood to qualify for membership. This concern for accuracy and authenticity derives from the benefits which accrue
from membership. The original and early enrollments, however, were far from accurate. There were no birth certificates when the enrollments were established, and individuals were assigned whatever blood quantum was claimed. There were no means available to verify these claims. In discussing this issue with one of the councilmen, he related the following story. In the traditional Gros Ventre society, when two men were very close friends, they sometimes referred to each other as "brothers." There were two men who had this close relationship, and one of them was a White man. When the tribal enrollment was established, this White man's name went on the tribal rolls.

The significance of this early inaccuracy is that the contemporary tribal rolls, which all derive from the inheritance of blood from the original tribal members, does not represent an accurate account of degree blood among the Gros Ventre. There were many Gros Ventre who claimed full-blood status on the early rolls, who had inherited White, Assiniboine, and other tribal blood through inter-marriage in earlier generations.

The inaccuracies regarding tribal blood quanta would have no significance at all, were it not for the tendency among some of the contemporary Gros Ventre to relate degree blood to the strength of tribal identity, adherence to traditional values, and participation in Indian culture. While the older Indian-oriented tend to have greater Gros Ventre blood quanta, this correlation does not bear out for middle-aged and younger Gros Ventre.

There is a relationship between degree blood and tribal identity to the extent that blood quantum determines membership in the tribe. Those
who do not qualify for membership tend to lose interest and their
attachment to the tribe. Once enrollment has been achieved, however,
the amount of Gros Ventre blood appears to have no bearing upon the
strength of tribal identity or participation in the Indian way of life.
Socialization, not degree blood, is a more significant determinant of
tribal identity, adherence to Indian values, and participation in Indian
culture.

The biological meaning of degree blood is a distinctively
different issue from the cultural issue of tribal identity. For many of
the mixed-bloods on Fort Belknap, they must make a decision as to which
tribe their children will be enrolled. This is not necessarily the
tribe with which they will have the strongest identity. There are Gros
Ventre who have only one-quarter degree Gros Ventre blood, and three-
quarters blood from another tribe or tribes, who have a stronger tribal
identity and greater participation in the Indian culture than those with
considerably more Gros Ventre blood. There are also cases of full
siblings with both Gros Ventre and Assiniboine blood, in which one is
enrolled as a Gros Ventre and the other as an Assiniboine.

Gros Ventre intermarriage with other tribal members, and with
Whites, is having a serious impact upon tribal enrollment. Many people
express the concern that there is such a high incidence of intermarriage
that the Gros Ventre Tribe is disappearing. This does, in fact, appear
to be the case. In an individual's selection of a spouse, tribal
affiliation is not often considered as a major factor in the decision.
Consequently, through intermarriage, the Gros Ventre blood quantum is
rapidly diminishing. So long as the legal definition of Gros Ventre
tribal membership remains one-quarter degree blood, the enrollments will decline.

There is serious need for a demographic analysis of off-reservation and reservation Gros Ventres. A study should be made of the current enrollment, the individual member's degree blood represented in the enrollment, the incidence of intermarriage, and the blood quantum of Gros Ventre spouses. This analysis would provide the Community Council with enough information to assess the rate of decline, and the number of generations before the enrollment is seriously diminished. The Council may have to evaluate the current criteria for tribal membership, and assess the current definition of tribal membership in light of the increasing loss of eligibility. These decisions would have great significance for the future of the Gros Ventre Tribe.

Socialization

The process of socialization is a significant factor accounting for the persistence of the tribal identity. Those individuals who have internalized the value on being Indian have been motivated to seek the means to confirm this identity. More importantly, they have been instilled with a pride in their unique Gros Ventre heritage. The Pan-Indian-oriented Gros Ventre were raised by Indian-oriented parents and grandparents. Lacking the traditional cultural elements to confirm their Gros Ventre identity, they initiated the use of Pan-Indian elements. The off-spring of the Pan-Indian-oriented are also internalizing the value of being Indian and are learning the means to sustain their Gros Ventre identity.
Pan-Indian Elements

The sixth factor supporting the Gros Ventre identity is the imported Pan-Indian elements which are emerging as a significant component of the Gros Ventre way of life. With the disappearance of the traditional Gros Ventre culture, Pan-Indian elements are becoming the symbol of Indianness in the Gros Ventre identity. As the relevant cultural elements of the Gros Ventre identity, they maintain both the uniqueness of the Gros Ventre people and their distinction from Whites and White-oriented Gros Ventre.

2. What cultural elements have been selected as symbols of ethnic identity?

The Pan-Indian-oriented Gros Ventre have consciously selected Pan-Indian elements as the symbols of their tribal identity. The Pan-Indian-oriented have a knowledge of, and association with, some of the elements of the traditional culture. For instance, while there are no middle-aged Gros Ventre familiar with the Flat Pipe and Feathered Pipe rituals, most of the Pan-Indian-oriented feel a strong respect and reverence toward the Sacred Pipes and understand that the pipes were central to the traditional religious beliefs and practices of their ancestors. Their knowledge of, and veneration toward, the traditional culture provides the Pan-Indian-oriented with a link to their heritage. In this sense, the attenuated traditional elements do have symbolic value for the Pan-Indian-oriented in terms of ethnic identity. The symbolic value, however, is very limited, because the Pan-Indian-oriented Gros Ventre have so little participation in any of the traditional culture.
The importing and adoption of Pan-Indian elements has come to serve as the symbols of tribal identity for those individuals who strongly adhere to their identity, but lack the depth of knowledge and experience to participate in traditional Gros Ventre cultural practices. The elements borrowed all derive from tribes in the Plains Culture Area. These imported elements are primarily material culture, religious, and recreational elements. The imported Pan-Indian elements, such as the handgame, Sweat Lodge, Peyote Meeting, beading, Sun Dance, pow wows, music, dances, Spirit Lodge, have come to be recognized by the White-oriented, Indian-oriented, Pan-Indian-oriented, Whites, and members of other Plains tribes as the symbols of the Gros Ventre tribal identity.

3. Why are these particular elements selected as symbols of ethnic identity?

There are a number of general reasons as to why the Pan-Indian elements described in Chapter Six are selected by the Pan-Indian-oriented as the symbols of their tribal identity. The Pan-Indian-oriented would prefer to practice the traditional Gros Ventre culture as an expression of their ethnic identity. The traditional culture and language, however, are gone and will not be revived. So little of the traditional culture is known by even the older Indian-oriented Gros Ventre that they are either unable or unwilling to pass this information down to the younger generations. The borrowing of Pan-Indian elements represents the next best viable option for the Pan-Indian-oriented. Motivated by the value on being Indian, internalized through socialization by Indian-oriented parents and grandparents, the Pan-Indian-oriented have sought some means to express their Indianness and thus
maintain their tribal identity.

The Pan-Indian elements selected have all been Plains cultural elements. Through an extensive network of contact with tribes across the Plains, and particularly with the reservations in Montana, Wyoming, and North and South Dakota, the Gros Ventre have been involved in a vigorous exchange of elements with these tribes. This exchange has also taken place with the Assiniboine with whom they share the Fort Belknap Reservation. Thus the Plains Pan-Indian elements are readily accessible to the Gros Ventre and have been available to them through this network of contact.

The borrowing of Plains Pan-Indian elements has also been facilitated by the frequent intermarriage that has occurred between the Gros Ventre and the other tribes of the Plains states. There are Gros Ventre who have married members of other tribes and have taken up residence on their spouse's reservation. The family relationships and friendships they maintain provide the channels through which much of the borrowing of cultural elements occurs. These family relations and friendships have a significant influence upon the process of Pan-Indian borrowing by the Gros Ventre.

The contact between the Gros Ventre and other Plains tribes has facilitated the borrowing of cultural elements. Through visits to friends and relatives and attendance at pow wows on other reservations, the Gros Ventre have been exposed to numerous Plains elements. They are able to observe the various customs and are able to learn their practice through first hand experience. They also participate in these activities as guests of the donor tribes and are often invited and
encouraged to attend various events, such as the Peyote Meetings, Sun Dances, handgames and others, held by neighboring tribes.

The importing of Plains Pan-Indian elements is also promoted by the similarities that exist between the cultural practices engaged in by neighboring Plains tribes and those that existed in the traditional Gros Ventre culture. Many of these elements, such as the handgame, Sun Dance, and Sweat Lodge, have basically the same form, meaning, and function as were present among the traditional Gros Ventre. For instance, when the Gros Ventre attend handgames sponsored by an Assiniboine, they are able to actively participate in the proceedings. They are familiar with the rituals and many Gros Ventre know the rules of the game. The Gros Ventre just do not have an active handgame set. In addition, some Gros Ventre know the handgame songs that have been passed down to them from previous generations and are able to participate in the singing during the handgame. Even in the case of the Peyote Meetings, Gros Ventre are able to participate in the meetings and ritual, though in a very limited way.

The similarities between many of the Plains elements borrowed and those that existed in traditional Gros Ventre culture, not only facilitate the adoption of these elements, these similarities also tend to endow the elements with additional value for those Gros Ventre who consider them as symbols of their ethnicity. They represent, to some degree, a tie to their past way of life.

The Pan-Indian-oriented have selected these particular elements as symbols of tribal identity, because they distinguish them as Indian. The Whites and White-oriented Gros Ventre recognize the Pan-Indian
The Plains Pan-Indian elements imported by the Gros Ventre are either material culture, religious rituals, or recreational elements. The Pan-Indian-oriented Gros Ventre appear to be importing and adopting those cultural elements that create the least amount of conflict with the Western culture that they have adopted during the acculturation process. The process of modernization and westernization among the Gros Ventre is considered a positive direction for the tribe by most, regardless of whether they are White-oriented, Pan-Indian-oriented, or Indian-oriented. During interviews with Pan-Indian-oriented Gros Ventre, most expressed their approval of the changes that have taken place on the reservation with regard to improved housing, employment, education, health care, nutrition, and the general standard of living. While some indicated a desire to return to the early days when life was less complex and more of the traditional culture existed, they all noted the improved standard of life that has resulted from the adoption of material conveniences, as well as modern housing, health care, and education. Thus, cultural elements borrowed by the Pan-Indian-oriented are deliberately selected so as not to replace these elements of western culture. It is significant that the material culture borrowed by the Pan-Indian-oriented is primarily objects of adornment. Refrigerators, televisions, washers and dryers, cars and trucks, and other
western material culture have become standard for the Gros Ventre. Few, if any, desire a return to those days when these conveniences were not available. Consequently, what is imported is selected so as not to interfere with these desired changes toward modernization.

Social or recreational elements, such as the pow wow, do not come into conflict with the adopted western culture of the Gros Ventre. Even participation in Pan-Indian religious activities, such as the Peyote Meetings, Sweat Lodge, and Sun Dance, does not supplant their participation in the Catholic Church. Those Gros Ventre who attend the Pan-Indian religious rituals also attend mass and continue their association and membership in the Church.

As was stated earlier in the dissertation, what differentiates the Pan-Indian-oriented from the White-oriented Gros Ventre is not the bulk of their day to day lives, but rather, those extra activities engaged in by the Pan-Indian-oriented as an expression of their Indianness. Most of their way of life is the same as the White-oriented and is the result of the acculturation process that has modernized and westernized the reservation community.

4. How do these elements serve as symbols of tribal identity?

The Pan-Indian-oriented Gros Ventre do not speak the native language; nor do they practice a significant amount of their traditional culture. Given this situation, which has resulted from decades of acculturation, there would be almost no distinction between themselves and the Whites from surrounding towns off of the reservation, if there were no replacement for the traditional patterns in their contemporary way of life. The Pan-Indian-oriented Gros Ventre do perceive a
difference, however, and they have sought the means to express this
distinction from the Whites and White-oriented. These Gros Ventre have
internalized the value on being Indian and have maintained an adherence
to their tribal identity. Their identity is confirmed to themselves
and to significant outside groups by participation in activities that
express their Indianness. It is through this Indianness, made possible
by the imported and adopted Pan-Indian elements, that they are able to
confirm and sustain their Gros Ventre identity.

The Pan-Indian elements selected by the Gros Ventre as symbols of
their tribal identity are recognized as Indian characteristics by all
of the Gros Ventre people, by the Whites who surround the reservation,
and by other Plains tribes. Their participation in Pan-Indian activi­
ties serves to confirm their unique identity to themselves and main­
tains the ethnic boundaries between this group and surrounding peoples.
The distinctions are reinforced by these outside groups who perceive
the Pan-Indian-oriented Gros Ventre as being Indian by virtue of their
participation in Indian activities. Through the use of these symbols,
the Pan-Indian-oriented Gros Ventre are able to confirm their Gros
Ventre tribal identity.

5. What differentiates those Gros Ventre who use these symbolic
elements for tribal identity from those who have not adopted these
elements?

The three categories of Gros Ventre on the Fort Belknap
Reservation, the White-oriented, Indian-oriented, and Pan-Indian-
oriented Gros Ventre are all highly acculturated and share a similar
way of life. The differences among them are based upon the orientation
of their ethnic identity and the cultural elements which serve as symbols of tribal identity. As described in Chapter Six, socialization and intermarriage are important factors in accounting for the differences between these categories of Gros Ventre.

The Indian-oriented and Pan-Indian-oriented Gros Ventre have internalized the value on being Indian through their socialization by Indian-oriented parents and grandparents and are motivated and guided by this value to sustain their Gros Ventre identity. Many of the Indian-oriented were raised by grandparents who were a generation closer to the traditional culture than their more acculturated parents and thus were exposed to and observed much of the traditional culture. Many Indian-oriented spoke Gros Ventre as a first language as children and only learned English when they started school at the Mission or at one of the other boarding schools. The small number of Indian-oriented Gros Ventre still have considerable knowledge of the traditional culture as compared to the younger generations of Gros Ventre. Their knowledge and memories maintain their tribal identity. They do participate in Pan-Indian activities, but do not rely on these elements as the symbols of their tribal identity.

The Pan-Indian-oriented Gros Ventre, lacking the knowledge and practice of the traditional culture, but motivated by the value on being Indian and the adherence to their ethnic identity, have sought another means to sustain their tribal identity. These Gros Ventre have used Pan-Indian elements as the symbols of their tribal identity. Through the borrowing of elements from neighboring Plains tribes, they have adopted these Pan-Indian elements to confirm their ethnic identity.
The White-oriented Gros Ventre do not have a strong Gros Ventre identity and have only a minimal attachment to the Gros Ventre Tribe. They are Gros Ventre and identify as such when that identity is threatened or when it is opportune to do so, but they place no great significance upon ethnicity. There is no attempt, therefore, for the White-oriented Gros Ventre to participate in Indian activities. There are several factors which account for this situation. Some White-oriented do not have enough Gros Ventre blood to qualify for tribal membership. Their ineligibility for tribal benefits tends to foster a disinterest in tribal affairs. For many of the Gros Ventre who are married to a French-Chippewa-Cree or White spouse, there is a tendency for the Gros Ventre to assume their spouse's orientation. The Gros Ventre who are married to a French-Chippewa-Cree spouse are often discouraged from identifying with the tribe due to the prejudice felt by some of the Gros Ventre toward the landless Indians. They choose to reject or ignore their tribal identity as a response to the prejudice sometimes expressed by their own group toward their spouse's group.

Conclusion

There are a number of unanswered questions and potential research problems that have been generated from this study of Gros Ventre acculturation and ethnic identity. For most of the Gros Ventre on Fort Belknap their way of life is not markedly different from the Whites who live in small rural communities off of the reservation. The Gros Ventre have experienced extensive acculturation in the direction of the dominant American society. The Gros Ventre are assimilating to western culture, and yet, about one-third of the reservation Gros
Ventre tenaciously adhere to their ethnic identity. Given the wholesale adoption of western culture, when, if ever, does the tribal identity disappear and complete assimilation take over?

Related to this question of assimilation is the experience of off-reservation Gros Ventre. It would be beneficial to conduct a study of ethnic identity among the urban Gros Ventre in order to assess their acculturative experience and the process of assimilation among these people. Studying the urban experience of the Gros Ventre, and thus factoring out the role of the reservation, may provide some insight into the significance of the reservation in the persistence of ethnic identity. If the urban Gros Ventre have been able to maintain their Gros Ventre tribal identity in the cities, it would be useful to assess the cultural elements which serve as symbols of this ethnic identity and the factors which account for its persistence.

Another question concerns the Pan-Indian elements imported by the Gros Ventre. Many of the Pan-Indian elements observed during this dissertation research were only in practice among the Gros Ventre for the past couple of decades. Research could be conducted to determine if the Gros Ventre modify the form or function of these elements as they integrate them into the contemporary culture and also if the next generation of Gros Ventre adopt these elements from their parents as symbols of their own tribal identity.

Finally, a study could be conducted to determine the influence of the media upon the ethnic identity of Gros Ventre children. During the course of the fieldwork research, we observed that many of the young children identified more as cowboys than as Indians. This was even the
case for children of Pan-Indian-oriented parents with strong tribal and Indian identities. It was postulated that the media played a large role in this identification. The children were exposed to television and movies that rarely portrayed the American Indian in the contemporary world. Children thus observed the American Indian as living in tipis, hunting buffalo, and engaging in other traditional practices, little of which was observed by the children on the reservation. What they did observe and identify with were adults engaging in ranching and other activities associated with the culture of the American West. These activities are idealized and the children seem to identify with the cowboy folklore and lifestyle. A research project designed to assess the influence of the media upon the identity orientation of the children would provide useful information regarding the significance of the media in the development of identity orientation. It would also serve to illuminate the special problems faced by American Indians caused by their stereotypic portrayal in the media and the influence these stereotypes have upon American Indian children.

The dissertation research has made a number of significant contributions to the fund of anthropological knowledge. This research represents only the fourth anthropological investigation of the Gros Ventre Tribe, and the first in the past three decades. Kroeber's research was conducted in the early 1900s, and Cooper and Flannery studied the Gros Ventre in the 1930s and 1940s. The dissertation not only provides unique ethnographic material on the tribe, it is the only contemporary ethnography of the Gros Ventre people of the Fort Belknap Reservation.
The research on the Gros Ventre offers some insight into the relationship between tribalism and Pan-Indianism. Tribalism and Pan-Indianism represent different levels of identity, but these identities are not in conflict. A tribe's involvement in the Pan-Indian movement does not reflect a diluted tribal identity. The Gros Ventre case demonstrates that Pan-Indianism can be an important feature of tribal identity. For those tribes that are highly acculturated, the adoption of Pan-Indian elements may be an adaptation and an accommodation to change. Through the importing of these elements, tribes are provided the means by which to sustain their tribal identities. For the Gros Ventre, the borrowing of Pan-Indian elements is one of the most significant reasons for the survival of the integrity and solidarity of the tribe.

Finally, the research on the Gros Ventre contributes to our understanding of the relationship between acculturation and ethnic identity. The Gros Ventre case illustrates the process of ethnic identification in a situation where there are minimal traditional cultural retentions. While acculturation has been most extensive among the Gros Ventre, with the loss of most of the traditional culture and language, the tribal identity has persisted. The contemporary Gros Ventre have adopted much of the western culture, but their ethnic identity has been maintained. The Gros Ventre case demonstrates that assimilation in no way implies the loss of ethnic identity.

The Gros Ventre case has demonstrated an important feature of ethnic identification that is a result of the acculturation process. The cultural symbols of ethnic identity need not be aboriginal in
origin, they do not require a history of association with the group, and they need not be unique to the group. What is significant for identity is that there is a collective recognition by the group that these are the symbols of their identity, and that other groups define their identity on the basis of the same symbols. Boissevan (1959) reached the same conclusion in the study of the Narrangansett.

This has been the case with the Pan-Indian elements selected as the symbols of the Gros Ventre identity. Their Indianness, made possible by these elements, is recognized by their own group, by other tribes, and by Whites and White-oriented as the symbols of their identity. The adoption of Pan-Indian elements is an adaptation to acculturation and permits the maintenance of their valued identity.
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