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"No Lock on the Tipi Door":

Extending Religion in the American Indian Urban Diaspora:

Healing, Renewal and Decolonizing Spaces

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in Religious Studies

by

Brian Morrow Clearwater

Committee in charge:

Professor Inés Talamantez, Chair

Professor Rudy Busto

Professor Eve Darian-Smith

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The dissertation of Brian Clearwater is approved.

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Eve Darian-Smith

_____

Rudy Busto

_____

Inés Talamantez, Committee Chair

September 2014

"No Lock on the Tipi Door": Extending Religion in the American Indian Urban Diaspora: Healing, Renewal and Decolonizing Spaces

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VITA OF Brian Clearwater

August 2014

Education:

2014 (expected)	**Doctor of Philosophy** University of California, Santa Barbara Department of Religious Studies
2014 (expected)	**Certificate in College and University Teaching**
2006	**Master of Arts** University of California, Santa Barbara Department of Religious Studies
1999	**Bachelor of Arts** in Religious Studies, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN Anthropology Minor

Areas of Specialization

Religion, Race, and Law in Native America and the US; New Religious Movements; Creolized Religions in Brazil and North America; Religion and Healing

Fellowships and Honors

2007	Lead Teaching Assistant Institute, UCSB Instructional Development
2007-2009	TA Development Grant, UCSB Instructional Development
2002	Rowney Fellowship, UCSB, Dept. of Religious Studies.
1999	*Magna cum laude,* Department of Religious Studies, UT Knoxville
1999	Phi Beta Kappa, UT Knoxville

Publications

"Ayahuasca/Yagé Religion" in Mark Juergensmeyer and Wade Clark Roof, eds. *Encyclopedia of Global Religions*. SAGE Publications, 2012.

American Indian Religious Traditions: An Encyclopedia. Suzanne Crawford and Dennis Kelley, eds. ABC-CLIO: Santa Barbara. (2005). Entries on "Art (Traditional and Contemporary), Northeast; Oral Traditions, Northeast; Religious Leadership, Northeast; and Revitalization and Retraditionalism, Northeast"

Presentations

"Diverse communities, Decolonizing spaces: Native American Spiritual Networks in Urban California." Native American Studies Graduate Student Symposium, UC Davis. April 2014.

"Retrieving Native Voices in the Urban Diaspora." American Academy of Religion, Western Region Conference. Loyola Marymount University. March 2014

"Religion in the American Indian Urban Diaspora." UCSB Dept. of Religious Studies. July 2013

"Contesting Orthodoxy in an Urban-Multiracial American Indian Religious Network." Beyond Binaries: Toward a Continuum Model of Religious Normativity. Univ of Texas, Austin. March 2013.

"Using the Film 'Avatar' to Reflect on Problems of Research on Indigenous Peoples" UCSB Dept. of Religious Studies Sept. 2010

"Race, Law, and the War on Drugs" UCSB Law and Society Program Oct. 2009
"Legalizing the Other: Anglo-American Law and Native Religious Resistance" Negotiating Legal Boundaries, UCSB May 2009
"Overview of American Indian Legal History" UCSB Law and Society Program July 2006
"The Rhetoric of Confusion: Shamanism, Eliade, and the New Age" American Academy of Religion, Philadelphia Nov. 2005

Selected Teaching Experience

Fall 2014	Lecturer, CSU Northridge, Religious Studies 100 "Introduction to Religious Studies"
Winter 2014	Lecturer, UCSB, Religious Studies 114D "Religion and Healing in Native America"
Fall 2013	Lecturer, UCSB, Religious Studies 14 "Native American Religious Traditions"
Summer 2009	Teaching Associate, UCSB, Religious Studies 14 "Native American Religious Traditions"
Winter 2009	Teaching Associate, UCSB, Law and Society, 111 "Law and Culture"
Fall 2008	Teaching Associate, UCSB, Law and Society, 123 "Indigenous Legal Movements"
Spring 2008	Teaching Assistant, UCSB, Law and Society 112 "Law and Culture" (Prof. Darian-Smith)
Winter 2008	Teaching Assistant, UCSB, Law and Society 173 "Law and American Society" (Brooks-King)
Fall 2007	Teaching Assistant, UCSB, Law and Society 112 "Law and Culture" (Prof. Darian-Smith)
Winter/Spring 2007	Teaching Assistant, UCSB, Law and Society 113 "Law and Politics" (Prof. Stevens)
Fall 2006	Teaching Assistant, UCSB, Law and Society 2 "Socio-Legal Research Methods"
Spring 2006	Teaching Assistant, UCSB, Law and Society 112 "Law and Culture" (Soni)
Winter 2006	Teaching Assistant, UCSB, Law and Society 113 "Law and Politics" (Prof. Stevens)
Fall 2005	Teaching Assistant, UCSB, Black Studies 5 "Blacks in Western Civilization" (Prof. Robinson)
Summer 2005	Teaching Assistant, UCSB Religious Studies 14 "Native American Religious Traditions" (Cordero)
Winter 2005	Teaching Assistant, UCSB Religious Studies 80B "Religion in Western Civilization II" (Profs. Hecht and Campo)
Fall, 2004	Teaching Assistant, UCSB, Religious Studies 14 "Native American Religious Traditions" (Prof. Talamantez)
Spring 2004	Teaching Assistant, UCSB, Religious Studies 16 "Chicano/Latino Religious Traditions" (Prof. Busto)
Fall 2003	Teaching Assistant, UCSB, Chicano Studies 168R "Chicano Religious Traditions" (Prof. Talamantez)
Summer 2003	Teaching Assistant at UCSB, Black Studies 7 "Civil Rights Movement" (Prof. Lawyer)

ABSTRACT

"No Lock on the Tipi Door": Extending Religion in the American Indian Urban Diaspora: Healing, Renewal and Decolonizing Spaces

by

Brian M. Clearwater

In 2014, more than 70% of American Indians live in urban areas away from reservations. This dissertation employs theoretical work on diaspora religion to interpret the effects on spiritual practices of the displacement of Native Americans to cities since the mid-20th century. Using the framework of an urban diaspora, I argue that the split geographical situation results in a center-satellite formation of pan-Indian religion in which Lakota practices are dominant. Employing ethnographic fieldwork among a diverse group practicing Native American spirituality in Ventura County, California, I argue that such urban spiritual networks balance competing forces of indigenizing versus extending within the larger pan-Indian religious community. That is, as Lakota spiritual practices were gradually opened to non-Lakota, and even non-Indian, outsiders, the traditional protocols that govern the ceremonial structure have become more important in ensuring the continuance of an authorized, traditional religion.

I trace the logic of assimilation through the relevant history of Native American forced dislocations and urbanization—from 19th century removal policies, prisoner-of-war camps, to compulsory boarding schools for Indian youth, to the Termination and

Relocation policies of the United States government in the decades after World War II. These migrations and policies of de-culturization contribute to the historical context for a study of mixed-blood natives and non-natives practicing intertribal, Lakota-based spirituality in coastal California from the 1970's to the present.

In addition, I interrogate categories of analysis in popular use, such as "Indian" and "Indigenous Religion," in order to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of the competing claims of biological race, cultural hybridity, and a history of forced assimilation upon native identifications. In order to more fully explore the meanings of pan-Indian and trans-Indigenous exchange, I turn to the field of Religion and Healing in Native America. The openness and welcoming of non-natives into native-controlled ceremonial spaces can be explained through an analytic of healing. Accordingly, I argue that native people have identified colonization as a pathology, both mentally and socially, from which both colonizing and colonized populations must recover. The sacred space invoked by Native American spirituality creates decolonizing spaces for the diverse multi-racial participants in that they seek to reinforce an indigenous model of knowledge and practice that resists assimilation. Community ceremonies, such as sweat lodges, function as a hub for the exchange of knowledge and for the healing of individuals and for the group as a whole.

Finally, I explore the logics of contestation to change and adaptation within the ceremonies themselves. Tension inevitably arises between fidelity to a sacred tradition and adaptations deemed necessary by the change in context from reservation to diverse city. In these cases, racial identity determines religious authority, where those with a greater degree of perceived "Indianness" express more freedom to improvise and adapt in

challenging conditions. Whereas among those without biological claim to an indigenous identity, emphasis is centered around performing and interpreting the traditional protocol in a strict manner. This case study in an American Indian urban diaspora community proposes a new model of indigeneity incorporating outsiders, extending the religious boundary, and circulating knowledge without losing an authentic connection to tradition and homeland.

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Introduction

This dissertation examines religion in the American Indian Urban Diaspora. It begins within the historical context that since World War II, members and descendants of Indian tribes in the United States have been migrating to urban areas for multiple reasons. This dislocation has created a demographic situation where today, in 2014, more than 70% of American Indians live off-reservation, often in cities far from their homelands. Thus I term the contemporary geographic distribution an Urban Diaspora, a situation largely unnoticed in US society and undertreated by scholars. We know little about the religious histories, adaptations, and conversions of these Native Americans in diaspora. This study seeks to remedy this gap through a theoretical study of diaspora religion and healing, historical contextualization of urban migrations, and ethnographic study of a Native American spiritual network in Ventura County, California.

Approaching the religious systems of indigenous people in a settler colonial state like the US is accompanied by a particular set of problematics,. To address these problems, I make a number of theoretical orientations. First, I follow Linda Tuhiwai Smith in framing colonial mentality as a pathology afflicting both victims and

[1] This phrase is from a personal communication with Grandmother Margaret Behan who heard it as a child from her Cheyenne Grandparents, who taught that the spirit of each ceremony calls people to it regardless of who they are.

perpetrators of colonization and their descendants.[2] Smith's analysis predicts that the will to heal (from) it will also come from both groups. I explore the ways that healing impulse is articulated primarily in religious terms as addressing a wound of the spirit. There is much good work, such as Vine Deloria's, that treats the intellectual basis of the colonial divide by problematizing Western rational-empiricism and buttressing native epistemologies and native science.[3]

Second, I follow Inés Talamantez in locating religious practices as integrated into local cultural systems. For indigenous communities, religion is not a bounded set of techniques or practices open to circumscription by the outside scholar to be decontextualized for comparative utility. Those aspects of the cultural repertoire that western discplinarity identify as religious are, in fact, an integrated part of a way of life constantly in creative motion and generative florescence.[4]

Third, in keeping with these indigenous voices guiding scholars not to stereotype or impose foreign knowledge structures on native cultures, I also refuse to romanticize or primitivize indigenous peoples by simply reproducing the discourses of religious actors themselves. That is, I insist on being reductive and I reject any simple functionalism that fits any culture into neat packaging. Rather, I rely on an analysis that foregrounds the fissures and ongoing negotiations that give cultures

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[2] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 1999).
[3] Vine Deloria, *Red Earth, White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishers, 1997).
[4] Inés Talamantez, "In the Space Between the Earth and the Sky," in *Native Religions and Cultures of North America: Anthropology of the Sacred*, ed. Lawrence E. Sullivan (New York: Continuum, 2000); Inés Talamantez, "The Presence of Isanaklesh. The Apache Female Deity and the Path of Pollen," ed. Nancy Auer Falk, 3rd ed., Philosophy Series (Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2001).

their living creative tension. Culture is perpetually messy. I have been privileged to observe and participate in many ceremonies with native leaders and contacts whom I deeply respect. I take these performances seriously as opportunities to reflect critically on broader issues of relevance to Religious Studies and social theory. American Indians and those practicing Native American spirituality require the same level of complex analysis as any other social group as their religious and social life is just as full of rich symbols, pregnant signs, and conflicting discursive projects.

As a scholar engaging in ethnographic fieldwork in these traditions, I am non-native and trained in the Eurocentric academy. Recently however, cracks in the epistemological wall of academe have been filled by the work of indigenous scholars, such as Tuhiwai Smith, Cajete, and Talamantez, who prescribe a more dialogical approach to research on indigenous peoples that gives theoretical parity to indigenous epistemologies and situates scholarly debates at the margins where diverse peoples and knowledge systems intersect with the Euroamerican academy.[5]

I make two analytic turns to note. First, "indigenous" is not a natural or self-evident category, nor does it become a univocal sign for people united by a racial or religious subjectification. The turn to the indigenous is an historically situated category the development of which I trace and whose definitional stability is disrupted by national and cultural identifications. Second, by examining the Native urban diaspora and focusing on a constellation of specific themes, I track changes in religious beliefs and practices in relation to other religious systems and people of other racial, national, and cultural identities.

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[5] Gregory Cajete, *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence*, 1st ed (Santa Fe, N.M: Clear Light Publishers, 2000).

Following these turns, I make two claims: that the urban Native American religious systems in question, although divided in space by diaspora, are united by a set of ritual protocols that are transported by authorized carriers of a matrix of sacred materials, signs and symbols that participants call an altar.[6] Second, that these urban ceremonies produce decolonizing spaces, spaces of healing, that will have a profound effect upon Euroamerican society. As spaces ritually set apart, they construct what Victor Turner called "liminal" space in which the normal social order is temporarily suspended and new forms of identification are engendered.[7]

Culture is a ground upon which meaning and identity are constantly contested, transformed, and the framework within which the categories of human existence are fabricated. With respect to religion, Paul C. Johnson chooses to focus inquiry not on "indigenous versus other kinds of religions, but rather *indigenizing* versus *extending* discourses and practices;" or, as he frames it later, as two modes of religious performance. The changes wrought in diaspora result in "distinct homeland versus diasporic redactions of 'the tradition.'" These two modes of religious performance, what Johnson dubs "the indigenous and the cosmopolitan," exert a mutual influence as mutual stimulants and irritants that often overlap and reinforce each other, but that *ultimately constitute a single diasporic religious system*.[8]

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[6] This is called a "Fireplace" in the Native American Church.
[7] Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1995).
[8] Paul C. Johnson, "Migrating Bodies, Circulating Signs: Brazilian Candomblé, the Garifuna of the Caribbean and the Category of Indigenous Religions," in *Indigenous Diasporas and Dislocations*, ed. Graham Harvey and Charles D. Thompson (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 42 emphasis in original.; Paul C. Johnson, *Diaspora Conversions: Black Carib Religion and the Recovery of Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 6.

Recognizing that indigenous identity today is too contested to assume a settled position, Johnson appropriately looks deeper into the processes of religion in society. The indigenous articulation is composed of tropes of depth, density and authenticity signified against the cosmopolitan based in extensions toward new kinds of agency and affiliation.

Indigenizing and Extending: these polar forces in social groups move oppositely along the continuum between an idealized pure tradition emanating from a homeland, one that is local and particular; and a discourse that lowers social boundaries, circulates religious knowledge, and extends tradition beyond territorial limits, a move to the universal. The field of Religious Studies has long operated on a binary that opposes these Indigenous Religions to "World" ones. In this framework, World Religions are extending, seeking converts from all cultures; while Indigenous religions stay at home, rooted in specific places, with no apparatus for extending to new converts. This dissertation adds to work such as Masuzawa and Cox that challenges this binary by giving evidence that "Lakota Religion," long categorized as Indigenous, is extending to new converts across ethnic and racial lines, and has developed clear cosmopolitan characteristics by its move into an Urban Diaspora and to other tribes.[9]

As Lakota Religion moves, it changes, of course. The extension to non-Lakota, non-native people and places has created a center-satellite dynamic where traditional

[9] I put "Lakota Religion" in scare quotes here to signal to the reader that it is an artificial and contested term, not least of which to the participants themselves with whom I spoke. I choose to employ it in my analysis because it draws attention to issues of framing and taxonomy, despite the risk that I will be seen as reifying a category imposed upon my subjects, whom I never heard use the phrase.

Lakota territory in the Northern Plains of the United States serve as a real and imagined homeland, with sites of pilgrimage and return by adherents across North America and beyond. While the two nodes of a diasporic religion (center and periphery or homeland and hostland) do not necessarily share the same space, they share a spatial horizon, a diasporic horizon that casts a longing gaze to the remembered place—"sacralized as the source of deep and abiding identity."[10] Johnson goes on to argue that religious power is measured according to "the fidelity of the ceremonies done here, to the ones done there." He calls this "an organic fusion of history, territory, and emotional attachment."[11] I will return to Johnson's theoretical work in Chapter One.

The study of Native American religions has usually focused on specific tribal groups and their processes of change and adaptation to colonization. This dissertation examines, instead, the logics of contestation to religious change and the competing pulls of indigenizing and extending discourses in the context of the general pattern of urban diaspora among American Indians, and specifically in a heterogeneous pan-Indian community in Ventura, California that includes non-natives even in positions of leadership. My study of this dual-sited situation demands an integration of approaches. I rely on scholarly sources and analyses for setting the context and history of indigenous peoples and religions in the US, and on ethnographic fieldwork among a small, diverse group of practitioners in Southern California called the Hummingbird Circle. This group is part of a global network of

[10] Johnson, *Diaspora Conversions*, 7.
[11] Ibid.

indigenous activists and religious practitioners who meet online and at various pan-Indigenous events. The discursive roots of many of these events are in forging trans-Indigenous alliances.[12] While members of the Hummingbird circle hail from countries around the world, many of them locate their spiritual center in Native America and specifically the Lakota homeland. Although this group is organized explicitly for practicing Native American Religious Traditions, they are embedded in a global network, saturated by legal boundaries and influenced by national discourses of multiculturalism and tolerance of racial diversity. I explore how this group must situate itself across multiple horizons of meaning and memory.

Who are American Indians? A note on terminology.

Because of the violent imposition of Euroamerican power over the First Nations of the Western Hemisphere, including European languages like English, the names that we use to refer to the peoples and nations already established on these lands are predictably contested. Indeed, naming is one of the most destructive acts of dismemberment that colonial powers imposed on native lands and histories, discursively obliterating native autonomy in the renaming of places and the narration of history as a successful colonial pursuit.[13] While the term Indian, or even American

[12] For International examples: The Peace & Dignity Run 2010; Eagle & Condor events; meetings of the Council of Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers; World Peace & Prayer Day. As well as more local encounters such as the Intergenerational Solstice Celebration of Indigenous Wisdom in Ojai, CA; and other events sponsored by the Ojai Foundation.

[13] see Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, *México Profundo: Reclaiming a Civilization*, 1st ed., Translations from Latin America Series (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996);

Indian, carries the trace of this colonial perspective (and indeed preserves its geographic confusion), it has been retained and indigenized by the people to whom it has been applied. With the rise of internet slang, it is becoming more indigenized with monikers like "NDN" and "Indianz." Similarly, although the term "tribe" has been abandoned by many indigenous groups and scholars alike, native nations in the US still employ it. It is important to note, also, that the terms "Indian" and "tribe" are also those currently in official use by the US federal government and the states. Thus we have agencies such as the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the Indian Health Service (IHS). Given these common usages by both sides of this affair, I find them useful as well.

"American Indian," or simply "Indian," in this work refers to any of the enrolled members of Indian tribes in the continental US and southern Canada, or to their unenrolled relatives or descendants. I am not concerned here with the verification of pedigrees or blood quanta or degrees of Indian blood. The term Native American refers more broadly to any of the groups native to the Americas regardless of modern national borders; while Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian refer more narrowly to those groups. Indigenous refers even more broadly to those groups all over the world understood to be the rooted inhabitants of a place who were/are subjected to imperial designs. Thus while we employ these terms, they do overlap. Specific tribal designations, such as Barbareño Chumash or Oglala Lakota, are preferable when possible. The Lakota, for example, fit into all three categories: American Indian,

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Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization*, 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003).

Native American, and Indigenous; while Native Alaskans are Native American, they are not denoted as American Indians. Similarly Native Hawaiians are usually grouped with Pacific Islanders rather than Native Americans, though all these groups unite as Indigenous.

In terms of persons in the United States who have mixed heritage both white and Indian or some other combination, American English does not have a conventional term for them similar to the French-Canadian *métis*, or the Mexican Spanish *mestiza/o,* or the Francophone Caribbean term *creole*. I will return to these linguistic markers of a putative bi-racial make-up, but the terminology problem remains for those in the US of such background. Historically such persons were called half-breeds or simply "colored," both with pejorative connotations and thus unsuitable for scholarly use. I have had to settle for the term mixed-blood for its neutrality and the way that it notes the importance of blood as a marker for identity, though it still falls short in that it inscribes racial thinking. The other possibility is the informal identification "part-Indian" which lacks, I think, the poetic depth of mixed-blood.

Native Identity is a contentious topic in North America today. Many native authors tell stories of being challenged on their racial authenticity by strangers. "How much Indian are you?" is a typical question that feeds into stereotypes about what "real" Indians look like in racial terms, but also in cultural terms. Mixed-blood native people today face judgment about what language they speak, or how acculturated they seem. Too often, mainstream Americans want the Indians they

meet in real life to match the Indians in their imaginations, the ones they see in films like *Dances with Wolves*, or the ones they read about in historical novels.[14]

Geographic Location

Where are Americans Indians today? And why are they there? Prior to Euroamerican contact, the indigenous peoples of North America determined their own cultural and geographic boundaries and these shifted over time with conflicts and environmental fluctuations. Although these borders were to some degree fluid and autonomous, they were also violently enforced, and it is a nostalgic fantasy to think that Indians "roamed free" in some pre-colonial Eden. But it is true that the advancement of Euroamerican political and military power steadily consumed Indian lands and confined them to smaller and smaller reservation tracts, often those deemed of little value. Further, most tribes on the Eastern seaboard were dislocated entirely from their homeland, with many being forced on a Long Walk or Trail of Tears to an entirely different environment west of the Mississippi River.

The majority of these reservations ended up in rural areas and American Indians have long been associated with wide-open (read empty) spaces in the rural interior of the US, spaces labeled "non-productive" by the capitalist economy. However, over two-thirds of Indians today live in urban areas. This punctuated migration is largely an economic exile from the poverty of reservations. The exodus of native populations

[14] For example: James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans: A Narrative of 1757* (Scribner, 1919); Carlos Castaneda, *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974); Forrest Carter, *The Education of Little Tree* (University of New Mexico Press, 2001).

escalated after World War II as returning Indian veterans used the GI Bill to obtain college educations and then looked for work in the booming post-war economy of cities where industrial machinery and weapons were being manufactured. These migrations got a boost by the 1950's BIA policies of Termination and Relocation that sought to forcibly assimilate most Indian people by either removing their special political status as citizens of a recognized Indian nation, or by persuading them into a "Relocation" program that shipped them to cities with a promise to provide job training and help finding housing. By the end of the peak years of the Relocation program in 1957, over 100,000 people were removed from their homes and sent to American cities.[15] Through official programs alone, nearly 30,000 American Indians were relocated to Los Angeles, California and statistics suggest that an equal number migrated on their own, doubling the indigenous population of Los Angeles between 1950-1960.[16] In 1986, native Anthropologist Joan Weibel-Orlando identified 154 discrete tribal affiliations in Los Angeles, very few of which were California native.[17]

Important theoretically to this history is that the move to cities created new subjectivities with new subjectifications. As reservation-based persons were inserted into diverse urban communities they were faced with new tasks of making meaning and preserving memory. For those indigenous and mixed-race Americans who continue to identify as native in urban areas, they do so in *diaspora*, as a result of voluntary, pressured, or forced dislocation. Diaspora can mean chaotic scattering, but

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[15] Donald Lee Fixico, *The Urban Indian Experience in America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 19.
[16] Joan Weibel-Orlando, *Indian Country, L.A.: Maintaining Ethnic Community in Complex Society*, Rev. ed (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 13–18.
[17] Ibid., 34.

it can also mean fertile dissemination.[18] This view of diaspora as a fertile dissemination opens new hermeneutic doors with the concept of diasporic horizons and the fecundity of having multiple diasporic horizons. Treatment of this concept for the Garifuna diaspora in US cities results in what Johnson calls a "key theoretical intervention…: to consider how a single group can simultaneously view itself against multiple diasporic horizons, and how, within that multiplicity, a particular horizon may become dominant at a given moment in time."[19] I will examine the same question for American Indians in urban diaspora.

Conventional scholarly work on Native American religions have been confined by a sense that the "field" for this topic is on a reservation where a single tribe's religious tradition is practiced. Much of the focus has been determining to what degree the tradition has retained pre-Columbian elements or changed due to colonization and occupation by Euroamericans. In a process Richard Grounds terms *mummification*,[20] much of the academic inquiry into American Indian traditions has been oriented to the past. Such an orientation results in representations that freeze native people, ideas, and cultural practices in a static state associated with an outdated, "primitive" mode of human being. I was drawn into the field of Native American religious studies by my personal interest in the present, by a curiosity about how native communities exist, play, and pray *today*. When I was introduced to

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[18] Graham Harvey and Charles D. Thompson, eds., *Indigenous Diasporas and Dislocations*, Vitality of Indigenous Religions Series (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005).
[19] Johnson, *Diaspora Conversions*, 7.
[20] George E. Tinker, "American Indian Religious Traditions, Colonialism, Resistance, and Liberation," in *Native Voices: American Indian Identity and Resistance*, ed. George E. Tinker, David E. Wilkins, and Richard A. Grounds (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 298.

the urban diaspora of American Indians and their religious practices, I was compelled to ask, how will native spiritualities look in the future?

Implicit in that question is that they *will* exist in the future, that is, they are not vanishing. Contemporary Indigenous Studies scholars emphasize that focusing on what religious, cultural, or linguistic knowledge was *lost* unnecessarily limits the scope of inquiry.[21] It is true that the ravages of colonization resulted in massive loss and upheaval in tribal societies. But to ask what was lost, to excavate the salvage anthropology of the 20th century to rediscover authentic Indian wisdom, is to regard the "real" essence of Native American traditions as confined to an idealized past. It is a strictly colonial view that puts temporal limits on true expressions of native identity because it ultimately disempowers contemporary people and their cultural and religious expressions. According to Robert Perez, a better question would be, "What *new* forms of knowledge and cultural expression are native people developing today?"

[21] For example: Robert Perez, "Michaelson Endowed Lecture" (UC Santa Barbara, May 15, 2013); Tinker, "American Indian Religious Traditions, Colonialism, Resistance, and Liberation."

Figure 1.

Stereotypes	
Negative	Positive
Primitive	Enchanting
Savage Past	an ideal Past, Pure
Uncivilized, wild	Magical, untainted by modernity
Inferior knowledge	Primal knowledge, integral
Unchristian	more spiritual, esoteric
--need to be redeemed	--may be source of redemption
removed spatially	closer to nature
--dislocated	--have sacrificed for that
--uninformed, unimportant knowledge	--conduit to primal
Doomed to extinction	Vanishing treasure
--unfit for survival	--needs white saviors
--overcome by superior forces	--tragic victim of "our" excesses

How we view Native Americans in the US is a reflection of how American society sees itself. In a process parallel to the Orientalism described by Edward Said, Indians are a mediating lens that refracts the light with which we see ourselves, see our history, and see Nature—the land we conquered from First Nations. Native Americans hold this pivot point in the American imaginary that always mediates our perception of ourselves and "our" land. As a pivot point they are always held at arms length: they must be kept removed at a distance for them to function as this reference. Concepts of wilderness, of Nature, of Primitive society, of Noble Savages, of exotic shamanic rituals—all these concepts and fantasies/impressions/imaginaries

all rely on the decentering of indigenous peoples, of keeping them 'out there' in the wild.

Scholarship has reproduced that social tendency (or need) to decenter indigenous people, to keep them removed to the margins. But increasingly in Native American and Indigenous Studies there is a turn to the decolonial, toward centering Indian people in their new configurations wherever they are, without prejudice and expectation. A shift in focus onto Native people as cultural agents reproduces the physical, spatial move of most Indian people to urban centers. Old scholarly research models risk missing important aspects of contemporary native religious life when they focus on reservations and do not incorporate the Urban Diaspora. Most American Indians in 2014 live in cities, which many people do not realize. Our ignorance perpetuates negative stereotypes (or positive ones) that feed on poor and old information and our lack of knowledge. When we talk about Indigenous people in the US, in 2014 that includes many besides American Indians: Maori, Oaxaqueños, Garifuna, and many more from both hemispheres. The economic and social emigrations to the First World in recent decades have not excluded the indigenous. We have a global network of diasporas complicated by the many mixed-race descendants of displaced indigenous peoples who have inherited new hybrids of ethnic identity and are actively creating new forms of identiication.

I will show evidence of sizable, vibrant, important Indian communities in urban areas and show that they are important because they are reorganizing, rejuvenating, and regenerating Native American cultural and religious practices in diaspora—that is, in new contexts, far from home, far from an isolated, homogenous

social context like some reservations. *Critical for my theoretical claims, they are doing this in collaboration with others, members of other tribes and others defined racially, legally, and religiously.*

Through case studies I will show that urban Indians are creating fertile new spaces, decolonizing spaces, that are sources of healing and cultural regenerations for both Indian people and non-natives who are welcomed in as guests. This inter-racial, inter-faith, intertribal engagement is having profound effects upon American society. These generative spaces are facilitating a change in the colonial mentality for both natives and non-natives. It is a healing process: healing the grief of the trauma of generations of genocide, dislocation, and oppression. Native leaders have long taught that the ill-effects of this colonization must be healed both for the victims *and* the perpetrators.[22]

To bring it full circle, I argue, the colonial process is being inverted. Whereas Native America has been kept apart as a reference for America's self-awareness as different, with migrations into urban centers, Native America is increasingly recapturing the center as a crucible for transforming American Identity. Mainstream opinion on exploiting weaker nations for resource extraction is changing. According to many with whom I speak in the course of attending native ceremonies, the justification used for such colonial invasions are growing weaker; and as the hold of colonial mentality weakens, the meaning of American history and our shared history

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[22] Julianne Cordero, "The Gathering of Traditions: The Reciprocal Alliance of History, Ecology, Health, and Community, among the Contemporary Chumash," in *Religion and Healing in America*, ed. Linda Barnes and Susan Sered (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 155; See also Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "On the Coloniality of Being," *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2 (March 2007): 240–70, doi:10.1080/09502380601162548.

with First Nations is transforming. They believe that the power of Native American spiritual knowledge is rising and is more important than ever to the healing and progress of our society.

As native knowledge and epistemological principles have become more accepted, the same is true for Native people themselves. First of all, they have played an active role in transforming urban spaces and resisting colonial annihilation by pushing back, keeping cultural/religious practices alive and relevant, and by retrieving or reprising them when they have gone underground or disappeared for a time. By generating new religious stories, new cultural narratives are keeping indigenous epistemologies centered in the traffic of global exchange. Power, money, stories, meaning are no longer confined by national or linguistic borders. They are traveling at the speed of new communications technologies and local or national processes are increasingly signified in relation to international trends and knowledge structures.

Native people have consistently asserted their agency and persisted tenaciously in keeping their languages, practices, and knowledge intact. All this has occurred against terrible odds, centuries of brutal oppression. And now indigenous futurity looks very different. I will show here that the future looks somewhat optimistic, even if strict legal/political progress is unlikely to render unmitigated progressive victories. I will argue that through reverse colonization Native Americans and other indigenous peoples and minority groups are having a profound transformative, liberating effect on the EuroAmerican cultural and spiritual landscape. Given the degree to which urban Indians are incorporated into that

society, this transformation has profound effects upon urban Indian communities as well and will have the power to change the mascot caricature of American Indians in the global imaginary.

While no one wishes to erase the past, to box it up in museums does not serve contemporary communities either. We must recognize that Native American cultures and religious traditions (just like all others) are *generative*.[23] They continue to reveal new forms of sacred knowledge, new sources of artistic and spiritual expression, new dances, new stories, new songs, and especially new meaning. The question is not what has been lost, but rather, what is being gained? Tradition is not a moribund dogma for the people to serve; tradition lives to serve the people. Therefore, this dissertation centers on an active contemporary spiritual community where I orient my central inquiries toward the future: How do participants understand their practice of Native American religious traditions as relevant to their lives today? How have the practices changed to remain relevant? How will future change be negotiated? Who will be the leaders in the next generations as population demographics change on reservations and in the urban diaspora? How do these traditions contribute to the healing process for victims *and* perpetrators of colonization?

[23] Suzanne J. Crawford O'Brien, "Introduction," in *Religion and Healing in Native America: Pathways for Renewal*, ed. Suzanne J. Crawford O'Brien, Religion, Health, and Healing (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1998), 11–14.

Urban context

Dispersed throughout Ventura County, California, there is a spiritual network of native and non-native people who follow the Red Road (that is, they practice Native American spirituality). These people are clustered in different groups around a few spiritual leaders, some native and some non-native, but the networks are related and most people are acquainted with members of the other groups. The groups meet together at community ceremonies such as sweat lodges, bear dances, and tipi meetings; they see each other at pan-Indian public events such as pow-wows, public lectures or performances of interest, and at marches or other gatherings of political resistance.

Beginning in 2002, when I moved to Santa Barbara for graduate school, I have been attending native ceremonies of sweat lodges, tipi meetings, and Bear dances with a variety of related groups in the area of Ventura, California. In 2008, my family and I moved to Ojai, CA, in Ventura County, where I expanded my network of contacts in the local Indian ceremonial community. Both Santa Barbara and Ojai are in Chumash traditional territory and they are acknowledged as the keepers of this land at virtually every ceremony. But the ceremonies are not strictly Chumash, nor are the participants.

American Indian identity is regulated by a prejudice toward racial purity. It is an identity scheme enshrined in and enforced by US law that measures individuals by blood quantum pedigree standards. Since these blood standards are entrenched in federal *and* tribal law regarding tribal membership, they have accrued cultural legitimacy. Many native scholars and activists articulate a position that excludes non-

natives from any traditional religious ceremony, which is countered by a multicultural argument that religion is the shared cultural heritage of humanity. This ethnic exclusivism, or tribalism, is seen as contrary to a legal framework of religious freedom and a cultural framework of religious pluralism. Given the racial diversity in the Hummingbird Circle's community, another set of questions arises: what are the arguments and concerns for and against welcoming non-natives into ceremonial space? Is it legal? Do non-Indians have a *right* to participate in Native American religious traditions? Who is served by exclusion or inclusion?[24]

The Hummingbird Circle is not a typical Indian community one finds described in scholarly literature. There is no tribe united by kinship ties and a shared history; membership is attained through voluntary participation (although attendance at ceremonies is vocally encouraged). There is no ancestral language held in common; services are conducted in English with ceremonial songs performed in several different Indian languages. There is no sovereign land held in common on which to hold community events; gatherings are held at people's homes, privately owned lots, or on public land. But it is clearly a community practicing Native American spirituality. Listening to the language and discourse used by practitioners over the last ten years, I believe that this is a religious tradition that is alive, on the move. It is growing beyond its past limitations and, as with any tradition, faces challenges in leadership and wrestles with how to incorporate new members.

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[24] These issues are explored in Tinker, "American Indian Religious Traditions, Colonialism, Resistance, and Liberation"; Suzanne Owen, *The Appropriation of Native American Spirituality*, Continuum Advances in Religious Studies (London ; New York: Continuum, 2012).

The community participants are likely to have a college degree or engage in intellectual debates online.[25] They are integrated into mainstream American society to some degree and so are not the removed, illiterate subjects that have been the concern of much debate in scholarly methods and responsibility. The leaders of this urban spiritual network are savvy to the debate and expect intellectual reciprocity. They are not a tribe on a reservation struggling to keep their traditions and language alive under the weight of cultural invasion and assimilation. Likewise, they are not simply New Agers disconnected from native communities and appropriating native symbolism and techniques to succor their own struggle with the spiritual meaninglessness of everyday life. Clearly, however, they are affected by the reality of contemporary California and the global economy, global discourses of legality, human rights, and pluralism. How do they understand themselves and their religious practices from within this in-between place? This research begins the study of how a colonized set of religious traditions maintains and spreads a coherent set of religious beliefs and practices in the globalized capitalist, racially diverse world. Who is authorized to conduct ceremonies? Who is authorized to change them? Who is welcome to attend? Given this context of the American Indian urban diaspora, I also explore the confluence of identity politics and religious authority.

In 2013, I began to focus my research on the Hummingbird Circle, a group of people centered in Saticoy, outside Ventura, who practice Lakota religion. They are known primarily for the sweat lodges they offer: a monthly community lodge, Full-

[25] I found out toward the end of my fieldwork that the leader of the Women's Lodge has a doctorate from the University of California, Santa Barbara, the same institution in which I am studying.

moon lodge, Women's lodge, and temazkalli. The community lodges are well attended, attracting over sixty participants who fill up two large lodges. When I first attended one of these, in 2003, they announced that one lodge would be conducted in English and one in Spanish. I knew I was in California for sure. Most of the examples I share in this dissertation are drawn from these community lodges. The Hummingbird Circle was founded and is organized by Moses Mora, a Sun Dancer active with the American Indian Movement since the late 1970's. Mora, or Tio Moses as he is known, is also a noted Chicano muralist, the chairman of a community arts center in Ventura, a baseball fan, and devotee of classic rock 'n' roll music. A lifelong resident of the Ventura area, he commands great respect from the community of people practicing Native American religions.

In addition to participating in ceremonies with the Hummingbird Circle, in 2013 I was invited to a sweat lodge conducted by Grandmother Margaret Behan and began a conversation with her about religion, healing, and diversity. An enrolled member of the Cheyenne/Arapaho, Grandmother Margaret is well known publicly as a former member on the Council of the Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers.[26] Grandmother Margaret is in the privileged position of belonging to an intact tribal community and being able to travel and dialogue with people from many walks of life. She is active in conversations about cultural renewal and building trans-indigenous coalitions.

Much of this renewal effort also focuses on cultural and linguistic retention. It is widely held that American Indian communities are threatened with losing their languages and cultural traditions as they become less relevant to youth. Communities

[26] More information available at http://www.grandmotherscouncil.org

in diaspora are faced with the monumental task of resisting complete assimilation into the dominant culture by maintaining ethnic identity. The approach to studying Native Americans by understanding their dwelling in urban areas as diaspora is still emerging, but promises interesting new directions in the study of migration and indigeneity. How are American Indians living with the urban experience keeping their ethnic identity alive? How do urban Indians understand a home they no longer live in (or never had)? The US Federal government's termination policies toward native nations in the 1950's are showing consequences for the third and fourth generations of this population in diaspora. How do they memorialize and grieve that historic loss? How does historic grief from collective trauma become embodied in Indian people today as addiction, mental health problems, and violence? And how are native communities developing indigenous models and approaches to recovery from those ills?

To answer these questions, let me propose that religion is one primary way that urban Indian communities continue to express and nourish their identity. The following chapters will address topics of religious identity, ceremonial protocol, religious healing, religious pluralism, racial diversity, and legality.

Structure of the study

Chapter 1 will consider theoretical problems concerning Indigenous identity, tribalism, formations of diaspora religion, and categorizations of Indigenous Religions versus World Religions. I will make the case for an approach to contemporary Religious Studies in Native America that utilizes the frame of an Urban Diaspora.

Chapter 2 traces the historical context of American Indian relocation to US cities and the Federal policies that enforced it. I review the major works on Indian urbanization and show how the study of religion in the urban diaspora is impoverished by its lack of treatment in these works. I also ask **how have Native Americans defied assimilation and retained distinctive cultural identities in diaspora? How have those identities been maintained or reinterpreted by the diaspora experience?**

Chapter 3 looks at the revival of indigenous spiritual traditions in the Urban diaspora through the lens of recent work in Religion and Healing in a framework supplied by Suzanne Crawford O'Brien. By shifting the analytical focus to embodied concerns often expressed as illness, I seek to interpret Dr. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart's thesis that Native American people suffer from historical trauma and unresolved grief by reviewing a range of healing projects that seek to reunite alienated Indians with their religious and cultural practices.

Chapter 4 identifies a major source of conflict in urban Indian communities as racial identifications that rely on legislated identity imposed by the federal government based on blood quanta. I will argue that, for diverse religious communities in diaspora, racial thinking based on biology affects questions of tradition and protocol. In this case, authenticity derived from "real Indian" racial identity buttresses claims to religious authority.

Chapter 1:

Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Religion in the American Indian Urban Diaspora

In this chapter I consider theoretical questions about two categories in use by scholars of Religion: Indigenous Religions, and Diaspora Religion. I also challenge a static binary applied to religious systems, that of orthodoxy versus heresy and present instead a model of perpetual contestations represented by what we might call micro-syncretisms, or simply adaptations to changing conditions, especially in diaspora. Examples from my fieldwork show frequent proposed micro-changes to the ritual protocol of the Native ceremonies countered by frequent reifications of those protocols by authorized leaders. Finally I attempt to navigate the contentious waters between competing discourses of authenticity about "real Indians" and "New Age wannabes" by proposing a unified classification system based on the imagination of diasporic horizons that will also account for those caught in-between such as Chicanos and mixed-bloods.

Contesting Orthodoxy

In a religious context that is very diverse—inter-tribal, multiracial, bilingual—the urban spiritual networks in Southern California that practice American Indian religions have multiple and shifting sources of religious authority. Consequently, they

have ample opportunity and impulse to contest the protocols and procedures of their community ceremonies. In this first part of the chapter, I consider belonging and how participants of the native spiritual networks negotiate insider/outsider status.

Among the participants of Native American ceremonies I have observed, status is obtained by experience and showing up, rather than legitimated by a hierarchy. In these networks of the various groups that meet to perform ceremonies, one expresses their membership preference by attending, but there is never a formal question of joining or not. Still, there *are* formal agreements that require a commitment and the ritual exchange of tobacco, regarded as a sacred medicine and a material conduit for prayer. For example, if a community member desires to pursue a vision quest or serve as firekeeper at regular ceremonies, this requires a formal verbal petition to the medicine person with whom one wishes to work. He or she will then choose whether to accept the tobacco and then set the timeline and the parameters of the commitment. A vision quest or keeping fire could be for one season or four years. A commitment to Sun Dance is always four years and includes the significant costs of preparation, travel, and support of such a large ceremony usually more than one day's drive away.

Starting in 2013, I began focusing my attention on the Hummingbird Circle, a group led by Moses Mora centered in Ventura that holds sweat lodges a few times per month, leads vision quests in the early summer, and sponsors people to prepare for Sun Dancing with various Indian groups, mostly Lakota. These ceremonies are all based on the Lakota tradition, but they are usually glossed as "Native American."

While there are important studies of how Native American traditions survive under Christian hegemony, they tend to rely on revitalization movements with allegedly clear prescriptions for belief and practice, such as Handsome Lake's Longhouse Religion or the spread of Peyote Religion throughout Indian Territory beginning in the late 19th century.[1] Less is known about the processes of change within existing native traditions and certainly no work has treated this question in regards to American Indian religions being practiced in the urban diaspora.

Review of Literature on Native American Identity, Urbanization, Healing, and Diaspora

The subject of religion in the American Indian Urban Diaspora, as I approach it, is situated within four fields: Native American Identity, Urbanization, Healing, and Diaspora. All of these fields overlap on the underlying themes of pan-Indianism and intersections with non-natives. No work has yet treated all four together.

Contemporary scholarship in Native American Identity has focused on situating identity issues within a historical frame of reference that accounts for the effects of colonization, legislation, and representations. As the make-up of native communities has changed over the course of the colonial era, identifying who is native has become much more complex. Legal impositions have often pronounced not only who members are, but who the groups are. The official, recognized tribes today in the US and Canada sometimes reflect an indigenous past, but are often colonial constructions of peoples grouped together for military and bureaucratic convenience.

[1] See, for example, Anthony F. C Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972); Omer Call Stewart, *Peyote Religion a History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987).

What these studies of native identity share in common is a sense of the diversity in Native America and the enormous pressure that native people face: pressure to assimilate and leave indigeneity behind, pressure from outside to look and act like a "real" Indian, and pressure from inside to be traditional or be politically active, or make up your mind.[2]

Circe Sturm's *Blood* Politics and Bonita Lawrence's '*Real Indians' and Others* treat the issue of mixed-race explicitly, while only Lawrence addresses an analysis specific to urbanization. Each work grapples with the evolving issue of pan-Indian identity and the titanic shifts in native identities over the course of the 20th century from clan and band or tribe to the racial category Indian. This composite category is itself a colonial construction, imposed on all native groups as if they had no important distinctions from one another. In *Native American DNA*, Lakota Anthropologist Kim Tallbear, by taking her analysis to the molecular level and interrogating the notion of Native American DNA, makes it clear that there is no natural, inevitable group of people who could be called "Indians," not even genetically. This category was always constructed through a colonial lens.

In *México Profundo*, Bonfil Batalla examines the history of the creation of the Mexican people as a mestizaje, a mixture of Indians and Hispanic Europeans. In delineating that history, he interrogates the concept of "Indian." "Before the

[2] Studies of this kind include Eva Marie Garroutte, *Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Kimberly TallBear, *Native American DNA: Tribal Belonging and the False Promise of Genetic Science* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2013); Bonita Lawrence, *"Real" Indians and Others: Mixed-Blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004); Circe Sturm, *Blood Politics: Race, Culture, and Identity in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

European invasion, each one of the peoples who occupied the territory that today is Mexico had a particular clearly identified social and ethnic identity…The Indian is the product of the establishment of the colonial regime. Before the invasion there were no Indians, but individually identified peoples. Colonial society, on the other hand, rested on a categorical division between two irreconcilable poles: the Spaniards, the colonizers; and the Indians, the colonized."[3]

Legislation such as the Dawes Act (1888) in the US and the Indian Act (beginning in 1876) in Canada first created colonial tribal governments modeled after Euroamerican political principles and then foisted protocols onto them for determining membership and identity. States continue to meddle with identity legislation evidenced by 1950's Termination acts in the US and Bill C-31 (1985) in Canada.[4] Insofar as native identity is a matter of legal control, it is subject to the vagaries of power. In this way, even the racialization of native peoples into "Indians" does not afford them the protections of tribes of First Nations if they are mixed-blood and legislated out. If, for example, their mother was 25% Indian and enrolled in her tribe, and their father was 50% Indian by blood, but from another tribe and not enrolled, they may not be eligible for political membership in any tribe. Tallbear emphasizes that

> Tribal folk often quibble with those who would refer to them/us as a racial group: 'We are not a race, we are tribal citizens. Citizenship is different from race.' Yes and no. We Native Americans have been racialized as such within the broader American cultural milieu. We privilege our rights and identities as citizens of tribal nations for good reason: citizenship is key to sovereignty,

[3] Bonfil Batalla, *México Profundo*, 76.
[4] see also Bonita Lawrence, "Gender, Race, and the Regulation of Native Identity in Canada and the United States: An Overview," *Hypatia* 18, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 3–31.

which is key to maintaining our land bases. But race has also been imposed upon us.[5]

Lawrence also examines the role of gender in determining political identity. In Canada, identification legislation explicitly discriminated against native women, stripping them and their children of Indian status if they married a man without status, even if the man was also Indian. The extent to which this disrupted living patterns and families is difficult to convey since the right to live on a reserve and participate in tribal life is dependent on Indian status. She traces how much of the urban mixed-blood population in Canada is there as a result of such terminating legislation targeting native women.[6] Several articles from the edited volume *American Indians and the Urban Experience* give shape and body to the urban identity frames of mixed-race and gender outlined by Lawrence.[7]

Although not explicitly dealing with urbanization, Sturm's ethnographic work among the Cherokee in Oklahoma explores vexing questions about race, mixed-race, and membership among the Cherokee, whose enrollment requirements are based on lineal descent rather than requiring any minimum blood quantum. Within this group, culture became socially more indicative of belonging. "Although culture is not a primary consideration when governments assign Indian identity, for most Native

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[5] TallBear, *Native American DNA*, 32.
[6] Lawrence, *"Real" Indians and Others*.
[7] Angela Gonzales, "Urban (Trans)Formations: Changes in the Meaning and Use of American Indian Identity," in *American Indians and the Urban Experience*, ed. Susan Lobo and Kurt Peters (AltaMira Press, 2001), 169–85; Kurt M. Peters, "Continuing Identity: Laguna Pueblo Railroaders in Richmond, California," in *American Indians and the Urban Experience*, Contemporary Native American Communities (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2001), 117–26; Deborah Davis Jackson, "'This Hole in Our Heart': The Urban-Raised Generation and the Legacy of Silence," in *American Indians and the Urban Experience*, Contemporary Native American Communities (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2001), 189–206.

Americans culture is the litmus test of 'Indianness…but cultural identifications can be as arbitrary as racial ones."[8] Her fieldwork in one Cherokee community shows how, similar to most others in America, "complicated systems of racial classification are simultaneously created, internalized, manipulated, and resisted."[9]

Lawrence is careful to explicitly link identity regulation with material consequences: "Definitions of Indianness almost from the start controlled who was recognized as an Indian band, who could get any land under the treaties, and who could live on this land" (31). She also shows how the legal regulation of identity "is part of a discourse through which crucial aspects of European race ideology were imparted as a world-view to Native people" (38). This transformation of the meaning of self and community achieved through the force of law and state policy in the US and Canada is part of what Lawrence argues is a logic of extermination. Referring to the juxtaposition of identity legislation and 19th century race science that sought to establish a scientific basis for white supremacy,

> Such methods of dehumanization were crucial to the overall project, in both countries, of declaring 'the Indian' irrelevant to their own history and indeed denying the Indian a history. This is the logic of extermination—the discursive violence that is perpetrated when colonized peoples have their identities reduced to measurable physical traits or to a strict code of categorization. Through such classification, the citizens of subordinated Indigenous nations were not only to be legally dismembered from their own identities and recast as 'Indians,' as part of the process of taking their lands, but in the process they were to be dismembered from their pasts and therefore from their futures. (41)

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[8] Sturm, *Blood Politics: Race, Culture, and Identity in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma*, 6–7.

[9] Ibid., 8 This constructionist view of race as contested and fluid over time draws from the leading work in the field: ; Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, 2nd ed (New York: Routledge, 1994).

Relatively little scholarship has been written about the impact of urbanization on American Indian culture. The most important monograph on contemporary Urban Indians to date is Renya Ramirez's 2007 work *Native Hubs: Culture, Community, and Belonging in Silicon Valley and Beyond*. In this work of American Studies, Ramirez gives a personal, sometimes-autobiographical account of intertribal Indian life in the Bay Area during the 1990's. Her work is valuable in providing a portrait of urban life in California and the intersecting communities that meet together in "hubs." Her analysis employs the concept of cultural citizenship and focuses on transnational networks.[10]

Ramirez's notion of the hub as a transformative space where urban Indians can create new communities that resist assimilation fits well with my perspective on urbanization. But for her, the hubs, centers of Indian diaspora culture, are limited to Indians. She describes the common feeling among her urban native collaborators that they can relax and feel at home at situations like pow-wows where everyone present is native. Although ostensibly secular, Ramirez transforms the pow-wow event into a sacred space characterized by ethnic uniformity, noting "the power of the powwow circuit to claim sacred territory, temporarily transforming dominant spaces such as school gymnasiums and athletic fields into a safe world, where [a] sense of identity, culture, health, and well-being are supported…*spiritual renewal is available in the urban environment*."[11]

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[10] Renya K. Ramirez, *Native Hubs: Culture, Community, and Belonging in Silicon Valley and beyond* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).
[11] Ibid., 65, emphasis added.

Although religion as a category of analysis is not central to her book, Ramirez does share her experiences attending sweat lodge ceremonies like the ones I have. The glaring difference with my approach, again, is that she characterized sweats as *exclusively* native events where, although intertribal, non-Indians are not welcome. "They are private, intimate spaces for Indians."[12] She goes on to conflating multi-racial sweats with illegitimate ones. "We wondered to ourselves why she would direct us to a New Age sweat, since white people usually attend them. Indians usually get very upset about New Agers who appropriate Native sweat lodge ceremonies. Sweat lodges are sacred events that Native Americans who follow their own tribal traditions should lead."[13] This passage is instructive in two ways. First, Ramirez, an enrolled Ho-Chunk, positions herself within a normative frame of who "should" lead or attend sweat lodges. This unnecessarily creates a binary between legitimate Indian sweats and illegitimate New Age ones. My research refutes that. But second, interestingly, it appears that her friend *was* referring her to a mixed-race sweat, maybe it was the best one around. I cannot be sure from the passage, but it seems that Ramirez did not realize that possibility at the time, nor in writing about it. Maybe there was an interracial spiritual network right on the periphery of her contacts that she did not know about, or maybe one that she chose not to write about.

Donald Fixico's *The Urban Indian Experience in America* and Nicolas Rosenthal's *Reimagining Indian Country* both use extensive archival research to reconstruct the lives and journeys of American Indians that migrated to urban areas,

[12] Ibid., 66.
[13] Ibid., 61–62.

whether through the federal program of Relocation or not. Fixico's scope is national, while Rosenthal focuses on Los Angeles, California.[14]

Intersections of Native American Religions with other religious landscapes do not always imply a dialogue with living Indian people. There is significant work on representations of Native people in the mainstream and the fascination with or exoticization of Indians in the public imagination.[15] Nearly all of this work by native authors is aimed at discouraging appropriation within the narrative that native religions have become the latest objects of desire that colonizers seek to steal from Native Americans. This mantle is taken up even more vehemently outside academe. Indeed my earlier work used the appropriation framework to trace the routes of scholarly works on native "shamanism" into New Age eclectic inventions as techniques of whiteness.[16]

While much of the appropriation narrative remains true, I began to question the completeness of it, especially given the multiracial ceremonies I had attended. I began to look for rigorous scholarly material that theorized some degree of open exchange between native and non-native peoples. The organizing principle for these

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[14] Fixico, *The Urban Indian Experience in America*; Nicolas G Rosenthal, *Reimagining Indian Country: Native American Migration and Identity in Twentieth-Century Los Angeles* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); see also Sonja Liza Dobroski, "Identity & Relocation Policy: Using Oral History to Affectively Map the Experience of Relocated American Indians in Los Angeles" (M.A. Thesis, University of California, 2012).

[15] See: Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Shari M. Huhndorf, *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Wendy Rose, "The Great Pretenders: Further Reflections of Whiteshamanism," in *The State of Native America*, ed. M. Annette Jaimes (South End Press, 1991); Robert Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian, from Columbus to the Present*, Mini Treasure Series (Vintage Books, 1979).

[16] Brian Clearwater, "Playing Shaman" (M.A. Thesis, University of California, 2006).

works is decolonization, and specifically that both the colonized and the colonizer must engage in a process of decolonizing the mind.[17] Another exception to the monolithic appropriation narrative is, ironically, Suzanne Owen's *The Appropriation of Native American Spirituality*. After exhaustively reviewing the literature on appropriation and the statements released by tribal groups, Owen adds nuance by showing that Native leaders point to the difference between non-native appropriation conducted without authorization, and indigenous inter-tribal sharing conducted according to internal authority/protocols. Indeed, she concludes that appropriations by colonizers are heavily criticized while those by other indigenous groups are understood as borrowing and accepted when performed in an appropriate way. "However, the rules of participation in ceremonies also allow for the incorporation of new people, both from inside and outside the community, demonstrating that the argument against non-native appropriation cannot be based solely on ethnicity, but on protocol, 'the right way to do things.'"[18] I rely heavily on this notion of protocol and observed that in diaspora it is precisely the protocol that is most highly contested because there appears to be some anxiety over correctly performing one's duties. I also see this anxiety as a clue to the decolonizing process that is occurring in these spaces.

The sense of exchange with some reciprocal benefit is also present in the works on Religion and Healing. In contrast to works in Ethnic Studies that foreground

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[17] In terms of research, see Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*; On a model of gift and exchange see Cordero, "The Gathering of Traditions: The Reciprocal Alliance of History, Ecology, Health, and Community, among the Contemporary Chumash"; and Maldonado-Torres, "On the Coloniality of Being."
[18] Owen, *The Appropriation of Native American Spirituality*, 15.

conflict and the historical injustice, works such as Suzanne Crawford O'Brien's *Religion and Healing in Native America* compile works that focus on creative responses to trauma. This healing literature is empowering by putting the history of colonization into embodied terms and showing how native communities have renewed healing traditions to treat these soul-wounds or historical trauma. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart's works on historical trauma and unresolved grief provide a clinical basis for identifying traumas in native communities that are being woven into a native healing framework. I treat this body of work more fully in Chapter three.[19]

In terms of religious change, there is a spectrum of works that vary by their inclusion of the networked reality of contemporary tribes that must deal with non-native guests. Some tell revitalization stories as if they only involve the enrolled members of tribes without accounting for mixed-blood, non-enrolled, or urban

[19] See especially Suzanne J. Crawford O'Brien, ed., *Religion and Healing in Native America: Pathways for Renewal*, Religion, Health, and Healing (Westport, Conn: Praeger Publishers, 2008); Clifford E. Trafzer and Diane Weiner, eds., *Medicine Ways: Disease, Health, and Survival among Native Americans*, Contemporary Native American Communities 6 (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2001); Jerome Levi, "The Embodiment of a Working Identity: Power and Process in a Rarámuri Ritual Healing," in *Medicine Ways: Disease, Health, and Survival among Native Americans*, ed. Clifford E. Trafzer and Diane Weiner, Contemporary Native American Communities 6 (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2001), 134–62; Joseph D. Calabrese, *A Different Medicine: Postcolonial Healing in the Native American Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Greg Sarris, *Mabel McKay: Weaving the Dream*, Portraits of American Genius 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); First Nations Development Institute, *Reclaiming Native Food Systems: Part 1: Indigenous Knowledge and Innovation for Supporting Health and Food Sovereignty* (Longmont, CO: First Nations Development Institute, 2013); Thomas Csordas, ed., "Theme Issue: Ritual Healing in Navajo Society," *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (December 2000); Lori Arviso Alvord and Elizabeth Cohen, *The Scalpel and the Silver Bear* (New York: Bantam Books, 2000); Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, "Wakiksuyapi: Carrying the Historical Trauma of the Lakota," *Tulane Studies in Social Welfare*, 2000, 245–66.

Indians.[20] Others deal marginally with intersection,[21] and some deal with cultural exchange deeply and explicitly. I find the Religion and diaspora work of Paul Christopher Johnson of particular value here in terms of proposing the framework for extending versus indigenizing forces within any social group. This framework animates my entire analysis in this dissertation.[22]

Similar to Johnson, In *Beliefs and Holy Places,* Folklorist James Griffith tracks changes, frictions, and accommodations in the religious expressions of the Tohono O'odham in their centuries long exchange with Catholic missionaries prior to American conquest. Rather than imposing a binary frame, Griffith presents a form of native Christianity still developing and evolving: "a complex but unified religious system built from elements taken from both European and Native-American concepts and practices and combined in a unique way."[23] Popular today, it appears to be based on Catholic ritual behavior that has been "integrated into what is basically an O'odham system for preserving balance and health in families and communities."[24]

Johnson looks at religious change across large geographical expanses, as Honduran Garifuna emigrate to New York City and put their indigenous religion in dialogue with other religions of the African diaspora. In the crucible of an American

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[20] In this category, see Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca*; Stewart, *Peyote Religion a History*.
[21] Alice Beck Kehoe, *The Ghost Dance: Ethnohistory and Revitalization*, 2nd ed. (Waveland Press, 2006); Thomas Parkhill, *Weaving Ourselves into the Land: Charles Godfrey Leland, "Indians," and the Study of Native American Religions* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997).
[22] Johnson, "Migrating Bodies, Circulating Signs: Brazilian Candomblé, the Garifuna of the Caribbean and the Category of Indigenous Religions"; James Griffith, *Beliefs and Holy Places: A Spiritual Geography of the Pimeria Alta* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1992).
[23] Griffith, *Beliefs and Holy Places: A Spiritual Geography of the Pimeria Alta*, 76.
[24] Ibid.

city, new kinship is forged between religious systems that had previously been exclusive.[25] I treat Johnson's work on diaspora religion extensively below in this chapter.

Challenging Binaries

I have a broader project here to reconceptualize the study of Native American Religious Traditions to include the urban diaspora's adaptations and extensions that include being inter-tribal and multi-racial. Here, I challenge binaries in the field in order to move from the question of orthodoxy vs. heterodoxy to a continuum model of contesting orthodoxy. Along with the question of indigenous identity, observing the disputation over orthodoxy helps focus on a theme throughout my work to consider the creative tension between *indigenizing* and *extending* discourses in American Indian religious practice.[26] Whereas in some contexts this might line up well with another binary in use, that of conservative vs. liberal forces, in this case, it is a tension between tribalizing and globalizing a set of religious traditions.

To help frame the problem, we must interrogate notions of Indigeneity and the relations of indigenous peoples to a globalized contemporary world. What is the political status of people we still call "tribal" vis-à-vis the modern nation-state? And pertinent to the field of Religious Studies, what is the analytic relationship between Indigenous Religions and World Religions, which are the foundation of our field? For example, what would "World" Religions be without local ones?

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[25] Johnson, *Diaspora Conversions*.
[26] Johnson, "Migrating Bodies, Circulating Signs: Brazilian Candomblé, the Garifuna of the Caribbean and the Category of Indigenous Religions."

Lakota Religion or Native American Religion?

Is this Hummingbird Circle part of the "Pan-Indian Movement?" If affirmative, how is it a part? What are the pathways of causality and relations between these people attending ceremonies in Ventura and the national pan-Indian activist/religious network? And how does attending ceremonies inform practitioners' thoughts about social/political activism and resistance?

At a sweat lodge ceremony in early 2014, circumstances would suggest that it is a part of the pan-Indian movement, since Tio Moses, the leader of this circle, was wearing an American Indian Movement (AIM) sweatshirt. AIM is a civil rights and resistance movement founded in 1968 to address poverty and disenfranchisement suffered by both urban and reservation Indians from many tribes. "At the heart of AIM is deep spirituality and a belief in the connectedness of all Indian people."[27] Tio Moses narrated the history of the resurgence of these sweats as beginning with AIM after the siege of Wounded Knee in 1972. It was there that Leonard Crow Dog called back the Sun Dance and began receiving people who had gone on vision quest and authorizing them to go back to their communities and lead sweats with certain Lakota protocol. He implied that it was through the work of AIM that this whole network existed today; that they helped revive the traditions and revive peoples' interest in them.

This, more than anything I had heard before, crystallized for me that the Hummingbird Circle is, in fact, practicing Lakota Religion by performing ceremonies

[27] Laura Waterman Wittstock and Elaine J. Salinas, "A Brief History of the American Indian Movement," accessed September 10, 2014, http://www.aim-ic.com/Brief-History-of-AIM.html.

according to Lakota protocol and under the authorization and training of recognized Lakota Medicine Men. Tio Moses gained access to these ceremonies through his involvement with AIM in the 1970's. Moses later told me that he was taught to call this system "The Way of the Pipe" and that he considers it a form of spirituality, not "religion." In this dissertation, I use the term "religion" to refer to the broadest range of human activity that seeks engagement with more-than-human forces and that helps participants make sense of human nature. That is, religion is a ground of contestation over claims about human nature and the relationship of humanity to divinity, however both are conceived.

What does it mean that mixed-bloods, Chicanos, Anglos, and others are practicing a Lakota religious system in Southern California? Is this an Indigenous Religion in diaspora? Or is it now a "once-indigenous" religion? That is, can local, land-based cultural systems of reciprocity with more-than-human forces and beings still be whole when unhinged from that place of origin? Further, what if it begins to accept new members? Is it then a missionary religion, or even a World Religion?

In order to shed light on the problem of academic categorization that is posed by an indigenous religion becoming a "World Religion" (and being practiced in diaspora), let us consider the term "tribal." Remember that before the recent preference for the phrase Indigenous Religions, many in the field of Religious Studies used the term "Tribal Religion" (in the singular), implying that any disparity between them was one of trivia and not categorical. Thomas Parkhill has written about the moving label for this field of study in the United Kingdom from Tribal Religion, to

Primal Religion, to Indigenous Religions.[28] As indigenous communities change and move, our field will have to develop ways of tracking the movement and a rationale for defining the field's parameters. What will the unifying traits be among "Indigenous" Religions in 100 years?

There is considerable debate about the appropriateness of using the word 'tribe' to define native nations at all because of its pejorative devolutionary connotations. But here I want to explore instead its usage to indicate a narrowing of the social world. There seems to be an implication that native people, *prima facie*, cannot conceive of the world in terms larger than their tribe; that a move toward the universal is somehow antithetical to the indigenous mode of being. Notwithstanding the postulation that the human brain is hard-wired towards tribalism due to its evolutionary advantages, this stereotype about peoples whose societies are organized in "tribes" stems from the assumption that this instinctual loyalty to one's social group overrides rationality. This positioning implies the corollary that those of "us" in civilization are at least capable of extending the social horizon to include Others, though we may not do so very consistently. I find the term ironic, given the clear *extending* trends in many indigenous religions today. All over the globe, indigenous peoples are finding their voice on the world stage via international organizations such as the United Nations and other non-governmental organizations focused on political reparation, environmental restoration, and social justice. Indeed, indigenous diplomacy and resistance has re-entered the international stage in a way that verifies that native nations are more than capable of defining their own identity, and that

[28] Parkhill, *Weaving Ourselves into the Land: Charles Godfrey Leland, "Indians," and the Study of Native American Religions*.

Indigenous peoples are indispensable members of the global community that helps to set the agenda of international priorities for human rights, health, environmental conservation, and religious pluralism.

Part of the rise of this movement is due to the fact that people from "tribes" all over the world have added "Indigenous" to their list of identifications. That act of acknowledgment is itself a linkage to a global network of groups now seen as related, and certainly an extension politically. It begs the question of how tribal religions are extending. Certainly every religious group has its propensity toward tribalism, a narrowing of the social world, but the movement for pan-Indianism, especially in religious ceremonies, shows clear signs of aspirations toward universalism. Pan-Indian religion "makes room in the tipi" for non-Indians within a clear set of protocols that serve to protect the integrity of the ceremonial structure. There is a logic, then, that ties pan-Indian religion to a way of living and praying, not just to an ethnic identity. Although I will not pursue the question in this dissertation, I suspect this fidelity to a protocol is widespread across the global indigenous community, even when ceremonies are performed in diaspora. A theory of religious decolonization would predict that accompanying an indigenous ceremonial form into a cosmopolitan area is openness to others who are perceived to share a broad worldview that includes respect for the spiritual basis of the natural world. Indigenous peoples' broad participation in international affairs is increasingly exposing them to the perception that such a worldview is reemerging in colonial centers.

Binary Identity

Problems of identity plague scholars today because of the old categories in place and the constant production of new forms of identification and hybridity. Trying to establish the identity of our research subjects in diverse circumstances can be quite troublesome. I certainly was not comfortable polling people for their ethnic and racial identities in order to determine whether or not they are "indigenous." Much work has been done recently on the category of Indigenous Religions[29] and it is instructive to think about what would be on the other side of that binary were I to pose it as an open question: Indigenous vs. what? Civilized; Industrial; Colonial; Migrant; Settler? The situation of mixed-blood urban Indians complicate all of these neat categories.

In the Hummingbird Circle, there is a core of people who are from recognized Indian tribes, vocally identify as Indian, and display the material adornments of native identity. The group practices what are understood to be Native American religious traditions: sweat lodges, vision quests. Some members also participate in California Bear dances, Native American Church meetings, and/or travel to Sun Dances held in Oregon, Arizona, North or South Dakota. But the group is not homogenous; there are *others* involved. At the community sweats there are people of all colors. There is no ancestry requirement or test to attend these ceremonies and indeed, many of the participants will exclaim proudly, "everyone is welcome to pray with us." In this sense, a racially open ritual community pushes those involved to

[29] see for example Graham Harvey, *Indigenous Religions a Companion* (London; New York: Cassell, 2000). And James Leland Cox, *From Primitive to Indigenous: The Academic Study of Indigenous Religions*, Vitality of Indigenous Religions (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd, 2007).

bridge the barriers of race that divide them and to differentiate between the changes and ravages that European contact brought to native societies from the lives and intentions of contemporary Euroamericans. Multi-racial religious settings challenge us not to stereotype.

The Hummingbird Circle clearly challenges the simple binary that a group is either indigenous or something else. Their categorical identity is complicated by their racial diversity but they do engage in Indigeneity as a real and imagined community whereby a group carries on the symbolic work to create a real and imagined connection to a place. That being said, protocol questions like whether a sweat should be conducted in English or in Chumash are already answered for a group that is inter-tribal and includes non-Indians, because English is already the lingua franca. In this setting, native tongues become sacred languages mostly used in song and prayer.

To say that there is diversity and rhetorical unity is not to imply that the identity politics within this group are without hierarchy. There is definite social contestation for "Real Indian" authority played out in multiple venues that cross over the explicit boundaries of sacred space and time. To segue from identity into the question of orthodoxy then, the question of who has the legitimacy to make changes to the ritual protocol is partially arbitrated by one's degree of Indian identity, measured either in blood or in demonstrated commitment to the path.

To frame this inquiry, I view culture not as a finished product, but a terrain upon which meaning and identity are constantly contested and transformed. With

respect to religion, Paul C. Johnson chooses to focus inquiry not on a taxonomy of "indigenous versus other kinds of religions, but rather *indigenizing* versus *extending* discourses and practices" (2005: 42). In a process of creative tension, these polar forces are present in every religious group. They move oppositely along the continuum between an idealized pure tradition emanating from a homeland, one that is local and particular, and a discourse that lowers social boundaries, circulates religious knowledge, and extends tradition beyond territorial limits, a move to the universal.

In their local contexts, religious traditions may not frequently face divisive issues of racial, ethnic, or cultural difference. But in the globalized world of emigration, transnational airplane travel, and mass conversions in the First World, the "luxury" of racial homogeneity is a thing of the past. This is especially true of syncretic traditions practiced by minorities in the (post)colonized West. The issue, then, is understanding how **multi-racial attendance affects the dynamic politics of ritual and doctrinal norms** in traditions being practiced in the US that have their origins in indigenous or other non-white communities. And these questions can be pertinently applied to any religion practiced in diaspora. I will address this more in chapter 4.

Where are Indigenous Religions? The case for an urban diaspora

Paul Johnson's book *Diaspora Conversions: Black Carib Religion and the Recovery of Africa* (2007) examines the theoretical basis of using the concept diaspora to guide inquiry into indigenous religions. His research context is the movement of

Garifuna people and religion from their homeland in Honduras and Belize to diaspora in US cities, like the Bronx. Historically known as the Black Caribs, the Garifuna today are an indigenous group that defies simplistic categories. To others in the Caribbean and North America they appear Black, being the descendants of Africans who escaped European slavery. They joined forces with the Caribs on St. Vincent for mutual defense. In that process, the indigenous Carib society served as a crucible for coalescing the different African ethnicities into a united group with shared language and cultural practices. Today they are set apart by their indigenous Carib language peppered with African vocabulary and their distinct religion that fuses elements from both continents in their past. The study of Garifuna religion in diaspora offers interesting comparisons to my inquiry into the American Indian Urban Diaspora. Of most interest to me, however, is the theoretical apparatus Johnson constructs with which to study the Garifuna diaspora. I will reiterate that apparatus here with annotations for its applicability to my subject.

Building on Thomas Tweed's work on Diasporic Religion,[30] Johnson makes two analytical turns in constructing his theory: First, diasporas are not simply determined by history or descent, but rather "as a possible subject position an individual moves in and out of."[31] Subject positions are constrained by "the politics of recognition—most notoriously by race" (3). While race identification are allegedly "natural," diaspora identity relies more on culture; so affinity, ritual repertoires, and

[30] Thomas A Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).
[31] Johnson, *Diaspora Conversions*, 3. Hereafter page numbers in parentheses will refer to this work.

public markers of identity choices buttress certain social affiliations more than others.

Second, by becoming diasporic in its way of envisioning home, a "religious group begins to view itself against new historical and territorial horizons" that change its current identifications (3). This can change the way people see each other in the present, even racially. This method of viewing oneself against diasporic horizons helps explain the identifications of whites and mixed-bloods who practice Lakota religion. They view history through the lens of the colonial misdeeds of their European ancestors, and also through the possibly redemptive strength of native traditions that have survived centuries of being under attack. They also know that they are the product of migrations and so feel a sense of longing for territoriality, seeking means through which to establish spiritual connections to the places they call home. American Indian traditions are unique in being able to claim this power.

"Migration's subordinations are not only losses, then; they are injustices that are also the conditions of new self-knowledge" (6). The dispersion of Indian peoples to US cities has created such conditions, and created them in racially diverse communities. Johnson accounts for these new social formations here: "Selectively remembering the past and the left-behind territory as an ideological problem…opens new opportunities for social and political alliances as well as for cultural defense" (6). Native Americans have found multiple avenues for support in the wider US society, going back at least to the turn of the 20th century when progressive reformers formed

the Indian Rights Association, misguided though it was in seeking the improvement of Indians through assimilation.[32]

For any group, diaspora is not a simple transplantation of religious forms from one place to another, "Emigrants' religious practice is not merely stunted by being dislocated…but also transformed and invigorated" (6). The changes wrought in diaspora result in "distinct homeland versus diasporic redactions of 'the tradition'" (6). These two modes of religious performance, what Johnson dubs "the indigenous and the cosmopolitan," exert a mutual influence as mutual stimulants and irritants that ultimately constitute a single diasporic religious system that often overlap and reinforce each other. The indigenous articulation is composed of tropes of depth, density and authenticity signified against the cosmopolitan based in extensions toward new kinds of agency and affiliation. (6-7)

So while the two nodes of any diasporic group (one in the homeland and one in diaspora in a hostland) do not share the same space, they share a spatial horizon, a diasporic horizon that casts a longing gaze to the remembered place—"sacralized as the source of deep and abiding identity" (7). Johnson goes on to argue that religious power is measured according to the fidelity of the ceremonies done here, to the ones done there. He calls this "an organic fusion of history, territory, and emotional attachment." (7).

For Urban American Indians, this remembered land is their tribal homeland before colonial encounter. Like the Garifuna removed from St. Vincent to the coast of

[32] Tisa Wenger, "'We Are Guaranteed Freedom': Pueblo Indians and the Category of Religion in the 1920's," *History of Religions*, 2005, 95.

British Honduras in 1797, Native Americans were often forcibly removed in traumatic episodes before coming to reservations. For both groups, the urban diaspora is a *second dislocation*. That there are multiple diasporic horizons is not contradictory, but rather creates a rich source of contested meaning. "Another key theoretical intervention of [Johnson's book] is to consider how a single group can simultaneously view itself against multiple diasporic horizons, and how, within that multiplicity, a particular horizon may become dominant at a given moment in time" (7-8).

A diasporic horizon changes the meaning of identifications in the present, even racial ones. In this sense, the importance of Indian blood may become less important as the possibilities for showing up and enacting ceremonial protocol increase in urban areas and are accessible to non-natives. This is evidenced even at the discursive level of Indian leaders who increasingly praise the efforts of non-natives in projects of rejuvenation that benefit tribal communities. Or they at least acknowledge the role of non-insiders in the development of positive changes in their communities. "Diasporic religions are memory performances of place, stages in a space; rather than repeat 'tradition,' they create new identifications and social affiliations because the memory of the homeland is transformed as it is rebuilt, through bricolage, in the spaces of emigration" (14).

On racial identity

Enslaved Africans fought against Black Caribs in 1797 because there was no common framework of history, no diasporic culture. The two groups did not see themselves as united socially via race nor even in common cause against a common

enemy racialized as white. Johnson's book traces the development of such a diasporic culture into which Blackness is integrated as a meaningful category upon intersections (in colonial centers) with others from the African diaspora. This same dynamic existed between Indian tribes in North America during the colonial period. In nearly every colonial war, some tribes allied with European powers against other tribes, often understood as historical enemies. It was only in colonially created spaces, such as military forts, prisoner of war camps, and boarding schools that lasting identifications were forged as Apaches and Cheyenne came to understand themselves as "Indian." Varun Soni comments on the role of Christianity in such a formation: "By classifying all Native Americans as 'Indians,' and by opening up inter-tribal avenues of communication and trade, Christian missionaries helped foster an ideology of pan-Indianism. Christian missionaries diminished those factors that traditionally kept Native American tribes separate, such as location, language and cultural norms"[33]

Johnson observes that culture authenticity has commodified value in a context of multiculturalism. This is true for Garifuna identity in black America where "cultural depth and specificity sell within a market of diversity, at least in cosmopolitan settings" (15). The same premise holds true for American Indian identity in the diverse city. However that cultural authenticity is claimed (via race, or experience, or commitment), it is something that people desire. The Indian leader with authenticity can make a living just performing their culture for non-natives. Bonfil Batalla

[33] Varun Soni, "Freedom from Subordination: Race, Religion, and the Struggle for Sacrament," *Temple Political & Civil Rights Law Review* 15, no. 1 (2005): 38.

uncovered a similar dynamic in the racial formation of *mestizaje* that creates a drive to discover and claim roots in transnational contexts.[34]

According to Johnson, the Caribbbean (and by extension Native America) was perceived as having three deficiencies: Racial impurity; Religious impurity; Lack of memory. But if we imbue full humanity onto the islands' indigenous inhabitants and the Africans who were shipped there (and not only the Europeans who chronicled the period), then a new picture emerges of the Americas as a crucible of a new social and religious engagement with the cross-currents of modernity.

These same deficiencies kept Native America on the sidelines of the academic study of religion, especially allegedly "syncretic" religions. But rather like the study of linguistics, the study of creolized religions can invigorate the study of religion more broadly (17). In the diaspora of American Indians, religion is one key way to indigenize and sacralize the ground of their suffering and displacement. It is a wide religious tendency to imbue the sacred into one's lived context. In diaspora religions, scholars have the chance to view and track this process, to pick apart emic claims to sanctity and self-narrative with the knowledge produced by the archives of colonial history. The intersection of the colonial body of knowledge with contemporary indigenous peoples' narratives must yield a critical engagement with the construction of knowledge in each respective semiotic field.

Why use the term diasporic religion? As Johnson notes, it is shallow analytically on two counts. First, there are no natural groups, so no natural diasporas. We must maintain a complex understanding of human groups as not given, not

[34] Bonfil Batalla, *México Profundo*.

bounded, but in flux, always being reconstituted through acts of reinterpretation. Second, the category is too broad. It cannot simply be that one is *from* someplace else, but rather must include the presence of a **double consciousness** of this place and that, one that holds both places in the the same horizon of memory (31).

Using the term Urban Diaspora

I am making an analytic turn by introducing an analysis of urban diaspora into the study of Native American Religions. On one level, I am arguing for the subjectivity of pan-Indian collectivity in that all American Indians are a group with common cause and character that can then be "in diaspora." It was *in* diaspora and dislocation that pan-Indian identification was realized. Secondly, my formulation takes on added layers of meaning by referring to Native America as a place, as if it is geographically bounded and identifiable. We could look at native-controlled areas or reservation lands as a base of what is called Indian country, but we also know that native people are in the process of reimagining Indian country to incorporate the urban areas that generations of Indians have now made their homes.[35] There is another aspect of referring to native America, though, which is the underlying conviction that all of North America is Indian land. It is this logic that guides speakers to acknowledge the people indigenous to the area they are speaking in as the caretakers of the land, before beginning their public speech. This kind of indigenous geography then, stands in defiance of the political borders claimed by the north American nation-states. This demonstrates a double consciousness on the part of native people, remembering the

[35] Rosenthal, *Reimagining Indian Country*.

past and the geographical land of the past, what we might call the pre-colonial imaginary.

One complication is that even in diaspora, pan-Indian consciousness has identified all of the US as "Indian land" so even in Los Angeles, a mixed-blood apache can feel or claim to be on Indian land. Diaspora is working in tandem here with the unifying force of ethnonymic Indianness. This unity is still mediated by tribal boundaries that are mapped over (or under) dominant political borders such that an Apache in Los Angeles will recognize the Tongva people at the beginning of a public performance.

Johnson brings up the intriguing question of whether a group can undergo de-diasporization (34)? Examples include Palestinians who were able to return to the west bank from Kuwait or Jews returned to the state of Israel. American Indians certainly face the possibility of de-diasporization, not only from the possibility of returning to their homelands (which have been modified and colonized and enclosed as reservations), but also by the strong force of assimilation in which they have existed under attack for the last few centuries. As Deborah Davis Jackson discusses in her essay, "This Hole in our Heart," many urban Indians were raised in denial of their ethnicity, remembering parents' vehement denial of being Indian and avoidance of Indian relatives.[36]

But part of that pan-Indian construction also affects the Hummingbird Circle because their practice relies on Plains Indian religious forms transmitted by Lakota religious leaders. Thus, while it is known that Indian people come from throughout

[36] Jackson, "'This Hole in Our Heart': The Urban-Raised Generation and the Legacy of Silence."

the continent, Lakota ceremonial protocol is what has primarily been exported and practiced. It is consumed abroad from Lakota homeland as a manifestation of generic (possibly ideal) "Native American religion." So while Native Americans of other tribes and scholars have criticized the generalization of plains Indians representations as standing in for all the diversity in Native America, at some level, Urban Indians do the same thing in regards to religion.

In addition, for groups like the Hummingbird Circle, Lakota reservations become the homeland to which the ceremonies point. In the urban diaspora, it is the Lakota land and language that speak to the longing that people feel for an authentic home. The Way of the Pipe, and the use of medicines sacred to Lakota, implement the practice of Lakota religion, glossed as "native American." This dynamic is predicted by Johnson when he states that "diaspora culture is the elevating of one reference group over other possible ones" (38). Theoretically, diasporic sentiment and interventions are limited by the imaginable and salient in the hostland.

"Diaspora culture is usually urban culture" (39). Drawing on Robert Orsi's edited volume, *God in the City*, Johnson argues that immigrants to new cities are subjected to new regimes of subjectification and afforded new forms of subjectivizing. In this diasporizing moment of the neo-colonial era, history witnessed the formation of several collective pan-ethnic identifications – Black, Latino, Native American. In some sense, then, these (urban) diasporas can be viewed as definitively distinct, as new collectivities.

For urban Indians, this opening up of possibilities in identity realizes the place of Lakota-as-pan-Indian religion in part because it is accessible and also because it

styles itself as such: as universal or applying to all people, Indians in particular. Lakota religion may be a World Religion, not just pan-Indian. A focused study (not undertaken here) of Lakota religious forms in diaspora might investigate whether there is sufficient evidence to create a distinction between Lakota and other tribal religions where Lakotas have transformed their practices to be portable, accessible to others in diaspora. Indigenous religions are typically understood to ***not*** be portable, based in a specific land, and also not open to outsiders. But many Lakotas are defying these standards of indigenous religion.

> "Religious bases for identity are enhanced" via exile. "As migrants are forced to assimilate in the economic sector, they maintain a sense of continuity with the past primarily in cultural domains, such as religion, music, or style." (41)

When the particular features of one's specific tribal culture are blurred by obstructions in history, some urban Indians and others even on their own reservations are turning to Lakota style ceremonies, cultural practices, and religion.[37] So while hunting buffalo or harvesting sweetgrass became impossible for the Lakota (or other plains Indians) in Los Angeles, religious performance becomes more important as a source of ethnic affiliation and staying in touch with home. The religious stagings of ceremonies like the Sun Dance similarly become the occasions for visits back home –in a religious sense these journeys become pilgrimages.

Religions are not simply practiced by diasporic cohorts, "Diasporas do not merely express or carry religions: in a certain sense, they make them" (42). They provide a crucible for religious systems to become more fully articulated. For

[37] Owen, *The Appropriation of Native American Spirituality*; Dennis F. Kelley, "Alcohol Abuse Recovery and Prevention as Spiritual Practice," in *Religion and Healing in Native America: Pathways for Renewal*, Religion, Health, and Healing (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2008), 65–90.

example, JZ Smith argued in *To Take Place* (1987) that the forced exile of Jews necessitated a more portable transmissible style of Judaism that had to transition from being based on temple ritual to religious law.[38] As social, political conditions change, religious systems are forced to shift focus through the different dimensions of religion (a la Ninian Smart), from ritualistic → doctrinal or other formulae.

"Diasporas force the hand of practitioners using religious discourses and actions" (43). They change from being taken for granted aspects of community life to being specially set apart as "objects of conscious selection" (43). Groups and individuals in diaspora must decide which practices must be retained, which expunged. The question of who decides the priorities evokes the intractable problem of religious authority.

This is where a white Sun Dancer like those I have met in Ventura will theoretically hold to the reified tradition steadfastly: when their racial identity as white does not lend them the religious authority to make changes like those Tio Moses has made over time in his lodges (described in Chapter 4). However, it may be the case that over time they will feel the freedom to make changes based on need and circumstance. But this theory would predict that even if this does occur, it will be more hesitant, more easily retracted, than those leaders whose Indianness racially is unquestionable.

> When indigenous religions become diasporic, they must become at least modestly more cosmopolitan in their appeal—available and recognizable to audiences that did not produce them, and which may be distant in time and space from the site of their origins. (44)

[38] cited in Johnson, *Diaspora Conversions*, 42.

Diasporas make religions by designating past sacred sites, and generating new spaces that "present multiple horizons of memory for adherents" (44). Immigrants replant new sites; the Hummingbird Circle has a spatial history of its own, places they once held ceremonies in whose names are remembered: Chorro Grande, Fillmore, SpiritDancer Ranch, and Saticoy. Even as new sites are replanted, "remembered spaces become sacralized as pivots of imagined communities" (45). When religious groups are exiled from a homeland, they can regain it symbolically by reconstituting its memory in idealizing ceremony. This memory making is entwined with commercial interests in selling commodities of the homeland, which become markers of pure origins. James Griffiths describes such a situation in the Pima pilgrimage-saint icon network in the Upper Pimería.[39] In the Lakota case, these commodities are pipes, buffalo hides, sweetgrass, and other materials that can only be obtained from the prairie. And the spread of these objects then has retroactive effects on the homeland iteration of the religion even as it brings in new material for ritual consumption, new sacred medicines.

"Migration also enables the formation of new and wider imagined religious communities" (48). For Tio Moses, the Lakota Way of the Pipe, becomes glossed as "Native American Religion." But it also interacts with Chumash perceived spiritual sovereignty so that Tio Moses opens his ceremonies with the Chumash welcome song. This protocol fulfills the common etiquette among Native Americans to acknowledge the indigenous keepers of land they are visiting. Religiously, incorporating a Chumash element calls for adherents of the Way of the Pipe to reconceive of themselves as part

[39] Griffith, *Beliefs and Holy Places: A Spiritual Geography of the Pimeria Alta*.

of a trans-indigenous religious community where enough similarities are recognized or imagined so as to identify them all together as "Native Americans." However, membership in that racial category has conventionally been imposed (although it is more likely to be chosen today than in times past).[40] Pigmentocracy reigns in the US but American Indians are often read as Mexican or Latino by Euroamericans in the Southwest. So choosing a native identity in a California urban area is a conscious choice for many who could pass for Chicano, or who are, in fact, both.

On the other hand, there is a trend in American society where Native America has spiritual currency, and so more people are claiming native ancestry who may not have done so earlier in their life.[41] Other families face issues of shame around their Indian identities creating oppositional social forces pushing both ways, often depending on geographic area.[42] It may be advantageous (safer) for a Navajo to downplay their Indianness in an Arizona border town, whereas the opposite may be true in Southern California where they can favorably adorn themselves with feathers and turquoise.

> The uncoupling of ethnic from racial identifications has taken especially curious forms in the area of religion, as many Cuban and Brazilian practitioners of the religions of the African Diaspora are not black at all, either in their self-understandings or the perceptions of others. To take an extreme example, someone who identifies racially as 'white' may under certain conditions of 'soft racialization' mark herself as ethnically African when it is advantageous to do so. Such voluntary double consciousness may present double value, the ability to see and work with multiple audiences. Whites may become 'African' by initiation into religions such as Santería, though their

[40] Joane Nagel, *American Indian Ethnic Renewal: Red Power and the Resurgence of Identity and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).
[41] Joane Nagel, "American Indian Ethnic Renewal: Politics and the Resurgence of Identity," *American Sociological Review* 60, no. 6 (1995): pp. 947–965.
[42] Yolanda Broyles-González and Pilulaw Khus, *Earth Wisdom: A California Chumash Woman* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2011).

> willingness to do so depends on the ability to shift ethnic codes in other contexts… If joining the African Diaspora entails a conversion of subjectivity, the practical implications for collective identifications and representations remain thoroughly underdetermined. The distinctiveness of the African Diaspora perhaps lies in the confusion between the way its members read themselves in and through elective subjectivities related variously to blackness and Africanness, and the way they may be read by others as simply black within the suffocating monopolistic closure of U.S. -style pigmentocracy.[43]

In this framework, African diasporic religions are ones that invoke Africa as a horizon of memory, authenticity, and sacred authority—and perceive the distance from Africa a problem remedied by rendering it present in ritual: a cultural category not a racial one (54). My observation of religion in the American Indian Urban Diaspora maps well onto Johnson's framework. The diverse group of people who attend ceremonies at the Hummingbird Circle enter a space where nativeness is being consciously constructed. Regardless of their ethnic or racial identifications, each attendee participates in a search for nativeness as a source of spiritual knowledge or cultural inclusion. Beginning in the 1960's Urban Indians dislocated from their homelands continued the conversion to a pan-Indian subjectivity that had taken root earlier in the 19th century and flowered as the Ghost Dance Movement and the spread of peyotism. The diffusion of Lakota Religion in the 20th century onward may become the religious movement best remembered by history.

Retrieving Native Voices in the Urban Diaspora

Christian, Urban Indians of mixed-race are not the preferred subjects for outside researchers who seek data from "true" Indian religion and culture. And precious little is written about the urban diaspora that resulted from Termination

[43] Johnson, *Diaspora Conversions*, 52–53.

and Relocation Policies of the federal government beginning in the 1950's. Yet, since that time and before, native peoples have been creating ways of staying connected to their homelands and harmonizing their Christianity with their native sensibilities. How do we retrieve their subjugated voices? In a word, by listening. Careful, sensitive ethnography remains one of the best ways of connecting to subjugated voices. For silenced, dislocated, neglected peoples like Native Americans in the US, a primary issue remains not just in making their voices heard, but in establishing the connections prerequisite to conditions in which they will speak. A silent, underground religious practice is still a viable choice for many native people after the centuries of legal repression. Given this background, I turn now to some native stories of moving to urban areas and carrying on a rich land-based tradition in diaspora among the inter-tribal, multi-racial spiritual network in Ventura County, California.

How do we define Indigenous Peoples, and how do their religions fit into the paradigms or taxonomies of the field of Religious Studies? In addition, what is the role of religious studies scholarship in determining whose voices are featured and whose are subjugated? Finally, what do native people have to say about the importance of their religious traditions and their relevance to everyday life on the ground?

Indigenous people are increasingly coming to see each other as related in constellations like the Global South. Focusing more narrowly on the indigenous peoples of North America, how do scholars construct knowledge and identifications about American Indians? Today in 2014, most Native American people live in urban

areas and most identify as Christian.[44] That these facts are not widely known points to the ways in which the academic disciplines construct knowledge about indigenous peoples of North America.. Why do we focus on traditionalists on reservations? What about Christian Indians in urban areas? Do we categorize them as "assimilated" and therefore of less interest? Are they less real? Do we erase them from the field of Indigenous Religions just as their ancestors were erased from the fold of the human, the citizen, or the holder of rights such as land rights, a right to language and a right to cultural heritage protection? In short, do our scholarly categories do violence to Indian people and communities, just as legal categories did in the past and present? What damage do we do to self-determined identity when we privilege some Indians over others?

These questions are important because of the history of divide and conquer strategies in colonized populations around the world; and European-derived colonizers do not have a monopoly on that. Religion and religious conversion have been one wedge that colonialism used to drive divisions into native communities. With the power, maybe even the sorcery, of academic discourse today, questions remain about what unintended consequences we may be creating in native communities. I also ask these questions to be critical of their implications in my own work.

Since 2002, I have participated in a shifting, diffuse, multi-racial community practicing Native American Religion in Ventura County, California. Although I can

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[44] *American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month: Facts for Features* (U.S. Census Bureau, October 31, 2013), http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/cb13-ff26.html.

articulate a critique of colonizing identity formations, as I have above, I still notice my own tendency to search for quintessentially native elements of religion and to focus on them. I find them interesting and so do participants. But my involvement with a community so diverse challenges my stereotypes about what is normal, what is native, and who counts. Yet, this opaque terrain is the reality for most native people today, in the urban areas where they live. Most studies do not acknowledge this fact, much less investigate what it means to the study of religion in Native America. The American Indian urban diaspora's integration with others of diverse racial and national identities provides us with the opportunity to reconceptualize the study of indigenous religions. An urban diaspora implies the concomitant changes in the clear demarcations of tribal enrollment, the meaning of homeland, of identity based in a reciprocal relationship with that homeland, and of the regional social and kinship networks that urban Indians are distanced from.

The kind of informal membership that I have observed in Ventura is mostly determined by attendance. If you show up at the ceremony, then you are one of the community. This is echoed by Hopi scholar Angela Gonzales. Among urban Indians, she says,

> "blood quantum is less important than participation in Indian community organizations and activities. Free from the structural constraints imposed by the federal government on Indian tribes, membership in an Indian community is far less formal, permitting individuals the opportunity to determine their level of participation and involvement."

Similar to precolonial times, she says, "membership in an urban Indian community is constituted by a network of social relations that link the individual to

the larger group."[45] This fluid social identification makes sense in a city where individuals can be anonymous, where people do not know each other's grandparents. Instead, they know each other's actions. Presence, service, and sincerity are the standards.

For example, participants use the phrase "showing up." By email and by word of mouth, multiple opportunities are presented for ways that people can help out: the many tasks associated with procuring and preparing the enormous amount of wood necessary for the fire, cleaning, maintenance, and communications. Going beyond the ceremony, showing up to help in these ways signals an unselfish commitment to the community by facilitating others' experience. It takes a great deal of work behind the scenes to coordinate these events, and there is no professional clergy or institutional treasury behind the community leaders and participants. Tudor spoke about community-building inside the lodge. He said, "a lot of people talk about wanting community but they show up five minutes before the lodge is supposed to start. Community takes work; it takes people showing up." He is expressing a logic of praxis rather than ethnic tribalism. Tio Moses echoed that sentiment to me, noting the priority of one's commitment over their blood identity. As an example of an urban Indian community whose identity is contested by scholars, I will look next at the contemporary Chumash community around Santa Barbara, California.

[45] Gonzales, "Urban (Trans)Formations: Changes in the Meaning and Use of American Indian Identity," 179–180.

Identity in the Chumash reemergence

'Indianness' has been defined by Whites for many years. Always they have been outside observers looking into Indian society from a self-made pedestal of preconceived ideas coupled with an innate superior attitude toward those different from themselves.

-Vine Deloria, Jr. *Custer Died for your Sins*[46]

At the heart of such a view of authenticity is a belief that indigenous cultures cannot change, cannot recreate themselves, and still claim to be indigenous. Nor can they be complicated, internally diverse or contradictory. Only the West has that privilege.

-Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*[47]

Chicano Studies scholar Yolanda Broyles-González treats the issue of fluid Chumash identity in her book *Earth Wisdom* co-authored with Chumash Elder Pilulaw Khus.[48] For the Chumash and other Indian nations in Alta California up to north of the San Francisco Bay, European urbanization came to them in the form of missions. "Chumash" is the English term for a language family of at least seven dialects spoken by the native inhabitants of a large area centering around the Santa Barbara channel, south to Malibu and north to San Luis Obispo, and offshore to the Channel Islands. The term itself artificially conglomerates a diffuse group of what were autonomous, though related, villages and trade networks. The regional groups are now known by their Spanish ethnonyms: Barbareño (from Santa Barbara), Ineseño (from Santa Ynez), Ventureño (from Ventura), and so on. During the Mission period from 1770's-1830's, Chumash were forced out of their villages into forced labor at the missions.

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[46] Vine Deloria Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 265.
[47] Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 74.
[48] Broyles-González and Khus, *Earth Wisdom: A California Chumash Woman*.

From the Mexican revolution until 1848, the Chumash were technically Mexican and, if bilingual, would have been Hispanic. It was turbulent history, and the brutal violence they faced under American occupation after 1848 made it very dangerous to be a California Indian. The US regime in California offered money for Indian scalps, and tacitly permitted abducting Indians into slavery, especially women. Many Chumash chose to de-Indianize, to identify as Californio or Chicano, while continuing a lifeway that was typically or partially Indian.[49]

The reason Chumash identity is in debate is because anthropologists Haley and Wilcoxon have challenged the authenticity of most people who identify as Chumash today. In a series of articles starting in 1997, they produce an exclusivist historiography of the Chumash community based solely on Mission records. Their work follows the lineage graphing done by Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History curator John Johnson, who is the self-appointed arbiter of Chumash identity. Since he controls access to the Mission records, a set of texts these anthropologists treat as almost sacred, only he can validate an individual's claim to Chumash ancestry. It is the case for the Chumash, as for every other tribe whose membership was committed to rolls, that *not* all Chumash families were represented on the Mission roll. This historical fact also makes it a troubling case that the contemporary claims of the Chumash community are handled by a Museum of Natural History (which is located very near the Mission de Santa Barbara). Haley and Wilcoxon write in creative terms about the "ethnogenesis" of the "neo-Chumash," accusing the mixed-blood members

[49] Michael F. Magliari, "Free State Slavery: Bound Indian Labor and Slave Trafficking in California's Sacramento Valley, 1850–1864," *Pacific Historical Review* 81, no. 2 (May 2012): 155–92.

of the Chumash community of the contrived construction of an ethnic identity as if it were artificially fabricated. Delegitimating whole branches of Chumash families (while recognizing their cousins), has real consequences for cultural heritage access to burial remains and other material claims.

Broyles-González identifies a period in the 20th century as the "Chumash Reemergence." During this time, Chumash people engaged in multiple projects of cultural rejuvenation, including basketweaving, language study, and the building and paddling of *tomols*, their traditional redwood-plank oceangoing canoes. In 2001, under the auspices of the native-led Chumash Maritime Association, the Chumash community completed the first crossing of the Santa Barbara channel to Santa Cruz Island in a *tomol* in 150 years. Friends and relatives who had traveled to Limuw (Santa Cruz Island) welcomed them home with songs and prayers in the Barbareño Chumash language.[51]

Much of the academic identity baiting and the accusations of ethnic switching that Chumash have endured are based on the historical precedent created by Federal officials that, in order to have standing, native people had to *maintain* their ethnic identity continuously over time.[52] In fact, the identity changes in question may well have been purely semantic in labeling. Switching to "Mexican" as their identity when doing so meant survival was an obvious choice. Indeed, even among the federally

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[51] Cordero, "The Gathering of Traditions: The Reciprocal Alliance of History, Ecology, Health, and Community, among the Contemporary Chumash"; see also Dean DePhillipo, *Return to Limuw*, DVD (Santa Barbara: Chumash Maritime Association, 2002).

[52] Gerald Torres and Kathryn Milun, "Translating Yonnondia by Precedent and Evidence: The Mashpee Indian Case," *Duke Law Journal* 1990, no. 4 (September 1990): 625–59.

recognized Ineseño Chumash, one elder is recorded saying "I would never even tell people I was Chumash. I would say I was Mexican."[53]

It is important for new studies to incorporate the reality of mixed-race identities for contemporary Indian communities – not as dilution, but as central to the character of their ongoing survival. Indeed, Julianne Cordero-Lamb puts this fact of networking into a traditional, healing frame: "Chumash and Californio families are, by allying ourselves with the larger community, working within an ancient model of gathering power and performing health."[54] Seen in this way, the fluid semantic labels and the intermarriage with non-Indians are examples of an Indian peoples' expression of power and resistance, conscious ways to adapt and survive the ongoing burden of Eurocolonialism. Too often the concept of "adaptation" takes on a negative connotation when applied to Indian cultures – as in a betrayal to the primordial way of being they are supposed to embody. Mick Taussig characterizes this tendency to preserve indigenous forms as "things-for-us," simulacra of a once noble primitive way of life that is a feather in the cap of American civilization.[55] But biologically the term adapt has a positive meaning: to change in such a way as to proactively become more suited to survive and thrive in a changing world. This positive meaning is easily ascribed to changes in western cultural systems like capitalism, but conveyed as pollution to a native culture viewed as only authentic when mummified in the pre-colonial past. It is this pollution narrative of a Chumash past that is mobilized by

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[53] Broyles-González and Khus, *Earth Wisdom: A California Chumash Woman*, 29.
[54] Cordero, "The Gathering of Traditions: The Reciprocal Alliance of History, Ecology, Health, and Community, among the Contemporary Chumash," 155.
[55] Michael T Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

Haley and Wilcoxon when they ascribe authentic Chumash identity only to those individuals today whose lineage can be traced to official Mission documents.[56]

For the Chumash, diaspora has not been forcible removal from their entire region, but rather a dispersal within that region when, for the Barbareño, their last reserved land was swindled away in the 1880's.[57] Many Chumash remain in the Santa Barbara area but do not have their historic right to a central, tribally-controlled land-base on which they can live in close proximity. Rather than a reservation then, the community has found visible ways to unite such as religious ceremonies, cultural practices like the tomol, and political resistance. An example of this kind of political activism is the yearlong occupation of Point Conception in 1978-1979 to prevent construction of a gas plant. This re-connected Chumash people and their allies to a sacred site in their homeland in a very concrete way – occupying it in defiance of legal consequences. In the same elegant way, paddling a traditional canoe in the open sea connects a maritime people to the ocean that has sustained them for millennia.

As the American empire moved West, it disrupted existing power dynamics between raiding tribes, pueblos, Hispanos, and Mexicans. The effects on identity are still felt today. As it has become more culturally (and in some cases economically) more rewarding to be Indian, hundreds of thousands of people have performed ethnic switching on official forms like the US census. Notably, between 1970 and 1980, those who identified as American Indian grew by 72.4%, while the population as a whole

[56] Many other tribes face similar problems across Native America.
[57] Broyles-González and Khus, *Earth Wisdom: A California Chumash Woman*, 3.

grew only 11.4%.[58] This switching makes sense when viewed through the lens of historical power relations and placed alongside other identity formations. For example, when a Pueblo family's primary threat came from raids from the Navajo or Apache, they might have switched to a Spanish identity that was socially expedient: "Speak Spanish, practice Catholicism, don't die." In that same place in Northern New Mexico a few decades later, with American ascendancy in military power, then it might not have been as advantageous to be affiliated with Mexicans if one's Pueblo was regarded as friendly to US interests. Part of the change today is that it is once again safe in many contexts to be publicly Indian, and so more people are expressing their identity that way.

In her study of transnational Indians in Albuquerque, New Mexico, Natalie Avalos Cisneros tells the story of a native woman who was raised in East Los Angeles by mixed-heritage parents. She later applied for citizenship with her father's pueblo but was denied because of her mixed blood. She ultimately turned this rejection from an Indian tribe into a rejection of tribalism itself, subsuming the limited scope of a tribe on blood quantum to a vision of universal humanity at peace with all people.[59]

This example of coming to peace with one's mixed race is also present in the work of Greg Sarris, a White/Jewish/Filipino/Pomo/Coast Miwok professor of literature. In his book telling the story of Mabel McKay, famous Pomo basketweaver, dreamer, and doctor, he weaves in the process of finding his own identity: meeting his Filipino grandfather after having been adopted by a white family and raised in a

[58] Gonzales, "Urban (Trans)Formations: Changes in the Meaning and Use of American Indian Identity," 176.
[59] Natalie Avalos Cisneros. unpublished manuscript.

diverse neighborhood in Santa Rosa, California. After earning a Ph.D. from Stanford, he becomes a very effective, though controversial, president of his tribe, facilitating their re-recognition by the Federal government, after having been terminated in 1958, and presiding over the planning and launch of their casino, which opened in November 2013. In one of his extraordinary short stories, a fictional grandfather remarks to another elder about his grandchildren, "I got them in all colors."[60]

For Indians in the urban diaspora, having relatives of all colors occurs both by blood and by ritual kinship. Living together, performing ceremonies together, challenges all of us not to stereotype. This is the backdrop of power relations in urban Native America today. It complicates the conversation around who is subjugated and informs the problems that urban communities are facing. Diabetes, Obesity, addiction, gangs, crime, poor housing, shortened life expectancy, religious intolerance: they do not just affect full-bloods. If our analyses of religion in Native America are to continue to be relevant, we must start to be attentive to these dynamics and reconceptualize the study of Native American religious traditions. Where mixed-race is one source of imprecision in the field, another stark polemically charged debate has stormed around non-native "wannabes" who attempt to infiltrate native religious context. I turn next to a consideration of this debate.

Middle course between "Real Indians" and "wannabes"

My goal in this section is to navigate the treacherous waters between the competing discourses of "Real Indians" and "fake New Age wannabes" in terms of their religious fidelity. One approach would be to chart a middle course between

[60] Greg Sarris, *Grand Avenue* (New York: Penguin, 1995), 156.

these two poles by following the spiritual network in Ventura that includes both. When they allow guests, one class of people that will attend will be various degrees of unscrupulous New Agers, voyeurs who will attempt to use that experience as currency in their own identity games on the market, i.e. hosting workshops or retreats where they list experience with Native American "ceremony" as one of their qualifications (and perhaps even "shamanism").[61]

Following Paul Johnson's theoretical work on diaspora religions, those two poles can be seen as existing within one discursive religious system. They both engage in and imagine themselves engaging in "Native American spirituality." They signify against each other as indeed Suzanne Owen's book *The Appropriation of Native American Spirituality* deftly tracks. All tribal leaders and native identified practitioners warn against commercialization and unauthorized appropriation. Conversely, all non-Indian practitioners who are "doing it right," as are those I have observed in Ventura, have a defensive posture to claim that their practice is valid. Non-native leaders who pour lodges can recite their qualifications in terms of with whom they vision quested and Sun Danced. And these qualifications, accompanied by observance of attendant protocols, seem to be acceptable to most native watchdogs.

On the other hand, even the most flagrant plastic shamans have a justification.[62] These include the universal nature of all religions, or that the First Amendment to the United States Constitution protects the Free Exercise of Religion, and that should include their playing shaman. The point is, both sides signify in the

[61] However, as a scholar I must be careful not to chart a middle course in such a way that inscribes the dichotomy as insiders see it.
[62] Clearwater, "Playing Shaman"; Deloria, *Playing Indian*; Rose, "The Great Pretenders: Further Reflections of Whiteshamanism."

same discursive field. I have come to the same conclusions as Owen in her assessment that it is *through the work of protocol that ceremonial leaders and altars are authenticated*. The altars, as ritual lineages and matrices of medicine and protocol, feed into real social connections, too, between medicine people, their tribal communities, and the urban people whom they train and authorize to carry altars. The mode of religious transmission and the continuity of relationship set apart those who identify with traditional altars, and those who defy such lineages. Most famous among the latter are those who claim authority from a mysterious benefactor from a lost tribe who died before they could meet anyone else to verify their existence. In short, these "wannabe" altars are independent.[63]

Altars like the one Tio Moses carries always exist in relationship to the elders of that lineage and the holder incurs responsibilities for reciprocity and for the protocols. An independent group can innovate indefinitely because there is no presiding authority to which they must answer. There is a sense of freedom in that to freely evolve the tradition to continue to suit changing contexts and this is part of their appeal to non-natives who are unfamiliar with native protocols or uncomfortable with the social mores of native communities. One example of this divide is the doctrinal claim that when you enter the sweat lodge you must remove all jewelry and hair ties because the lodge is ritually transformed into the womb of the mother earth and participants should therefore enter it as though they were in an actual womb—with no artificial accoutrements. Some non-traditional sweat lodge

[63] Castaneda, *The Teachings of Don Juan*; Brooke Medicine Eagle, *Buffalo Woman Comes Singing: The Spirit Song of a Rainbow Medicine Woman*, 1st ed (New York: Ballantine, 1991).

groups have interpreted this to mean that they should enter the lodge literally naked and advertise as "clothing-optional."

Traditional lodges like the ones I have been attending in California require women to dress modestly with high necklines and long skirts covering their ankles. Men generally wear only trunks. The lines of this protocol debate are clear: both sides agree on the symbolism of the sweat lodge as womb, but differ on the interpretation. The clothing-optional adherents perceive the modesty imposed on women in traditional lodges as an artifact of a conservative culture, possibly even patriarchal. To them, the progressive changes in their cultural attitudes toward women's bodies dictates that women and men should be free to experience the womb of the mother completely naked and therefore completely loyal to the symbolism of womb and rebirth. I do not think that traditional Indians regard this as absurdly implausible interpretation, but they rely on the traditions that they inherited from their elders and prioritize fidelity to them and their protocols. Whether or not this precept of modesty is itself an artifact of colonial mentality imposed on tribes by sexually modest early religious authorities will have to be the subject of another investigation. For my purpose here, I must simply report that non-traditional interpretations and practices like the clothing-optional lodge render those whole groups inauthentic to indigenous observers for whom tradition and relationships are so important. As one white Sun Dancer I know might say "it's not indigenous to be isolated."

Chapter 2

American Indian Urbanization and the Logic of Assimilation

History of Urbanization

In the United States in 2014, most Native Americans live in urban areas. The 2010 census shows that about two-thirds live in urban areas[1] with only 22% living on reservations or native held lands.[2] This fact is largely unknown in American society, which points to our tendency to locate Native Americans far from the American cultural center. We represent them in popular and academic discourse as remote, as if they are confined to rural, reservation-based areas, as well as rendering them invisible in representations of urban populations. For instance, The New York Times, in April 2013, referred to the migration of American Indians to urban centers as "largely unnoticed."[3] However, native people have been moving to US cities and remaking homes and communities there since at least the turn of the 20th century.

"During the first half of the twentieth century, Federal Indian policy was a sincere effort to reform Indian conditions and to assist Native Americans in developing the confidence and economic improvement for assimilating into the dominant society. It was a reversal of policy from the previous century of U.S. military–Indian wars and

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[1] Carol Berry, "Urban Indians: Greater Numbers, Fewer Dollars," *Indian Country Today*, May 23, 2012, http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2012/05/23/urban-indians-greater-numbers-fewer-dollars-114332.
[2] *American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month: Facts for Features*.
[3] Timothy Williams, "Quietly, Indians Reshape Cities and Reservations," *New York Times*, April 13, 2013.

treatymaking."[4] Although "reform" connotes a gentler approach to Indian policy than extermination, such efforts included forcible assimilation like boarding schools and the "reorganization" of tribal governments to resemble corporate boards of directors. Both of these conditions had catastrophic consequences on native communities.

The rationale that termination was for Indians' own good harkened back to the rhetoric during the removal era of the 1830's when President Andrew Jackson and others claimed that removal was necessary to protect Indians.[5] In the 1950's it was Termination and Relocation, but in the 19th century it was removal or extermination as white settlers expanded deeper into Indian territory. The former utilized a logic of assimilation, while the latter relied on the project to physically remove Indians from the national body.

Fixico links Termination efforts in policies after removal—the 1887 Dawes Act allotted Indian lands to individuals resulting in millions of acres being converted to white ownership. Also the 1924 General Citizenship Act conferred US citizenship on all Indians with or without their consent. Having thus become part of the US politically, Indians could no longer levy claims against it as foreign nations. This can also be seen to set the stage for termination because Indians had previously only held tribal citizenship. With dual citizenship in tribes and the US, it was foreseeable that some would view the tribe as superfluous to providing basic needs and governance to Indian people, as redundant.

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[4] Donald Lee Fixico, *Termination and Relocation: Federal Indian Policy, 1945-1960*, 1st ed (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986), xiii–xiv.
[5] Ibid., xi.

The assimilation program during the first half of the 20th century produced more contact with white society in an attempt to reform Indians economically and socially prepare them for mainstream life.[6] The mistake of American legislators was to assume that contact meant a one-way motion of Indians assimilating toward white society—as if *everyone* would naturally desire to be white. This arrogant assumption was based on the social hierarchy taken as common sense at that time. It was also the basis of the logic of assimilation: that it was *natural* and unavoidable that Indians should curtail their native expressions and slip toward whiteness. Fixico notes the divide between mixed-bloods and full-bloods on the issue of assimilation. Mixed-bloods often "dressed like white Americans and imitated their lifestyle, which reinforced the belief that Indians were assimilated and were ready for trust removal."[7] This would set the stage for Termination policy as the culmination of a half-century of reform.

Although a logic of assimilation informed the Termination and Relocation policies of the U.S. Federal Government in the mid-20th century, Native Americans have resisted total integration into the American mainstream. While other scholars have documented how this maintenance of a minority ethnic identity is achieved through cultural groups that participate in such events as pow-wows, language revitalization programs, and through the many networks for social, environmental, and political activism,[8] none have focused on religion in the urban relocation. Nevertheless, native peoples continue to form urban spiritual networks facilitating the continuation of their religious traditions,

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[6] Ibid., xiv.
[7] Ibid., 16.
[8] Weibel-Orlando, *Indian Country, L.A.*

as well as making these traditions accessible to non-native participants in decolonizing spaces conducted with respect toward traditional elders and protocols.

If native people have brought their traditions to urban areas, they have also brought urban practices and ideas back to their homelands. Indeed, as historian Nicolas Rosenthal has argued, American Indians have engaged in a long quest to "reimagine Indian country" to include the urban areas to which they have migrated and now live in diaspora.[9] Reimagining here must be conceived in contrast to re-conquering. This is not an issue of control or domination. Rather, Apaches and Navajos, Mohawks and Lakotas, and members or descendants of many other tribes have sought to apply the cultural logics of their heritage to the urban areas where they now live. This includes creating place: forming connections and ascribing meaning to drastically different natural landscapes, as well as the extraordinary racial and ethnic diversity American cities enjoy today. Neither are they immune to the pressures of assimilation assaulting all immigrants in these cities. Public policy programs, health care facilities, the workplace, public cultural events, and other factors apply homogenizing pressure on newcomers to American cities. Intermarriage with other Indians, other minorities, and with whites also contributes to the pressures on urban indians to sacrifice their traditions and conform to new cultural formations.

I rehearse the history of American Indian urbanization through the policies of Termination and Relocation below in order to trace the logic of assimilation through these events in American Indian history.

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[9] Rosenthal, *Reimagining Indian Country*.

Boarding Schools

The boarding school program of forced assimilation is central to the history of American Indians' contact with the outside world and their moves to cities. Many Indians who migrated to urban areas graduated from Indian boarding schools where these forces of assimilation took on sometimes-grotesque coercive forms. Forbidden to speak their native languages or exhibit any cultural expressions, not only were native children severely punished for doing so, they were too often also abused and molested. In addition, the objectives of residential schools were not as modest as simply stamping out native cultural sensibilities; they also sought to actively replace them with mainstream American values popular at the time. These included a punctual work ethic appropriate for men in an industrial labor force; domestic-submissive gender roles for women including preparation to work as maids and domestic servants; and indoctrination in the practices and beliefs of Christianity. Many of these boarding schools were operated by religious organizations, further implicating religion as a tool of oppression.[10]

The United States congress pursued assimilation as a policy and a concept starting in the late 19th century when it believed "the nation would best be served if Native cultures were eradicated and replaced by American standards of 'civilization.'"[11] This led to the Dawes Act of 1887: splitting up communally held Indian land into "allotments" managed by individual tribal members on the private market. In effect, this resulted in the transfer of around 100 million acres of land from indigenous control to

[10] David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995).
[11] Rosenthal, *Reimagining Indian Country*, 50.

private hands. Assimilation policy also led to the boarding school program that meant to suppress indigenous languages, cultures, and religions. This Americanization spread to other immigrants at the time and into the 20th century including the national education policy where all children would be taught the official narrative of American history.[12]One effect of compulsory schooling is the marginalization of indigenous epistemologies, cosmologies, structures of knowledge that inform native science and religion. I turn briefly here to a consideration of native science as a product of an epistemology banned from government-run boarding schools.

In a native society where it is believed on principle that all things are interconnected and are animated by the same power, then the focus of native science becomes the pursuit of inquiry into how to live one's life and organize society to fit into that order. The principle of interdependence has a moral imperative on human life. All people engaged in that pursuit seek to conduct themselves appropriately, to be good relatives to the human and more-than-human community in which they are enmeshed.[13]

According Native American Studies scholar Gregory Cajete, native science relies on balancing forces that coexist in dynamic reciprocity rather than in opposition. The entire universe is an integrated whole acting in exchange with itself and facilitating creative expression. The role of humans within that field of possibility then is to enhance the experiential reward by developing and practicing a way of life that keeps individuals and society in the flow, in the vortex of truth and power, able to access the subtle knowledge flowing through the ecosphere. Our greatest source of metaphors

[12] Ibid.
[13] Cajete, *Native Science*.

come from nature, so a native science uses nature metaphors rather than mechanistic metaphors to conceive of nature.

Native Science is a map of natural reality drawn from the experience of thousands of human generations. Wisdom is obtaine by utilizing the metaphoric mind "inclusive and expansive in its processing of experience and knowledge."[14] This metaphoric mind as described by Cajete is an older part of the brain, and its description resembles spiritual experience: "Because its processes are tied to creativity, perception, image, physical senses, and intuition, [it] reveals itself through abstract symbols, visual/spatial reasoning, sound, kinesthetic expression, and various forms of ecological and integrative thinking.[15] These rich intellectual traditions were nearly impossible to pass on when the nation had been removed to foreign lands, and the children were being removed to boarding schools. Thus schooling was an existential threat to the very base of knowledge accumulated over centuries by indigenous nations and had traumatic effects on entire populations.

The removal of Indian children produced generations of traumatized, ill-adjusted adults estranged from their families and homelands. Tragically, those abused were far more likely to inflict similar abuse on their own or other children. The overhaul of tribes' governance structures left many traditional leaders estranged from the new seats of power in their tribe as the new offices were designed for those more accustomed to Anglo law, language, and styles of governance. So while reform is not termination, neither is it autonomy. It denotes a logic of forced assimilation based on a negative judgment of native cultural identity. Only those in need of fixing need reform. This logic

[14] Ibid., 51.
[15] Ibid.

relies on the fallacy that reform toward the American mainstream was the normal, the natural, and the correct path for all Indian people.

The paradigm shift away from and disruption of native science, philosophy, cosmology, history, community, and passing on of knowledge in Indian boarding schools assimilating young students into a western mechanistic narrative is reinforced through the policies of termination and relocation affecting all ages and all communities.

The graduates of these schools understandably found themselves in confusing personal and cultural situations. Although they had been trained to assimilate to white society, they were still racialized by their skin color and faced the concomitant prejudice. In addition, upon returning to their home communities after 6-8 years away, they were virtually strangers to their own families and struggled to re-integrate into the social life there. This removal of native children raises important issues about cultural survival, hegemony, and assimilation. Schooled Indians wondered why their people clung to primitive superstitions and barbaric practices. Removed from the cultural logics that inform native practices, graduates were hesitant to fully re-immerse themselves in a culture that now felt alien to them and which they judged as having no future in the western-dominated world.

WWII and the Indian Claims Commission Bill

A similar dynamic occurred when Indian soldiers, serving in the United States military, returned from service abroad. They had enjoyed some privilege as soldiers, but returned to a country that treated them like second-class citizens. Indeed, this second-class status was familiar; most of their older relatives had not been born citizens of the

U.S. but were naturalized into citizenship as part of the legalization of the annex of native-held lands.

Still, Native Americans volunteered for military service in World War II in record numbers, eager to fulfill traditional roles as warriors and as a ticket off their poverty-stricken reservations.[16] Those who returned from war alive often had difficulty adjusting back to reservation life after having been exposed to the outside world. "Many returned veterans soon became frustrated with reservation life. Unable to find work on or near reservations, they moved to cities to search for jobs."[17] Economic pressures, and a growing acceptance that Anglo lifestyles were the only route to future survival, led many Indians off-reservation in search of opportunities. What those in power, who celebrated this exodus, could not predict was the persistence of cultural attachments. The mythology of the melting pot in America was so prevalent it was unthinkable that Indians would find ways to renew cultural practices and connect with other Indians to form pan-Indian traditions such as pow-wows.

It was also true at this time following WWII that many mixed-bloods chose to pass as non-Indian to avoid discrimination and pursue economic opportunities available to them with better educations and lighter skin. These experiences of mixed-blood Indians, deemed successes by federal officials, led policy makers to believe that all Indians were well enough assimilated to be 'set free' of federal trust status, relinquish their own governance, and join mainstream American society. While public sector officials were swayed by this argument, liberal charity groups insisted, presciently, that the prerequisite for Indian liberation was education—for the non-Indian mainstream.

[16] Fixico, *Termination and Relocation*, 5–6.
[17] Ibid., 9.

Until it had shifted in its regard for Indians, they argued, laws that held native lands in trust were necessary to protect Indian lands from plunder and their tribal governance structures from dissolution.[18]

What is really at stake with this debate about trust protections are the rights of enrolled tribal members to dispose of their property as they wish. While in theory this can be framed as a question of freedom, in practice it often resulted in the irreversible loss of Indian land at sub-market prices and increased strain on the federal aid system when those "emancipated" Indians were without food and shelter. We must remember, however, that this situation did not reflect an innate deficiency among Indian people to care for themselves. Thousands of years of flourishing on this continent testify otherwise. Rather, the trust situation reflects the loss of indigenous *means* of survival. It also indexes the cultural incommensurability reflecting a narrow view of lifestyle choices by the American mainstream. It was the American settler state that encroached on Indian lands that had sustained them for centuries. This history shows that it was incredibly short-sighted[19] to offer removal to foreign lands, agricultural training, and food rations in exchange for the very foundation of tribal culture and sustenance. Indeed, removed from their homelands, Native Americans embarked on a diasporic journey, one that would leave an indelible mark on all facets of their societies and cultural expressions.

Part of the problem was that tribally controlled lands were usually located on poor soil unable to produce sustenance for its new inhabitants. Again, this is not a deficiency on the part of Indians or their ability to grow crops. Rather, it reflects

[18] Ibid., 10–12.
[19] Or, more cynically, genocidal

intentional traps set by military and federal officials to force assimilation by making long-term survival on reservation untenable.

Still, the "success" of the boarding school program to produce de-Indianized graduates continued unabated. As Fixico notes, many of these graduates *did* support the removal of trust restrictions on their land, a position termed "Progressive" at that time because they saw these restrictions as enforcing a second-class citizenship on Indians. These views contributed to the bureaucratic belief that "Native Americans wanted assimilation."[20] The accompanying rhetoric that would lead to the policy of Termination claimed that the Progressive position would give American Indians the same opportunities that all other Americans enjoyed. Of course, even a cursory reading of American history shows that American citizens did not enjoy universal right at that time, or ever. Japanese-Americans had just been confined in Internment camps solely because of their race; Black Americans in the South lived under "Separate but Equal"" conditions; Mexicans and other Hispanics in the Southwest, Chinese on the Pacific coast: racial minorities all over the US faced oppression, discrimination, violence, and second-class citizenship.[21]

But facts rarely derail ideological politics, and the stage was set for Termination. In a context echoing today's political rhetoric of cutting social welfare programs in order to save money, in 1947 Congress entertained legislation to cut Indian appropriations by terminating employees and entire bureaus and emancipating Indian veterans from trust

[20] Fixico, *Termination and Relocation*, 16.
[21] Ronald T. Takaki, *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in 19th-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

restrictions.[22] The logic of assimilation, at work in Indian affairs for half a century, had reached a tipping point. With the country intoxicated by their victory in the war and experiencing an unprecedented economic boom that would vastly widen the middle class, "Both Indians and whites, and especially the latter, deemed that a new era had dawned for American Indians. They were convinced that the Native American population, or at least a large portion, was ready to assume responsibility for their own lives without intervening government trust restrictions. Such sentiment sowed the seeds for the termination policy that called for liquidating the federal trust relationship. Bureaucrats became convinced that both the public and Native American population wanted the Indians to be assimilated into the mainstream."[23]

Fixico shows how this milieu of Termination manifested after WWII in multiple bills introduced to state and federal legislators as well as frequent policy proposals after the resignation of BIA commissioner John Collier.[24] Chief among these was the creation of an Indian Claims Commission, an idea going back to the Indian New Deal of 1934. Many tribes wanted compensation for the federal government's breach of treaty provisions, illegal appropriations of native lands and resources, and mishandling of Indians' rightful compensations. Typical of colonial regimes, the US Congress was unwilling to consider such a proposal until it came packaged with Termination. The logic went like this: if the federal government resolved all outstanding claims against it by Indian tribes, it could pay out those settlements, terminate tribal trust status as a condition of the payouts, and finally "get out of the Indian business" forever. Proponents

[22] Fixico, *Termination and Relocation*, 19.
[23] Ibid., 19–20.
[24] see ibid., 16–44. Collier had championed cooperative policies with Indian tribes that sought to bolster tribal cultures and political participation.

claimed that the large sums required to settle claims would nevertheless represent significant savings over the long run.[25] In this formulation, "justice" for tribes would include Termination as the ultimate expression of assimilation logic.

The Indian Claims Commission Bill passed in 1946, signed by President Truman, followed by a bill to streamline the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). In anticipation of the predicted end of Indian business, this bill eliminated over forty offices, stripped the budget, and presaged the Terminationist dream to dissolve the BIA.[26] Summarizing this period, Fixico references "a steady stream of bills, all purporting to be in Indian interests, followed the Indian Claims Commission bill…[and] each legislative measure became another step toward terminating federal services to Indians"[27] It is in this vein that we must view the program of Relocation.

Termination Policy: Background and Implementation

Termination ,as in extinguishing formal recognition of a native polity, is an old strategy in colonial dealings with First Nations, even older than the United States, and is evident throughout US-Indian relations.[28] As foreign nations, Indian tribes were just as dangerous as England or France to the young American republic. As potential enemies, tribes were viewed as a military problem until the cessation of the last armed hostilities in the late 19th century. Shortly after declaring independence from Great Britain, the US pursued cooperation with Indian tribes as powerful allies in the Revolutionary War as well as political recognition by established sovereign nations (which European nations

[25] Ibid., 25–26.
[26] Ibid., 29.
[27] Ibid., 31 see more on pp. 31-44.
[28] Ibid., ix.

were reluctant to give the rebellious colonists). That is the context in which Indian tribes are referenced in the US Constitution. This period of cooperation was short-lived however, as white settlers expanded into indigenous territory and put pressure on the state to facilitate this expansion legally and militarily.

As pressure mounted in the 1820's, Congress increasingly saw removal as the only option, although it was also bitterly opposed by liberals of the day who believed Indians held undisputed legal rights to their lands.[29] Under the administration of Andrew Jackson, and with the approval of the US Supreme Court under Chief Justice John Marshall, Congress authorized the Indian Removal Act of 1830 that set off a wave of forced removals of Indian peoples to points west of the Mississippi River. President Jackson, the primary architect of removal, peddled the *faux* humanitarian argument that removal was for the Indians' own good,[30] a claim we will see repeated in political posturing.

Historian Donald Fixico links Termination efforts to a string of policies after the removal era. For example, the 1887 Dawes Act tore the fabric of tribal life by unilaterally destroying the tradition of collective land ownership. In its place, Congress allotted Indian lands to individuals based on questionable identity markers. Tying blood quantum to land, those deemed "mixed-blood" were given full land title, while "full-bloods" had their land held in trust. This was the impetus behind the construction of the infamous tribal rolls that are still used to determine eligibility for tribal membership today. Legislating identity via a quantity determined by the colonial authority is designed to breed tribal citizens out of existence. Blood "purity" is a one-way street.

[29] Ibid., x.
[30] Ibid., xi.

When the government limited authentic membership to a set list of names, it set in motion a quantifiable logic of assimilation that relies on the premise that legitimate new members can only be accepted by birth. Given the extensive measures the US would take to remove citizens from their families and communities, it must be read as an explicit attempt to induce exogamous marriages that would dilute tribal bloodlines and reduce the number of people qualified for political membership.[31] With this termination structure in place, beginning in the 20th century, federal Indian policy shifted in favor of reform and assimilation.

On the rising tide of Termination sentiment, in 1950 Dillon S. Myer was appointed commissioner of Indian Affairs based on his experience as the director of the War Relocation Authority, the agency that interned Japanese Americans during WWII.[32] Myer came into office a staunch Terminationist, determined to remove Indians from federal oversight and dissolve the very agency he had been appointed to command. Because president Truman was preoccupied with the Korean War, Myer had nearly free reign in shaping the direction of federal Indian policy. He proceeded to remove many Collier appointees in the BIA who supported Indian rights and cultural maintenance, installing bureaucrats with little experience in Indian affairs in their place. "Myer ruled federal-Indian affairs with a heavy hand and was blinded by a passion to dissolve the Bureau of Indian Affairs."[33] Former commissioner John Collier, still an outspoken advocate for native justice, criticized Myer for his tyrannical control over American

[31] for more on this topic see Lawrence, *"Real" Indians and Others*; Garroutte, *Real Indians*.
[32] Rosenthal, *Reimagining Indian Country*, 52.
[33] Fixico, *Termination and Relocation*, 69.

Indians and accused him of turning the BIA into an instrument dedicated to his single-minded pursuit of termination.[34]

> "According to Myer, tribal governments, Indian schools, clinics, and hospitals for Native Americans stifled their development toward independence. Such institutions segregated the Indian population from the rest of society, thereby hindering their progress toward becoming middle-class Americans."[35]

Congress passed termination acts on a tribe by tribe basis. Most such acts included the end of federal recognition and all the federal aid that came along with being federally recognized tribes. From 1953-1964, the government terminated recognition of a total of 109 tribes and bands as sovereign dependent nations, resulting in 2.5 million acres of Indian land being removed from trust status. The push for terminations at this time was fueled by a 1943 report that found the BIA was delinquent in managing Indian reservations. Poor living conditions had not been alleviated after 60-100 years of BIA supervision. Thus, Congress concluded that they would be better off free of the BIA's oversight.[36] Blaming their own agency for mismanagement, Termination policy as a solution was to just give up altogether.

These individual bills being considered by Congress one at a time were buttressed by multiple attempt to push Termination across the board. These bills failed to receive Congressional approval until House Concurrent Resolution 108 was passed making Termination official federal policy. HCR 108 gave Congressional approval to direct the BIA to remove trust restrictions, supervision, and entitlements over certain tribes immediately and ordered a review of other tribes deemed suitable for

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[34] Ibid., 71.
[35] Ibid., 72.
[36] Charles Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle: The Rise of Modern Indian Nations* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company,, 2005).

Termination. Congress acted quickly thereafter, specifying more tribes for termination with the intention to desegregate native communities from the (imagined) rest of society.[37]

In 1953, Congress passed House Concurrent resolution 108, that removed ward status and directed policymakers to give Indians the same rights and responsibilities as all American citizens. One Senator compared it to the Emancipation Proclamation.[38] Except that Termination of a tribe meant the immediate withdrawal of all federal aid, services, and protection, as well as the end of reservations. The Klamath tribe's termination legislation required each tribal member to choose between remaining a member of a tribe no longer recognized as a legal entity by the US, or withdrawing and receiving a one-time monetary payment. The Menominee received faced a similar ultimatum. In lay terms, they were "bought out."

Since the federal government had held exclusive authority to regulate and oversee American Indian affairs since the US Constitution was ratified, getting "out of the Indian business" was a complicated process. Public Law 280 was passed in 1953 to pass criminal and civil jurisdiction over to certain states that had never before had authority over federally recognized tribes. State and tribal governments found themselves thrust into a new formal relationship overnight and neither found it satisfactory. More states were expected to follow as the BIA was decentralized and dismantled, but state budgets did not have the funds to provide the services expected.

Overall, the termination movement passed legislation to withdraw federal recognition and trust protections from 109 tribes, but the processes to realize these

[37] Fixico, *Termination and Relocation*, 97–98.
[38] Ibid., 95.

goals was so arduous that most terminations were never completed. The Menominee case is telling: they were one of the first tribes whose termination was signed into law in 1954 giving them four years to establish a new government. But forming a municipality under the laws of the state of Wisconsin was a difficult adjustment. With increasing opposition by the Menominee to Termination at all, and especially the deadline of 1958, the date was pushed back by Congress, twice. Eventually completed after much red tape and bureaucratic wrangling, Menominee termination was a disaster. They were established as a new Wisconsin county, the least populated and poorest one in the state. Unable to fund essential services from low tax revenue, living standards in the area degraded to such an extent that activists rallied together to reverse termination and the tribe was restored to full tribal status in 1975.[39] Important to my purposes here is to note that the activism to prevent sale of Menominee land to non-Indians and then to reinstate the tribe was accomplished by a coalition of reservation-based and urban Menominee.[40]

That relatively wealthy tribes like the Menominee found it so difficult to survive termination reveals a deep flaw in the practice. Simply put, assimilation is not cheap. It was deeply naïve to expect indigenous communities with thousands of years of their own history to be able to, even when they so desired, insert themselves collectively inside a foreign occupying power's society successfully. The Federal Indian apparatus had likewise developed over 100 years to provide services to tribes. It is important to

[39] "Menominee Termination and Restoration" (Milwaukee Public Museum, n.d.), http://www.mpm.edu/wirp/ICW-97.html.
[40] David R.M. Beck, "An Urban Platform for Advocating Justice: Protecting the Menominee Forest," in *American Indians and the Urban Experience*, ed. Susan Lobo and Kurt Peters, Contemporary Native American Communities 7 (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2001), 155–62.

note here that the BIA is not a welfare agency for low-income Indians; it is the institutional mechanism for the US government to fulfill its treaty obligations to tribes who ceded their lands in exchange for the means to survive in perpetuity. That is, as long as the US controls the ceded lands, it is responsible to provide food, shelter, education, and health care to all living members of the tribe. One way to read the history of Indian-U.S. relations is as an ongoing attempt to shirk that responsibility. For example, legalizing all Indians as citizens, while ostensibly an act of generosity, immediately abrogated all treaties since the government cannot enter into treaties with its own citizens.[41]

The trauma of facing termination engendered factionalism among many tribes, especially between younger mixed-blood members and traditional elders. Many who favored termination were poised to benefit economically by selling their share of land and investing. Tribes like the Klamath with American towns nearby also experienced rising rates of juvenile delinquency as more accessible vices lured the youth away from schools and community events.[42] The divide over termination essentially pitted those who held to their traditional cultures against those who were alienated from that culture and wished to cash in their tribal past for a chance to assimilate. The resulting divisions, based largely on conflicting models of economic action between traditional and capitalistic, had far-reaching effects on tribal communities that outlasted the termination era.

Relocation

[41] This position was articulated by prominent Terminationist Senator Arthur Watkins, cited in Fixico, *Termination and Relocation*, 100.
[42] Ibid., 126.

Later in the 1950's this same logic of assimilation was used to guide the Termination and Relocation programs. The BIA calculated that urban centers were better melting pots than rural reservation communities for breaking down tribal ties and identities and to assimilate American Indians into the modern nation's economy. These federal programs intended to push Indian people into mixed urban environments to isolate them from native community and catalyze the transition away from Indian identity. But many native people who relocated to cities skillfully negotiated federal policies to produce their own freedom and built urban Indian organizations that strengthened Indian Identity and community.

The first urban Indian organizations were among the earliest groups to reimagine Indian country in urban areas. They were usually made up of financially stable individuals who were "most often graduates of federal boarding schools for Indians." Members of these early advocacy groups, such as the National Indian Family Coalition "struggled to reconcile the educations they had received and their attraction to modern American society with a desire to identify as American Indians and to work toward reform in the conditions and treatment of Native peoples."[43] One of the main goals of such activism was to recover spiritual heritage and religious modes of being that had been disintegrated by boarding school policies prohibiting expressions of native identity through language or behavior.

Residential boarding schools were based on the premise that lifting up Indian children out of their savagery would make them become productive citizens of the American state and able to return and lead their reservation communities in ways

[43] Rosenthal, *Reimagining Indian Country*, 105.

commensurate with the will of the state. One expectation was that Indians raised this way would forsake their fidelity to native religion and reservation life and head for the cities and churches. This disintegration of tribes would decrease government trust responsibility and also open the abandoned Indian lands up for settlement by other white immigrants. Christian denominations were complicit in this scheme by operating most of the boarding schools.[44]

The migration of thousands of American Indians to cities during and after World War II convinced Commissioner Myer that in addition to Termination, America's native people needed to be physically relocated to urban areas to compete with other Americans for jobs. Just as his War Relocation Authority had moved Japanese residents away from valuable coastal land during the war, Myer believed society would benefit from breaking up tribal communities and moving Indians to cities. In 1951, the BIA began the Relocation program under his authority. Despite the threat of McCarthyism, which threatened any system of thought deemed foreign, prevalent at the time, hundreds then thousands of curious and ambitious Indians signed up for the Relocation program and moved away from their homelands. The BIA set up placement offices in Chicago, Los Angeles, Denver, San Jose, San Francisco, St. Louis, Dallas, Cleveland, Oklahoma City, Tulsa and other cities around the country.[45]

While at first offering job placement and help with housing, eventually the bureau, under Myer's replacement Commissioner Glenn Emmons, began to prescribe schooling as a key to successful Indian urbanization. Urban schools became a strategic

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[44] H. Henrietta Stockel, *On the Bloody Road to Jesus: Christianity and the Chiricahua Apaches* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), 44.
[45] Fixico, *The Urban Indian Experience in America*, 10–12.

way to assimilate Native Americans by forming habits and practices commensurate with the expectations of the mainstream society. Although the Relocation program was ostensibly voluntary, Indian agents urged their wards to sign up with promises of a better life in the city. Officials used pamphlets with color photographs of white middle-class professionals and families to market the life they were prescribing. When volunteers for the program declined after a few years, the agents began holding classes on reservations to prepare people for life in the city. Success was mixed; although some succeeded in finding work and raising their families, other Indians struggled with the culture shock and either returned home or ended up in poverty or homeless in cities.[46]

Tribes that supported relocation programs and the BIA officials created training programs that increased the success of emigrants. As the postwar economy boomed, thousands more Indians signed up for relocation and by 1970, Los Angeles and San Francisco had received the most émigrés. Between WWII and 1957, over 100,000 Indians left reservations with peak years in 1952-1957.[47] Most volunteers were young men who removed to cities alone and veterans were the most likely to succeed due to their previous exposure to mainstream life. Boarding school graduates were also likely to remain in diaspora.

Relocation was a program designed to assimilate Native Americans. It took its place as the adult arm of the boarding school project to remove Indian youth from tribal communities, de-culturize and de-Indianize them and encourage them to leave behind their tribal identities forever. Because reservation economies were so depressed, even émigrés who wanted to return were often discouraged by the lack of opportunities at

[46] Ibid., 13.
[47] Ibid., 18–19.

home. In this sense, the government's design was morbidly effective, it was a lose-lose situation unless individual Indians chose to fully pursue mainstream assimilation. They strategically weakened any other options. Tribes had historically requested and negotiated for autonomous spaces set apart from Euroamerican colonists. The federal Indian affairs machine was set up ostensibly to provide for those promises made by treaty to indigenous nations. But here with the policies of Termination and Relocation, they were intentionally jettisoning longstanding native requests for independence by desegregating reservations and forcing tribal members into American society, the same society that had historically been their enemy, conqueror, colonizer, and occupier. Even tribes that had historically allied with the US escaped little of the poor treatment and were suffered the same onslaught of policies of assimilation in the 20th century.

Urbanization

Historian Nicolas Rosenthal traces the movements Indian people made to cities in the early 1900's, showing a wide range of motivations and contexts for migration. Often times, in this early period, economic opportunity brought tribal members to urban areas, such as the work in Hollywood films that found many Lakota and other Plains Indians in southern California during the heyday of Western films featuring "Cowboys & Indians." World War II intensified Indian migrations to cities. "Indian veterans took advantage of the GI Bill to attend urban colleges and universities, and by the late 1960's they were joined by Indians who responded to minority recruitment efforts and the rise

of ethnic studies programs…Government Termination policies that eliminated federal recognition and trust status also played a role in the decision to migrate to cities."[48]

On the one hand, this urbanization must be seen as another chapter of the same policy that removed many tribes in the East and South to Indian Territories west of the Mississippi River during the 1830's, the first diaspora for those tribes. In similar fashion, during the Bureau of Indian Affair's termination policies of the 1950's, misleading promises were used by government officials to persuade Indian people in targeted tribes that it was in their best interest to leave their homes and move to a city designated for them.[49] This created a second diaspora for these tribes. However, Blumenthal argues that native urbanization predates the termination programs of the mid-20th century and is a far more complicated process than just reservation families transplanting from one location to another and then living out the rest of their lives in that new place.[50]

In fact, American Indians' involvement with American cities predates European presence. America's First People had been building cities, establishing trade networks between them, and abandoning them for centuries before Europeans arrived. Cahokia and Tenochtitlan were larger and more advanced than any comparable cities in Europe. Other tribes were never sedentary to begin with, and their traditional modes of living required frequent migrations. Mobility was esteemed in these cultures. Persons from these tribes, such as the Kiowa and Comanche, were the most likely to return home after

[48] Rosenthal, *Reimagining Indian Country*, 80.
[49] Fixico, *The Urban Indian Experience in America*.
[50] Rosenthal, *Reimagining Indian Country*.

urban relocation.[51] Thus the encroachment of colonial powers restricted some familiar movements, but they also created new routes and resources for Indian people, new modes of adaptation.

In many ways, American Indians have been connected to the urban experience in America, having mixed with other ethnic groups in working class neighborhoods of many urban centers when industrial jobs were created there. Indeed, in Alta California, it was the native people of the coastal areas who built the Spanish missions and populated them throughout the missionary period.[52] So much so, that many of them became known in the US as "Mission" Indians. It is important to understand these historical trends to approach the socio-religious study of American Indians in urban areas today.

In effect, the post World War II programs informed by the logic of Assimilation may have largely succeeded in moving Indians off reservations and integrating them into the mainstream economy. But, rather than completing a cultural assimilation, they precipitated a cultural revival among urban Indians and renewed interest in Native American cultures by non-Indians. Other parts of the regime, such as the Boarding school program, left deep wounds and historical trauma on native peoples, necessitating renewal of their healing traditions, which I address in the next chapter.

[51] Fixico, *Termination and Relocation*, 116.
[52] Rosenthal, *Reimagining Indian Country*, 13.

Chapter 3

Religion and Healing

"The process of alcohol recovery in Native communities draws upon the spiritual practices and values relevant to Native communities, making recovery an opportunity to re-experience a sense of 'Indianess'"

-Dennis Kelley[1]

Introduction:

Native Americans, among others, are the survivors of historical trauma. According to Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, historical trauma is the cumulative effect of emotional scarring from violent, repressive, and abusive acts perpetrated on a population over generations.[2] Her important work on this subject calls for a bridge to religious studies. While Dr. Brave Heart's work is focused on clinical studies and treatment for Lakota (and other tribes) struggling with the trauma response features she has identified, scholars in the study of religion have long shown that religious renewal (religious expression and cultural practices) are common and effective strategies for decolonizing intentions to heal the individual and society. In this chapter I will review Dr. Brave Heart's work as a foundation for building upon with a model of indigenous religion and healing developed by Suzanne Crawford O'Brien. I will review several examples of religion and healing in the recent literature that show religion and healing being renewed together and then place some of the voices I have heard in the urban diaspora into that stream.

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[1] Kelley, "Alcohol Abuse Recovery," 94.
[2] Brave Heart, "Wakiksuyapi: Carrying the Historical Trauma of the Lakota," 246.

Historical Trauma

Brave Heart starts with her own experience, taking the Lakota as an example of a people affected by "historical trauma—cumulative wounding across generations."[3] Military suppression including the massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890, and family disintegration through out-adoption and forced attendance at remote boarding schools have left Lakota individuals and families inheriting a legacy of trauma response. The features of this trauma response resemble those suffered by survivors of the Jewish holocaust and their progeny.[4] These features include:

> (a) transposition where one lives simultaneously in the past and the present with the ancestral suffering as the main organizing principal in one's life,
>
> (b) identification with the dead so that one feels psychically (emotionally and psychologically) dead and feels unworthy of living, and
>
> (c) maintaining loyalty to and identification with the suffering of deceased ancestors, re-enacting affliction within one's own life.
>
> Additionally, there is survivor guilt, an ensuing fixation to trauma, reparatory fantasies, and attempts to undo the tragedy of the past.[5]

These trauma response features color every aspect of life for Lakota and other victims of historical trauma; (they also have important connections to religion, to which I will return later). In particular, among American Indian youths, suicide rates are more than triple the national average and up to ten times the average on some reservations. Members of a criminal justice task force convened in 2014 to address youth violence in Native America referred to the prevalence of suicide as a consequence of the "pervasive

[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid., 247.
[5] Ibid.

despair" on reservations. A tribal judge in Washington claims that Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder rates are so high in Native America that they rival those of veterans returning from Afghanistan.[6]

The suicide epidemic afflicts native youth in particular. On reservations where suicide runs have struck, nearly every teenager knew someone who took their own life. This stacked on the fact that American Indian youth suffer twice the rate of abuse and neglect as the country as a whole.[7] Former United States Senator Byron Dorgan argues correctly that this epidemic of American Indian youth suicides cannot be understood in a historical vacuum; it is tied to a "trail of broken promises to American Indians" in treaties that the US government promised but largely failed to deliver on nourishing food, health care, education, and housing.[8]

Brave Heart's phrase "historical trauma" has gained so much traction socially that it appears in the Washington Post, quoted by Sarah Kastelic, deputy director of the National Indian Child Welfare Association. She goes on to link high suicide rates among American Indian youth to government policies of assimilation that devastated family and cultural systems for childrearing in native communities. As out-adoption and boarding school policies were implemented in the last 140 years, rates of trauma and suicide have gone up, while a sense of despair has risen. Subject to such intrusive policies that attack the cultural fabric of communities, youth report feeling a lack of

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[6] Sari Horowits, "The Hard Lives — and High Suicide Rate — of Native American Children on Reservations," March 9, 2014, sec. National Security, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/the-hard-lives--and-high-suicide-rate--of-native-american-children/2014/03/09/6e0ad9b2-9f03-11e3-b8d8-94577ff66b28_story.html.
[7] Ibid., n.p.
[8] Ibid.

direction and purpose in life, a common precursor to suicide attempts. This breakdown of the cultural system strikes after children return from boarding schools that were frequently sites of widespread sexual, emotional, and physical abuse.[9]

Much of the historical trauma that afflicts native communities is manifested in the youth and is a direct manifestation of the aftermath of decades of official attempts to assimilate America's First People. To put it into perspective, abusive boarding schools were in operation until the 1970's. In 1973, they held 60,000 Indian children, who are the parents and grandparents of today's youth.[10] This is not ancient history. The predictions of Brave Heart's historical trauma theory will be relevant to American society for decades to come. Let us explore this theory more.

Trauma Response Features

The trauma features of transposition, identification with the dead, loyalty to past suffering, and survivor guilt (described above) manifest in observable behaviors. Commonly identified by clinical therapists in native communities, these include: depression, self-destructive behavior, psychic numbing, mood swings, anxiety, anger, and elevated mortality rates.[11] Historical trauma theory predicts that where a population has been exposed to multiple instances of widespread trauma, over multiple generations, particularly those that disrupt the family support structure, and in the absence of a well-resourced concerted effort to address their effects, subsequent generations will suffer from similar response features as a way of coping and exhibit

[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Brave Heart, "Wakiksuyapi: Carrying the Historical Trauma of the Lakota," 247.

similar symptoms as a result. Contemporary Native American Studies, especially those from the perspective of the field of Religion and Healing, are filled with examples of such concerted efforts to help communities recover from epidemics of drug and alcohol abuse, poverty, dispossession, and chronic illness through social renewal by a return to native cultural and religious practices, even if such practices must be borrowed from other tribes or the pan-Indian, Lakota-dominated repertoire.[12]

I am concerned in particular here with the way Brave Heart references the dead and the spirit world. Ancestors, the spirit world, and the spirits of the dead: these are generally the provinces of religion in society. Yet here in the work of Brave Heart, a social worker and clinical researcher, these forces are utilized for explanatory purposes. She writes, "Traditional Lakota culture encourages maintenance of a connection with the spirit world. Thus, we are predisposed to identification with ancestors from our historical past."[13] Here we are wading into murky waters. The historical record shows that Lakota culture was massively disrupted, but contemporary Lakota also continue to identify with it, speak the Lakota language, and practice traditional religion. Is it possible to parse out exactly which components of Lakota culture were "lost" and which persist? What is the effect of trauma, loss, and memory on the continued vitality of cultural expression? Brave Heart's work on historical offers a productive model for religious studies scholars to explore the role of trauma in abandoning or reclaiming cultural practices.

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[12] Kelley, "Alcohol Abuse Recovery," 67–69; Owen, *The Appropriation of Native American Spirituality*; Calabrese, *A Different Medicine*; Alvord and Cohen, *The Scalpel and the Silver Bear*.

[13] Brave Heart, "Wakiksuyapi: Carrying the Historical Trauma of the Lakota," 248.

Innate to her work is the demonstration that Lakota culture persists. This is evident in her own story and experience as a descendant of Wounded Knee victims. No serious commentator will argue that Lakota culture is lost or degraded beyond the point of relevance. Given culture's generative and memorializing nature, those Lakota structures that were destroyed seek to be rebuilt. So one question that presents itself is whether Lakota cultural beliefs and practices are helpful coping mechanisms for historical trauma, or do they in fact hinder healing and resolution on a widespread basis? Certainly no simple answer will suffice. Given the seriousness of the matter and the consequences involved, I think it unwise to offer any blanket assessments. However, we can begin to explore the role of religious beliefs and practices in the process of making *meaning* out of such horrible circumstances and view traumatized cultures as both stronger and weaker. That is, no living culture is solely traumatized without a corresponding project for coping and healing; culture is co-produced by history and visions of futurity.

One source of this search for meaning in this section will be from Brave Heart's work, but later I will also examine other scholarship on Lakota religion and draw from my experience with practitioners of Lakota religion in diaspora, none of whom are ethnically Lakota. Scholars agree with Brave Heart's assertion that Lakota culture emphasizes a connection with the spirit world.[14] Brave Heart's own analysis of this fact

[14] Ella Cara Deloria, *Speaking of Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); David Martinez, "The Soul of the Indian: Lakota Philosophy and the Vision Quest," *Wicazo Sa Review* 19, no. 2 (Autumn 2004): 79–104; Larissa Petrillo and Melda Trejo, "Figuring It Out: Sundancing and Storytelling in the Lakota Tradition," in *Religion and Healing in Native America*, ed. Suzanne J. Crawford O'Brien (Westport, Conn: Praeger Publishers, 2008); Bruce Lincoln, "A Lakota Sun Dance and the Problematics of

centers around cultural practices of grieving. Voicing and displaying grief in cultural appropriate ways are integral in every society. According to Brave Heart, the sheer volume of the loss of life during the period of Sitting Bull's leadership and the Wounded Knee massacre was so great that Lakota survivors simply could not adequately grieve for so many lost relatives. In addition, confinement on reservations impaired grieving because all expressions of Lakota spirituality were prohibited. Expressions of grief such as body cutting were viewed as barbaric by Indian agents and could be severely punished. Hence, as far as mourning and religion were connected, and we know that they are, *grieving was impaired because religion was banned*.

This impairment, combined with Lakota "proclivity for connection with the deceased,"[15] resulted in what Brave Heart calls historical unresolved grief. In a cultural system where deceased relatives are understood to continue to exist in the same cultural world and continue to require obligatory social etiquette, then the separation of the social fields of religion and mourning break down. Religion is everywhere concerned with death. Lakota social life places extraordinary importance on systems of reciprocity and the observing the social interactions and proscriptions that make one a good relative. Thus the living have social obligations to the dead for whom such interactions bleed into the realm of the sacred. Being spirits, and thus invisible, Western reason locates any practice of propitiating the dead in the category of religion. And native religious forms, for the Lakota and all American Indians, were forbidden until passage of the 1978 American Indian Religious Freedom Act.

Sociocosmic Reunion," *History of Religions* 34, no. 1 (August 1, 1994): 1–14, doi:10.2307/1062976.

[15] Brave Heart, "Wakiksuyapi: Carrying the Historical Trauma of the Lakota," 248.

The point here is not that Religious Freedom in 1890 would have resolved all of these traumas. Rather, the question is whether and how might native religious traditions assist healing modalities to salve the maladies that contemporary Lakota face? Or, how can they move toward integration and resolution? How do heirs to historical trauma move forward with vital, dynamic cultures as a vehicle? After extensive work with Lakota survivors, Brave Heart's research shows that, similar to Jewish Holocaust survivors, the guilt, shame, and trauma responses are shouldered especially by some family members she calls *wakiksuyapi*, Memorial People "who carry the grief and whose lives are a testimony to the lost ancestors."[16] This burden of grief falls on whole families and bands of Lakota, not just individuals as traumatized survivors fled catastrophe to find sanctuary among neighboring bands. And the trauma of boarding schools and other assimilation tools extended beyond clan or tribal identifications. Those tools were wielded by the US government on a racial basis, affecting all members of the "Indian" race.

In 1992, Brave Heart conducted her most important study, a "four day psychoeducational intervention designed to initiate grief resolution for a group of 45 Lakota human service providers."[17] Filled with psychological assessments and tools, and conducted in the Lakota language, she titled this intervention "The Return to the Sacred Path." She is not a religious leader, a medicine person or *wiçasa wakan*; rather she is trained in Western institutions of psychology and social work. How did her work with suffering and grief and cultural history culminate in a workshop that utilizes the terms of Religious Studies? Is healing sacred? Certainly something is going on here. The use of

[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.

the term sacred is never discussed.[18] The remainder of her article is concerned primarily with presentation of data from her clinical research, including psychological evaluations given to participants during the workshop.

Dr. Brave Heart included a reference to religion when she gave a lecture at the University of California, Santa Barbara in May 2014. After addressing the trauma response features and psychological symptoms she has documented during the decades of her career, she spoke about the importance of her own spirituality to her work. She said that it was the source of her own survival from historical trauma and the inspiration for her to continue her work. In particular, she said that all of the psychological work, the counseling and therapies, were intended to occur alongside religious practice. For her, *participation in traditional ceremonies is an essential component to the project of healing Native Americans from their historical trauma and unresolved grief*.[19] So what is it about native ceremonies that facilitate this healing and resolution? How is religion involved in healing? I will attempt to answer these questions in the following section.

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[18] Neither does the term "religion" ever appear, Brave Heart, "Wakiksuyapi: Carrying the Historical Trauma of the Lakota"; Compare to: Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, "The American Indian Holocaust: Healing Historical Unresolved Grief.," *American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Research* 8, no. 2 (1998): 56–78 where religion is referenced only tangentially.

[19] Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, "Workshop on Historical Trauma" (presented at the American Indian and Indigenous Studies Research Focus Group, UC Santa Barbara, May 23, 2014).

Religion and Healing

"[T]heories *about* health share reciprocal standing with the practices that *perform* health."

Julianne Cordero-Lamb[20]

I turn now to the model of Religion and Healing developed by Suzanne Crawford O'Brien. She draws heavily on the analysis of Jerome Levi in his influential essay, "The Embodiment of a Working Identity," in which he places illness and healing in a social frame. For Levi, illness is any inability to fully participate in the web of social relations as defined by one's identity. More specifically, this withdrawal from the "work" of society is attributed to deficiency in one's body. Thus healing and religious healing are always, already concerned with restoring embodied meaning and function for individuals and society.[21] However a society defines health, it must always refer to the body, and in this it draws religious analyses back to issues of embodiment germane to other domains treated by religion, e.g. soteriology, doctrine, and belief. These theoretical claims have specific qualifications when applied to Native America.

Crawford O'Brien begins these specific concerns in the same place as Brave Heart: through a lens of the history of colonization that placed native religions and healing practices (grieving or mourning practices for Brave Heart) under attack by colonial authorities. The current trend toward tribal control over health care funding is a dramatic shift because, "Since its founding, the U.S. government had sought to curtail Native spiritual and medical practices through legal suppression, missionaries, and boarding schools." These designs only became "more systematic with the establishment

[20] Cordero, "The Gathering of Traditions: The Reciprocal Alliance of History, Ecology, Health, and Community, among the Contemporary Chumash," 143 emphases in original.
[21] Levi, "The Embodiment of a Working Identity," 134–136.

of reservations in the mid to late nineteenth century, where government officials and missionaries would work to limit Native approaches to health and wellness, seeing them as obstacles to assimilation. As long as their traditional healers remained, it was argued, Native people would resist conversion to Christianity and full assimilation into white society."[22] The logic of assimilation and prohibition extended even to the area of health.

The legal suppression of native religious practices (by laws such as the Indian Religious Crimes Code of 1883) usually resulted in their going underground. This affected native healing practices, which were so often affiliated with religious ones and performed by religious leaders, medicine men and women. If religion is about conceptions of human nature and human consciousness, then healing is about restoring people to their wholeness of being in order that they may fulfill their humanity, however it is conceived. Conversely, dehumanizing people leads to illness on a wide scale. Eliminating medicine people in Native America was seen as necessary to assimilation as these were usually the most fiercely independent advocates of traditional culture. Although, at the same time, religious leaders often became the most ardent converts to Christianity, crafting native christianities that could serve as vehicles for tribal survival. Religious conversion almost never meant abnegation of one's traditional cultural heritage. Thus, even native Christians continued to agitate for political rights and cultural protections within American society.[23]

By starting with the colonial history of suppression of religious, cultural, and healing practices, Crawford O'Brien sets the stage for the growing movements for

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[22] Crawford O'Brien, "Introduction," 2.
[23] James Taylor Carson, *Searching for the Bright Path: Mississippi Choctaws from Prehistory to Removal* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999).

renewal of these intertwined practices. As American society progressed in the 1960's in its regard for historically oppressed groups, such as Native Americans, the political climate was forced to change. Termination and Relocation were ended; and in 1970, Richard Nixon announced the shift in federal policy toward tribal self-determination. This offered, at least rhetorically, the opportunity for tribal governments to take control of social and medical services. In the following section I will show some examples of native communities pressing forward with projects to renew their embrace of traditional practices. Among these, Crawford O'Brien argues, "Health and wellness concerns are the most pressing issues facing Native communities today, issues arising directly from the experience of colonialism, racism, and systemic oppression."[24] Pivoting back to Brave Heart's term, we could say that native health problems today are largely due to historical trauma and unresolved grief.

The work of medical anthropologist Arthur Kleinman is relevant here and adds another dimension. A physician and medical anthropologist, Kleinman investigated the role of discourse in understanding and treating illness. He interpreted phenomena like the recapitulation of colonization in disease patterns among American Indians by documenting how individual illness narratives often reflect both the psychological state of the sufferer and the larger social context.[25] For Kleinman, "putative physical disease" correlates to social problems such as oppression and poverty. More importantly, he showed how a myopic reliance on biomedical constructions of disease systematically deflect attention away from issues of social justice by focusing attention solely on

[24] Crawford O'Brien, "Introduction," 3.
[25] Arthur Kleinman, *The Illness Narratives: Suffering, Healing, and the Human Condition* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 119.

individual symptoms and diagnoses. I will show below that Native American conceptions of health and illness reject this focus on the individual and instead position each member's health as an issue of relationships stretching across the human social network and beyond to the natural and spiritual worlds. Relevant here for the pattern of religion's role in decolonial healing constellations is Kleinman's conclusion that exclusivist, (materialist), biomedical models serve the interests of hegemonic systems in maintaining status quo power arrangements by masking the real need for social change that would result in healing for the oppressed.[26] Just such projects commenced among Native Americans both before and after political circumstances changed to allow more self-determination and religious freedom.[27]

The study of these renewal projects in native communities today holds great scholarly promise because, while situated in and addressing contemporary issues, they reflect indigenous understandings of the body, the social world of relations, and traditional religious views of the healthy relationship between the human and spiritual worlds. In the neo-colonial context in Native America, religion and healing are being renewed together, each embedded in the other. They also reflect indigenous attempts to address the historical trauma and unresolved grief that are so prevalent in native communities, whether or not it is named as such.

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[26] Kleinman, *The Illness Narratives*, 119.
[27] see for example: James Treat, *Around the Sacred Fire: Native Religious Activism in the Red Power Era : A Narrative Map of the Indian Ecumenical Conference* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Allen Warrior, *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee* (New York: New Press : Distributed by W.W. Norton, 1996); Crawford O'Brien, *Religion and Healing in Native America*; Trafzer and Weiner, *Medicine Ways*; Calabrese, *A Different Medicine*.

Delving closer into the semantics of religion and healing, the terms clarified by Kleinman are central in the field. He argues that *healing illness* must be contrasted with *curing disease*. In this formulation, disease is the narrower category, the diagnosis of a particular ailment; while illness is the much broader category, encompassing the impact of an ailment "on a person's entire sense of self, their family, and their community."[28] This helps to explain why minor disturbances to health often do not result in religious treatment; they are a bother, but do not threaten one's very sense of self. In contrast, a severe illness such as cancer has profound effects upon one's work, family, and social relations. Facing death also tends to incite profound religious questions and to affect one's spiritual life. For Kleinman, then, "healing includes the ways in which terminally or chronically ill patients are able to renegotiate their sense of self, and make meaning within their suffering. From such a perspective, healing is fundamentally about meaning making, and is often a deeply spiritual process.[29]

Another important contributor to our understanding of religion and healing is Thomas Csordas, the author of voluminous work on the subject. His work has investigated central questions of selfhood and the effects of illness on one's sense of self. Healing practices, in this view, are fundamentally designed to negotiate the maintenance and re-creation of the self. Csordas suggests that in religious healing, the "most common effect is not to remove a disease and its symptoms, but to transform the meaning of the

[28] Crawford O'Brien, "Introduction," 4.
[29] Crawford O'Brien, "Introduction," 4.

illness."[30] While this may seem to preclude it own failure, it also renders it positively creative and this meaning contributes to the patient's production of their *self*.

For Csordas, "Self is neither substance nor entity, but an indeterminate capacity to engage or become oriented in the world, characterized by effort and reflexivity" and "Self processes are orientational processes in which aspects of the world are thematized, with the result that the self is objectified, most often as a 'person' with a cultural identity or set of identities."[31] All this cultural activity and meaning is, of course, situated within a body and thus the ideas we create about "illness and healing reflect the relationship between a person's self and body: what one might call *embodied subjectivity*."[32] We experience the world from a body, so our studies of healing must acknowledge this fact. Indeed, for populations like Native Americans, health problems embody the colonial process: loss of power, loss of control. These losses combined with centuries of oppression manifest in indigenous bodies through physical, spiritual, and mental illnesses.

If Native American illness reflects one side of the colonial process, it may be necessary to suggest that mainstream Americans' illness reflects the other side. The loss of power and control experienced by indigenous victims of colonization everywhere is mirrored by the attending loss of a meaningful matrix of humanity and conscience experienced by the perpetrators of colonization and their descendants. This may help to explain the fascination with the indigenous and other facets of New Age religion and healing in America (and correlate movements internationally). Native critics have long

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[30] Csordas, Thomas. *The Sacred Self: A Cultural Phenomenology of Charismatic Healing*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997; 70.
[31] Csordas. *The Sacred Self*, 5.
[32] Crawford O'Brien, "Introduction," 4.

interpreted New Age dabbling in native American spirituality as a desperate quest for grounded meaning. Heirs to a society forged in colonization and slavery, Americans in this view are victims of a vacuum of meaning in modernity and secularized society. Many feel that American culture is bankrupt. And so they look to indigenous people, especially at home, to provide some sense of direction, some steady, uninterrupted link to a spiritual life that was "lost" to the West.[33] Since New Age seekers exist within the larger religious system of Native American religions, there is a dynamic potential in the tension between their experience of being lost, urban Indians' sense of having lost their traditions, and the reservation-based elders who carry the traditions that might render both groups feeling found.

If some illnesses in native communities are linked to colonial oppression, how are those communities responding? I will survey some projects for restoring health in native communities that can be instructive in revealing their conceptions of health and relationships and the role of religion in community recovery. Some of the most destructive health problems in native communities today are alcohol and drug addiction, diabetes and obesity, cancer, suicide, and trauma associated with surviving from emotional, sexual, and physical abuse. How are these problems and their healing related to religion? Crawford O'Brien argues that "…if we understand healing to be fundamentally about meaning-making, about identity formation, and about orientation of the self in relation to the cosmos, it ought to be clear that we are talking about the

[33] I think here of Wendy Rose in her famous 1992 essay "The Great Pretenders: Further Reflections on Whiteshamanism." In *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance*. Ed. M. Annette Jaimes. Boston: South End Press. 403-421. Also see Lisa Aldred. "Plastic Shamans and Astroturf Sun Dances: New Age Commercialization of Native American Spirituality." American Indian Quarterly 24, no. 3 (2000): 329-52; Phillip J. Deloria. *Playing Indian*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

fundamental work of what scholars think of as *religion*."[34] These concerns about the embodied self are amplified during times of illness, crises of the self, when the very existence of the physical body is threatened. Responses to illness and death demonstrate a culture's ultimate concerns, which are, again, matters pertaining to the realm of religion. Let us begin by exploring some native conceptions of health itself.

Conceptions of Health in Native America

In general, health among Native Americans is understood as a balance between the body, mind, and spirit. Importantly, this balance or state of wellness is created and maintained through acts of reciprocity that keep the relationships between people, natural beings and forces, and spiritual entities in harmony. Health is relational. To be healthy is to be a good relative. Conversely, if one ignores their social obligations, they are likely to upset the balance and become ill. This is one domain where culture bites back. The failure to meet cultural codes of etiquette is believed to result in poor health and sickness; soft culture meets hard medicine. This dynamic is illustrated in many native myths about social order and its consequences that confirm interdependence as the order of being in the cosmos.

For example, Trafzer and Weiner identify a trope in oral traditions that during primordial times the first people enjoyed a state of perfect health. But due to jealousy, treachery, or carelessness "one or more beings used his/her powers unwisely, resulting in the illness and death of one or more of the first beings…Today, as in centuries past, certain beings give their lives for others; for instance, deer or salmon may offer their

[34] Crawford O'Brien, "Introduction," 6 (emphasis in original).

lives so that others may be nourished. Although mortality occurs, healing powers also come into existence. Poison plants exist, but so do healing plants."[35] These themes in native myth ratify the belief that the cosmos exists in a state of balance that, though it may be threatened, has structures that help it return to that state, just as human society and personal health must.

Whapmagoostui Cree.

To consider specific conceptions of health in Native America, let us start in the far north among the Whapmagoostui Cree of the St James Bay Cree First Nation in the subarctic taiga where the Great Whale River flows into Hudson Bay. The Whapmagoostui assert the relationship between human health, ecological balance, and social justice. Anthropologist Naomi Adelson's research on health's conceptualization among the Whapmagoostui Cree was spurred by her reflection on these relationships: "Why when I asked about 'health' were people always talking to me about the land, the animals, and their lives in the bush?"[36] Her efforts at identifying the concept of health among her hosts were further confounded by their asking this basic question: "If the land is not healthy, then how can we be?"[37] These indigenous questions complicating the concept of health prompted Adelson to investigate health as a concept more broadly.

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[35] Clifford E. Trafzer and Diane Weiner, "Introduction." In Trafzer and Weiner eds. *Medicine Ways: Disease, Health, and Survival among Native Americans* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2001). *viii-ix.*
[36] Naomi Adelson, *Being Alive Well: Health and the Politics of Cree Well-Being* (University of Toronto Press, 2000), 15.
[37] Ibid., 113.

Adelson begins with this assertion: "Health is never simply a neutral, biological category. Rather… [it is] a complex, dynamic process."[38] This implies there is no natural or universal definition of health, but that it is always historically and culturally mediated. Quoting Robin Saltonstall: "Health is not a universal fact, but is a constituted social reality, constructed through the medium of the body using the raw materials of social meaning and symbol."[39] Reflecting on the contrast in conceptions of health between the Whapmagoostui, who emphasize balance and relationships, Adelson argues that the version of health that we are obsessed with in North America is largely the representation of youthful fitness. But cross-culturally, being young and physically fit are not the sole qualities of being well.[40] Health is not a category that can be known universally, but clearly it provides an interesting category out of which to make cross-cultural comparisons.

For the Whapmagoostui Cree, there is no single word that translates as health. The closest term to a concept of health is *miyupimaatisiiun*, or Being Alive Well. According to Adelson's Cree teachers, *miyupimaatisiiun* is characterized by the practices of daily life that keep the balance of human relationships intrinsic to Cree traditional life. It means that one "is able to hunt, to pursue traditional activities, to eat the right foods, and (not surprisingly, given the harsh northern winters) to keep warm."[41] The dynamic process of health here is about quality of life, Cree life, and overcoming the colonial obstacles to continuing to live a Cree life. In this sense, being culturally Cree regardless

[38] Ibid., 3.
[39] Quoted in ibid., 5.
[40] Ibid., 4–5.
[41] Ibid., 15.

of age or fitness is more apt description of health than merely being young and free from disease.

This characterization invites comparison to historical research on tribal identity among the Anishinaabeg on White Earth Reservation in the early 20th century. According to Jill Doerfler, the concept of blood as a marker of Anishinaabeg identity was indeterminate; in emic terms, full-bloodedness was an indicator of a way of life rather than parentage.[42] To illustrate, among the group of Anishinaabeg with mixed parentage at that time, what today we would call half-blood or bi-racial, some would be considered full-blood and some mixed-blood based on their adherence to traditional practices, not biologically determined race.[43] In essence, if those Anishinaabeg shared a similar concept of health to the Cree (which is likely), then being culturally observant is the relevant indicator of both health and political identity. A clear sense of one's identity produces both healthy subjects and socially engaged ones.

Returning to the Whapmagoostui Cree, their concept of *miyupimaatisiiun* transcends the individual and extends the identification processes of "being Cree" to the larger anti-colonial resistance movement to balance power between the state, the tribe, and the individual.[44] In other words, health is political. Being Indigenous in a settler state is political. Being Cree, or Chumash, or Lakota is an ongoing assertion of an identity that is under the attack of assimilation policies and discourses on multiple levels. So although health is always changing, being negotiated on the social level, the

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[42] cited in: TallBear, *Native American DNA*, 52.
[43] N.B. The subjects of Doerfler's research were engaging in a racial project to determine "full-bloodedness" as culturally performed, albeit in ways that defy current regimes of identification.
[44] Adelson, *Being Alive Well: Health and the Politics of Cree Well-Being*, 9.

concept of *miyupimaatisiiun* "offers a means of making sense of the profoundly vital links between 'health,' politics, and Cree identity."[45] Maintaining an indigenous sense of health is one avenue for holding to these broader senses of identity for all Native Americans.

Diné conceptions of health

Health and healing are well-documented among the Diné, or Navajo, of Northern Arizona and New Mexico.[46] Indeed, Csordas claims that "[H]ealing is the central theme of Navajo religion, while the sacred is the central element in Navajo medicine."[47] With religion and healing so intertwined, it is not surprising that the researchers in the Navajo Healing Project found that issues of identity were frequently addressed by the healing events they observed. Issues of identity are exacerbated in Navajoland by the historical trauma of religious suppression, especially for youth exposed to the outside world through schools and television. Garrity identifies three traumas in Navajo history: dislocation to the Bosque Redondo prison camp, Livestock reduction program in the 1930's, and alcohol/substance abuse.[48] Where health is partially understood as participating in cultural practices and religious ceremonies (similar to the Whapmagoostui above), but many Navajo are subject to pressures to assimilate, it is predictable that much illness will result.

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[45] Ibid.
[46] see for example: Csordas, "Theme Issue: Ritual Healing in Navajo Society"; Alvord and Cohen, *The Scalpel and the Silver Bear*.
[47] Thomas Csordas, "The Navajo Healing Project," *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, Theme Issue: Ritual Healing in Navajo Society, 14, no. 4 (December 2000): 463.
[48] John F. Garrity, "Jesus, Peyote, and the Holy People: Alcohol Abuse and the Ethos of Power in Navajo Healing," *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, Theme Issue: Ritual Healing in Navajo Society, 14, no. 4 (December 2000): 527.

Rising to meet the need for healing in Navajo society is a religious pluralism of three religious healing traditions: traditional *hataali*, the Native American Church, and Christian Faith Healing. Each of these modes of healing was observed to engage issues of identity and embodiment.[49] Where healthy, organic cultural identity was traditionally inherited from one's elders, today's youth live in a world vastly removed from their grandparents. Within this context of fragmentation and cultural discontinuity, "Religious healing practices in each tradition provide a context for and means of addressing identity issues."[50]

Reiterating what Religion scholar Dale Stover has called "cosmic kinship" in which selfhood is defined by relationships in a complex interdependent cosmos,[51] the Navajo concept of health argues that the conditions for wellness are harmony within and connection to the physical and spiritual world. The emphasis on proper relationships manifests in a way of creating kinship with all beings, so that one does not live in a world of strangers, but in a world of *relatives*. Navajo healing ceremonies are explicitly concerned with ordering kin relations to embody a condition in which everything is in its proper place. Any disruption in this symbolic kinship web is the prime concern of Navajo self-orientation and becomes the central dimension in Navajo healing. Traditional Navajo religious healing ceremonies provide a sense of orientation to the

[49] As dicussed below
[50] Elizabeth L. Lewton and Victoria Bydone, "Identity and Healing in Three Navajo Religious Traditions: Są'ah Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhǫ́," *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, Theme Issue: Ritual Healing in Navajo Society, 14, no. 4 (December 2000): 477.
[51] referenced in Crawford O'Brien, *Religion and Healing in Native America*, 8.

patient; they are shown their relation to the cosmic kinship network and resituated in their proper place.[52]

The same structures exist for healing in the Native American Church and the Pentecostal Church among the Navajo. In these contexts, the church community and the Christian deities of Gods, angels, and demons supplant the traditional cosmic kinship circle. In both cases, attending the ceremonies physically puts one within the circle of believers who act as kin in a new format. Attending these church services thus acts to orient the subject to a positive framework for moral action. Sitting in the supportive, spiritually charged atmosphere creates a bond and a sense of rejuvenation.[53] Thus even the religions more recently introduced are indigenized to recapitulate the central themes of Navajo religion and healing: naming and affirming one's kin relationships to the local, social, natural, and celestial communities while symbolically engaging in practices that work to keep those relations in balance.

Barbareño Chumash

Among the Barbareõ Chumash of the Southern California coast, health is conceived as action, as a verb. Meaning, "to deal well with situations," health for the Chumash implies the spiritual and practical relationship "between beings and landscapes."[54] For religion scholar Julianne Cordero-Lamb, aspects of this relationship go beyond the abstract; she locates actions for health in the gathering of plants, the

[52] Lewton and Bydone, "Identity and Healing in Three Navajo Religious Traditions: Sạ'ah Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhǫ́," 479–482.
[53] Ibid., 487.
[54] Cordero, "The Gathering of Traditions: The Reciprocal Alliance of History, Ecology, Health, and Community, among the Contemporary Chumash," 143.

observation of the stars and seasons, in telling stories that position people in relation to places and each other, and in traditional cultural practices like paddling a canoe.

Echoing and expanding on the groundbreaking work of Kat Anderson,[55] Cordero-Lamb shows how health is imbricated in the long-term fruitful engagement of people with the plant and animal communities in their landscape. This means gathering food or medicine is an act that crescendos over time by repeated visits to the sites where those plants grow; mutually beneficial visits as the gatherer uses techniques that encourage the flourishing those sites she visits. This flourishing of the ecological network of which the human is a part is reciprocated by the availability of food and medicine and basketry material of superior quality. "In this context, theories *about* health share reciprocal standing with the practices that *perform* health."[56]

Similar to Navajo identity issues discussed above, Cordero-Lamb reads the considerable harm done to the Chumash community by officials seeking to invalidate persons from authentic Chumash pedigree as a health problem. Conversely, she reads the diversity of Chumash families today, incorporating by marriage immigrants to Chumash land, as a sign of health based on a reading of plant communities *as* indigenous texts:.[57] In a move to universal healing, Cordero-Lamb calls for all people to "give themselves permission to act like family, to trust, forgive, make real and lasting amends,

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[55] Kat Anderson, *Tending the Wild: Native American Knowledge and the Management of California's Natural Resources* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).
[56] Cordero, "The Gathering of Traditions: The Reciprocal Alliance of History, Ecology, Health, and Community, among the Contemporary Chumash," 143 emphasis in original.
[57] Ibid., 140.

to accept who we are at this moment in history, and to know that who we presently are will change yet again."[58]

This approach to performing health is again reliant on making and ordering relations, but for Cordero-Lamb, those relations transcend tribal boundaries to embrace the rich and changing ethnic diversity that is extant in Santa Barbara today. While it will certainly continue to be a matter of contestation within the larger Chumash community,[59] Cordero-Lamb sees a multicultural community as inherently stronger, just as plant communities thrive in diverse combinations that flourish is unique places.

One group expression of this cultural flourishing is the resurgence of Chumash maritime culture in the form of the *tomol*, the traditional redwood plank canoe. The building and paddling of the *tomol* by the Chumash community invites all their neighbors into good relations that "require all beings to practice living in a manner that strives for equilibrium."[60] Rooted in the same verb form for gathering together, as in plants and people, the Chumash word for a canoe journey is the same as for a gathering of community healing. The Chumash community's inspiring project in the 1970's and again *circa* 2000, to build and paddle a traditional *tomol* embodies multiple avenues of healing in a community divided by colonial fissures. To make the journey across the Santa Barbara channel to *Limuw*, or Santa Cruz Island, required the *tomoleros* to unite their disparate communities for a collective healing journey to be celebrated by a

[58] Ibid.
[59] Especially those aligned with external sources of power and identity validation.
[60] Cordero, "The Gathering of Traditions: The Reciprocal Alliance of History, Ecology, Health, and Community, among the Contemporary Chumash," 148.

gathering of Chumash people on the ancestral island to celebrate the crossing. Religion and healing here were embodied by the saying that "every paddle is a prayer."[61]

Rarámuri

Many scholars of religion and healing refer to the powerful essay "The Embodiment of a Working Identity," by Jerome Levi.[62] In this work of ethnography and interpretation, Levi interprets a ceremony he attended among the Rarámuri of northern Mexico, intending to account for the restoration of power to a patient through ritually restoring his sense of self-identity as a working member of society. Levi puts together the two levels of interpretation called for by Csordas and Kleinman: power in the social context and the cultural process of healing. According to them, the analytic of power "would recognize the intimate connection among therapeutic, political, and spiritual power in both the practice of healers and the experience of the afflicted." [63] The treatment of the therapeutic process must attend to life beyond the healing event, where its effect is intended. Healing is meant to extend to the patient's and community's life after the healing takes place.

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[61] Ibid., 153.
[62] Jerome Levi, "The Embodiment of a Working Identity: Power and Process in a Rarámuri Ritual Healing," in *Medicine Ways: Disease, Health, and Survival among Native Americans*, ed. Clifford E. Trafzer and Diane Weiner, Contemporary Native American Communities 6 (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2001), 134–62.
[63] Thomas Csordas and Arthur Kleinman, "The Therapeutic Process," in *Handbook of Medical Anthropology: Contemporary Theory and Method*, ed. Carolyn F. Sargent and Thomas M. Johnson, Revised (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 19.

Levi combines these two levels of analysis by giving a performative microanalysis of a healing event, what might be called a "thick description,"[64] within the broader frame of sociopolitical processes that are affecting the community. Briefly put, the patient is torn by a conflict of interest between his indigenous community and the encroaching mestizo interests because he is simultaneously a local leader and employed by a powerful mestizo family that is disputing land ownership in the region. This conflict is manifesting in idiopathic pains all over his body and feelings of fatigue and powerlessness. This conflict was taxing his strength to the extent that he was unable to fulfill his normative social roles—he had lost his power. This was further symbolized the fact that he carelessly misplaced his *bakánawi*, a personal power object with salient cultural meaning. [65]

Levi observes the meaning of health within an ongoing social dynamic life. The "expression of normative behavior depends upon an ability to evidence an identity that 'works,' both socially and physically."[66] In this case, although the patient is stuck in a precarious situation, by requesting a *tesguinada* healing ceremony, he signals his intention to return to "the right path, correct his improper behavior, and redress these insults to cultural, natural, and supernatural orders through normative ritual intervention."[67] In locating the etiology for this illness in an imbalance to the human and more-than-human orders, this indigenous community affirms the importance of balance and harmony in relations between human society and the natural and spiritual worlds in

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[64] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).
[65] Levi, "The Embodiment of a Working Identity," 138–139.
[66] Ibid., 135.
[67] Ibid., 140.

which it participates in an interdependent web of relations. One person's "insults" to these orders affects the entire community and thus healing ceremonies often involve them.

In the *tesguinada* that Levi observed for this patient, healing was enacted through actually and symbolically uniting the community and spiritual powers and then empowering the patient through physical contact with substances thought to embody power. First the gathering functioned as a work party where the men gathered in the morning to build a new corral for the family. Second, families assembled for the healing ceremony; and third they petitioned for rain to ensure a prosperous crop that year. To begin the healing phase, the host tossed libations of tesguino, a sacramental drink of fermented maize beer, to God in the sky and to the four directions. This symbolically gathered the relevant forces of in Rarámuri cosmology, welcoming them into a constellation of ceremonial objects and spaces prepared for just this purpose. Tossing libations of *tesguino* to the directions is both an offering to God and "a mimetic reenactment of the creation of the Rarámuri people. When the world was new, God himself stood in the center of the earth…tossing libations of *tesguino* in all directions"[68] that created the scattered ranchos where the people live today. Thus the *tesguino* as sacramental substance, is ceremonially offered to endorse the sacred relations between God, people, land, and maize. It invokes mythic time and the powers of creation and healing.

The healing ceremony, thus sanctified, then commences by serving *tesguino* to those assembled, especially the patient, and accompanied by smoking corn-husk

[68] Ibid., 141.

cigarettes of native tobacco. The healer also blows tobacco smoke over the curing objects and medicines he has brought. Levi presents more detail to the ceremony, but I want to focus here on one aspect, which is the symbolic empowerment of the patient through physical contact with sacred substances. The healer used a cross as a healing implement by submerging it into the *tesguino* and then anointing the patient's body with it. In behavior clearly set apart from the mundane by repetitious consecrations and formal oratory, the healer applied healing substances to the patient's body and then offered him a gourd full of *tesguino*. Levi summarizes:

> At this point, the patient was now literally coated, internally as well as externally, with the Rarámuri's quintessential medicine. Maize beer had been painted on him outside and poured down his insides. The body of the man…not only contained the intoxicating liquid and exhibited lustrous surfaces anointed with sacred beverage, but now [the patient] himself was actually a vessel of the holy, regenerative, fluid.[69]

In his analysis, Levi proposes that healing succeeds by restoring one to a working identity via placing bodies in contact with powerful agents, powerful sites, and practices of power. Let me touch on those here as I will use them as comparative categories for interpreting more examples of religion and healing among Native Americans. Powerful agents include the ritual objects and medicinal substances brought into play during the healing event. Also called to be present are the spiritual and cosmic forces. Finally, all of the patient's relations: family, neighbors, the healer, the musicians, the host; everyone involved in facilitating the healing was re-inscribed in relationships and served as conduits of power through those social and spiritual ties. Individual health requires community health, which consists of harmonious relations between members and with the more-than-human community.

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[69] Ibid., 146.

Powerful sites are "loci for the convergence of cultural, natural, and supernatural forces."[70] These sites start with the patient's body and layer upon meanings as ritual associations are made between the body and the cosmos or sacred objects such as a cross. In addition, ceremonies are usually held in special places that become sites for coaxing power into the human realm and inscribing it on the body of the patient and the collective group. Levi points out that powerful sites are also located in time and ceremonies are often timed to coincide with auspicious natural events such as the solstices and equinoxes. Scholars have long observed the ritual calendars that people use to keep religious ceremonies accurately timed.

Practices of power in indigenous societies often revolve around beneficial exchange, or reciprocity. These are acts that increase community solidarity, strengthen interpersonal ties, and model social etiquette to younger generations. Reciprocity maintains what Levi calls a "dynamic balance" in society.[71] These mutual exchange protocols are reproduced at all levels of society extending to religious acts that affirm interdependence with natural and spiritual forces. Offerings, libations, and prayers directed toward spiritual forces give something in exchange for requested receipt of spiritual power, health, and good fortune. These practices of power thus also serve as performative methods to conduct power from its spiritual source into the human realm. As such, they must conform to specific protocols so as not to offend the spirits but to please them and coax them to bequeath their gifts.

[70] Ibid., 151.
[71] Ibid., 153.

By way of comparison, I will use these categories to show connections with Garifuna religion described by Johnson, and with Lakota religion I have observed in Southern California.

Garifuna healing

It is interesting that Johnson presents so much information about Garifuna religion that involves issues of illness and healing, but never places it within the constructed relationship between healing and religion as discussed by Crawford O'Brien, Csordas, and Levi. Nearly every religious event he describes is precipitated by a bout of illness, and a request for healing,[72] but he drives his analysis of these events with concepts from diaspora religion such as return to the homeland via travel or possession. While this results in a fascinating account that shows the Garifuna place within the African diaspora, I wish to place some of the events he describes under the lens I have presented here in terms of healing.

For example, similar to the Rarámuri, common to all ritual exchanges and treatments among the Garifuna shared by Johnson is the presence of rum and tobacco and ritual implements. A standard ritual treatment offered by a Garifuna *buyei* is to put rum in their mouth and then spray it over the head of their client. They may also smoke tobacco and blow the smoke over the client's body or rub their body with herbs, oils, or other herbal preparations.[73] All of these examples iterate Levi's category of powerful agents. Healing is thought to be aided by physical contact of the client's body with these substances regarded as sacred and powerful by the Garifuna. During more substantial

[72] Johnson, *Diaspora Conversions*, 149.
[73] Johnson, *Diaspora Conversions*.

ceremonies, such as the *dugu*, rum is sprayed and tobacco smoke blown all over the building, especially the doorways to protect the ceremonial space from spiritual intrusion and to appease the spirits already welcomed into the space.[74] Contact with empowering beings extends in the Garifuna context to full bodily possession in which the ancestor or other spirit mounts the participant in the full expression of spiritual contact with a powerful agent.

Powerful sites for Garifuna include the home village and the ritually invoked St. Vincent from which the ancestors arrive during a dugu. Honduras has become more of a sacred or powerful homeland as people have emigrated to New York and other North American cities. In those urban diasporas where Garifuna have made contact with other Caribbean émigrés, they have also developed an identity of Garifuna religion as part of the African diaspora and thus Africa is more frequently invoked as a powerful site of return where spirits originate who are available for possession.

Another powerful site for the Garifuna, whether in Honduras or New York, is the altar where each *buyei* seats the spirits with whom they are in relationship. The altar serves as a site of communication with the spirits, where the *buyei* will stare during a consultation to discern messages. It also serves as a site to put symbolic instruments onto their altar that characterize actions they wish the spirits to take on their client's behalf. This might include a pair of scissors to symbolize cutting ties with a problematic financial agent; or candy to sweeten the heart of a desired lover; or a boat to symbolize the return of the ancestors from overseas.

[74] Ibid., 154–155.

The entire negotiation and preparation for the large dugu ceremony that Johnson describes serves as an example of practices of power. Entire families must be brought into alignment to accomplish the ceremony that requires everyone gather in the home village. Thus members from both home and in diaspora must pool resources, make travel arrangements, and work together in good faith to appease the ancestors and heal the afflicted member of the family whose condition prompted the call for such an event. Further enacting reciprocity are the lavish offerings of food, drink, and medicine for the ancestor spirits as they are called into the ceremony. As a group they are generously propitiated; and as individual spirits possess the dancers they are personally tended to with offerings of rum and tobacco and, in particular, by being offered the attentive ear of the living. Through possession, the living and the deceased are brought into balanced relations as the living respond to grievances aired by the ancestors.

Diversity and Healing in Lakota Religion

How do we combine the process of religion and healing in urban Indian communities with the move to allow multi-racial attendance? Has inviting non-natives into the ceremonial space been a function of healing from historical trauma?

In her telling of the Anishinaabe story of the first birch bark baskets, Kathleen Delores Westcott demonstrates the common ontology among American Indians to attribute personhood to non-human beings, in this case a tree and the plant nations.[75] She describes the story as being about illness, suffering, and loss, but can this story also

[75] Garroutte, Eva Marie, and Kathleen Delores Westcott. "'The Stories Are Very Powerful': A Native American Perspective on Health, Illness, and Narrative." In *Religion and Healing in Native America: Pathways for Renewal*. Religion, Health, and Healing. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2008. 168-172.

be an allegory about religion and the unintended consequences of Indian people moving out beyond the limits of their natal territory? In this sense it speaks to the loss of religious freedom during the period of forced assimilation and also to the loss of group members to diaspora.

First of all, unusual among written accounts of native stories, the chapter is co-authored by a scholar (Garroutte) and the native storyteller (Westcott). At the beginning of the sequence, Westcott pauses to offer tobacco to the story in a ceremonial observance to honor the story as a person, as a being with consciousness and to whom people owe social obligations. These sorts of offerings make up much of the preparation involved in ceremonies I have attended. Then the story starts many hundreds of years in the past, immediately transporting the audience to a mythic time. In an interesting way, this story is about unresolved grief and the potential power and gifts it can bring. In the story, a widow mourns the death of her husband in the normal protocol of her day. But after the ceremonial grief cycle is complete, she is still stricken. She responds by leaving her village and sitting against a tree in isolation season after season. After the second year, the tree speaks to her with compassion and teaches her how to use its skin to make birch bark baskets, which she brings back to her people as an ornamental and functional gift; a gift that is still practiced today.

In prefacing the story, Westcott expresses her conviction that no illness is random. "Instead, illness is reagarded as a *teacher*, and it is my responsibility to find the guidance in it…[S]tories taught me about what we lose if we rely heavily on prescription drugs, or addictive substances, to manage the symptoms of illness quickly—thereby suppressing the "voice" of the illness instead of going through the experience and

considering it as a teacher. When we don't come into relationship with the illness as student-to-teacher, we lose a lot."[76] Without being flippant, I want to suggest a comparison here to the long period of mourning and isolation that the Lakota suffered after the 1890 Wounded Knee Massacre and the murder of their steadfast leaders Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull. These events reverberated throughout Lakota society and even further among other Plains tribes because these were some of the last Indian leaders to fervently resist conquest and assimilation. They became symbols of resistance to other indigenous peoples all over the world and have subsequently inspired non-native sentiments of resistance against a US government perceived as unjust or oppressive.

Brave Heart writes about the impaired grieving the Lakota suffered for these losses because of the sheer volume of deaths and because their mourning ceremonies were prohibited. Another aspect of this is that the Lakota nation carried the burden and memory of those lost at Wounded Knee not for one year, as the normal protocol prescribes, but rather for 100 years. During this time, it was said that the Lakota were not supposed to feel joy, but were obligated to mourn for the deceased. This period of 100 years of mourning culminated in the five year ceremony Wiping the Tears of Seven Generations chronicled in the film of the same name.[77] Memorializing this loss through a traditional journey on horseback, the Lakota ritually remembered their ancestors and tried to create meaning and healing out of the tragedy. This serves as one manifestation of the allegory in the birch basket story that illness, loss, and suffering can be pathways for renewal.

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[76] Garroutte and Westcott, "'The Stories Are Very Powerful,'" 168.
[77] "Wiping the Tears of Seven Generations" film

While it is true that the Lakota nation suffered grievously for their refusal to submit to American authority, they also rose to prominence in the American imagination for exactly that recalcitrance. Their "noble savagery" captured our imagination; for every free people loves stories of others standing up for and fighting for their own freedom. While this first expressed itself in western novels and later western films, it eventually surfaced in American culture through religious exploration and playing Indian. Phillip Deloria's work *Playing Indian* traces this phenomenon all the way back to the Boston Tea Party, where rebel Americans masqueraded as Indians during their act of civil disobedience. It continued through the World's Fairs exhibitions, celebrations of modernity during the 19th century, and into the masculinity movements of wilderness excursions and their attending suspicion of modernity in the early 20th century.[78]

Beginning in the 1960's and 1970's, Americans suspicious of modernity had also begun to defect from the mainline churches, suspecting the religion of their parents had lost touch with a primal, wild force of nature that they increasingly imagined was present in indigenous religions and "shamanism." What also changed is the visibility of American Indians at this time due in large part to the public stagings of the American Indian Movement (AIM). When AIM occupied Wounded Knee in 1972 and was besieged by Federal Marshalls, suddenly real Indians were being broadcast into living rooms across America on television news.[79] This sparked a flood of interest in Indian affairs and a particular interest in American Indian spirituality by hippies and other spiritual seekers disaffected from institutional religions. Starting at this time, Lakota religion

[78] Deloria, *Playing Indian*.
[79] Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Allen Warrior. *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee*. New York: New Press : Distributed by W.W. Norton, 1996.

began to spread and become the quintessential "Indian" religious system, providing a kind of lingua franca for non-Indian participants as well as for members of other tribes and Indians in the urban diaspora who may have lost contact with their tribal communities.

In essence, what I am arguing is that Lakota people and their religions suffered a great deal, but this may have been a teacher. Their period of mourning and illness may have paved the way for their religion to come back from underground and spread throughout North America and even beyond. Lakota religion is now practiced by Chicanos, Blacks, Whites and Asian-Americans in Los Angeles and New York. It is poised to become a true World Religion. And this may all be a function of healing. I suggest that the process of welcoming in non-natives to Lakota ceremonies, of making room in the ceremony for outsiders, has itself been a process of healing from the terrible grief and trauma that Lakota survived. The tools that their religion developed during those dark times, tools of decolonizing the minds, bodies, and spirits of the people, appear to be effective tools for those outside the Lakota nation's circle as well.

Grandmother Margaret would agree. In my conversations with her, she emphasized her belief that Native American religions are adaptable, living traditions that should be accessible to everyone. With her deep sense of reverence for the fireplace passed to her by her grandparents, she views adaptation as almost inevitable. To her, that fireplace, that set of protocols is not frozen in time. Rather, she was taught to treat the fireplace like a person, like a sacred being. Holding a ceremony with that fireplace in the center, lighting that fire, is like having God there. She told me about the practice of

"reading" the ceremony, reading the spiritual signs and energies in order to allow the right things to arise.

This sense of fluidity within a ceremony was impressed upon Grandmother Margaret at a young age. Her grandparents explained to her that the Native American church was a "melting pot." The ceremonial structure is deliberately kept very simple so that there is room for each person attending to bring in their own things; each tribe brought in their own doctoring ceremonies, which is partially why there are different recognized fireplaces.[80] As a pan-Indian tradition, the Native American Church has had to make room in the tipi for different practices, different kinds of members, and regional variations. It is "big tent" tipi style of religious configuration and that has been a function of its healing: bringing so many people together across tribal divisions into healing ceremonies that include indigenous knowledge and practices has made Indian ways accessible to many more people than if each tribe kept its own traditions closed. For NAC members, their church has united people in healing spaces just as Lakota religion has united people of different races as it spread into the urban diaspora.

Healing in the American Indian Urban Diaspora

The two men who usually pour the community sweat lodges for the Hummingbird Circle are Moses and Tudor. The two have different approaches to healing. When I asked Moses about healing, he told me that when someone comes to him for healing, he offers to run a ceremony for them, such as a sweat lodge, and he trusts the ceremony to do for that person what they need. If the spirits are called to intervene,

[80] Personal communication, February 12, 2014.

then the person's condition may improve.[81] Moses is clear that he is not trained or called to be a healer, but he frequently exerts considerable effort to help people attend a ceremony, get oriented in it, and get clear about what they action they need to take next in terms of taking responsibility for their own health. Part of this has to do with his evident humility, and with a skepticism toward the oft-heard claim by people that they are "healers." Tio Moses is a Sun Dancer, a sweat lodge leader, and the founder of the Hummingbird Circle. His position on the subject of healing shows the diversity of roles that leaders take. Religion and healing are not always co-present in the same individual.

Tudor's situation is quite different. A practicing medical doctor, he is a professional healer. He incorporates together his medical training and his religious experience in what he terms "a philosophy of healing."[82] One form this integration takes is that he invites his medical patients to attend sweat lodge and other ceremonies. He has found that if he can get them into a ceremony in conjunction with their other treatment it yields much better results. The two seem to work symbiotically, perhaps through the effects ceremonies tend to have on people: relaxation, a meditative sense of calm that reduces stress, and a renewed sense of gratitude and purpose in life.

Whether participants attend Moses's or Tudor's lodge, there is a general sense that healing is one of the reasons everyone is there. I have heard from many people around the circle about maladies they suffered from that were improved by the sweat lodge. Indeed, if you consider the improvements in mood noted above as healing to the mind, then everyone who crawls into the lodge experiences some degree of healing. My

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[81] Personal communication

[82] Tudor Marinescu, "Osteopathic Medicine | Natural Holistic Remedies Los Angeles," accessed August 9, 2014, http://www.doctortudor.com/.

experience with the Hummingbird Circle lodges, and other lodges I have attended over the years, show that many regular participants experienced an initial healing that cemented their commitment to the practice that keeps them coming back and making it accessible to others.

One advantage the sweat lodge in particular has, as a healing modality, is that it is emphatically not a mundane experience. Regardless of one's religious beliefs, participation in the full sweat lodge ceremony is bound to elicit a strong reaction. The sense of *communitas* is palpable inside the lodge, once the heat has melted away one's sense of the everyday. The ceremony itself clearly demarcates sacred space: once you walk inside the four poles at the cardinal directions that mark the ceremonial ground, cell phones and idle chatter are discouraged. Everyone is sanctified by the smoke from a burning smudge of white sage (*salvia apiana),* further setting us apart from the mundane world. Then, as participants prepare to enter the lodge, prayers are offered to the fire with handfuls of tobacco, pipe carriers load their pipes while someone sings the accompanying song. Men strip down to trunks and a towel, women wear special skirts into the lodge, often more modest than the clothes they wear outside the lodge. All jewelry is forbidden. We are told we are entering the womb of mother earth and must prepare our bodies just as we were in our own mother's womb.

As each person kneels down to crawl into the lodge, they say *mitakuye oyasin,* or "All my Relations" to signal the interconnectedness of each individual as they enter the sacred space. Crossing over that threshold, on hands and knees, crawling into the darkness—this is when the sense of sacred space set apart from the mundane world is intensified, only to be cemented when the door is closed and the group is enclosed in

complete darkness. Huddled together inside the lodge, there is a pregnant sense of anticipation before the first water is poured over the hot stones. It is into this moment that I want to explore more as a healing space because we are not alone in that space. As each stone is brought in, the leader or an assistant sprinkles it with "sacred medicines:" sweetgrass, incense cedar, copal, and sometimes bear grass. Thus the lodge is filled with the vapors these medicines release in contact with the glowing stones.

All of these are examples of Levi's categories of powerful agents, powerful sites, and practices of power. The stones are considered Earth spirits activated by the sacred fire, thus the stones themselves are venerated as powerful agents and honored with prayers, songs, and offerings of powerful agents in the form of medicines, or what Moses calls "sacreds." These powerful agents are literally rubbed or sprinkled over the hot stones, a practice of physical contact of the *stones* with powerful agents. Additionally, the vapors released by that contact fills the lodge with an herbal steam, a pungent healing bouquet that offers an olfactory signal to participants that the heat will be coming soon. It is a powerful moment. Especially because we are put into contact with those powerful agents as well by breathing in their vapors and sweating in their steam. We are literally bathed inside and out, through our pores and our lungs, with the vapors from these medicines.

This bathing happens inside a powerful site: a sweat lodge symbolizing a womb, made from willow branches and consecrated to the ceremonial purposes of prayer and healing. And it happens on our own consecrated bodies, specially prepared to enter this womb and offer our prayers via the sacrifice of our normal comfort for the extraordinary heat that is about to be released on us. This heat, what I think of as the primary medicine

of the sweat ceremony, is produced by the combination of water with the hot stones. The water has been sanctified and offered to the stones. As the first dippers full of water are poured on the stones, a mass of hot steam billows up and over participants, again putting us in direct physical contact, inside and out, with a powerful agent. This one incorporates all four elements: the stones were heated in fire, combined with water to produce an airborne steam that purifies us and carries our prayers. Then, in this intense setting, the ceremony begins with prayers and singing accompanied by drums and rattles.

The preceding description should make clear why participants are so likely to emerge from the sweat lodge ceremony with a sense of healing, even if the ceremony was not explicitly a healing lodge directed at them. *Everyone* that enters the lodge in such a setting is sure to have a healing experience, even if it is only apparent afterward. This is because during the rounds of sweating, while the water is poured, the temperature can get so hot, and the energy so intense, that every conscious thought besides survival is boiled out of your head. Many times my experience has been one of sheer will to endure the heat with no room left in my head for thoughts of healing or even prayer beyond a kind of mantra along the lines of "please let me survive this."

It is in this context of the suffering the sweat lodge may engender that I cite the following example. At the community lodge in July 2014, the lodge was very full, at least thirty people were squeezed in. It got very hot; it was a very intense lodge. But no one asked to leave, even though several people were clearly struggling. A woman in front of me needed to lay down and she asked me to switch places with her, so I moved up to the front row (where it tends to be hotter). I was also next to a young man who was almost

in agony. He was vociferously expressing his suffering, rolling on the ground, and almost losing control to the point that another man had to help him not hit his head on the hot stones! During the next round, I saw something I have never heard of before, but that illustrates Levi's theory of powerful agents and sites. After a particularly hot round, the door was opened to bring in more stones and the medicines were passed in for the assistants to offer to the stones as they arrived. The man started moaning and writhing on the ground, which I could see because of the light from the fire filtering in through the open door.

The young woman next to me, who was holding a plastic container of cedar, reached over and touched it to the man, physically putting *him* in contact with that medicine. She held it on his body. Even as she was interrupted by having to sprinkle some over each new stone, she returned over and over again, leaning over me to touch the medicine to the man. It seemed to help. His voice lowered; his writhing slowed. As the time drew near to pass the medicine back out to the altar, she seemed to sense the power of what she was doing and offered some to me. I awkwardly touched it and muttered a thanks. She touched some others within reach and then passed it out. It struck me because although it makes perfect sense according to Levi's prediction of the efficacy of physical contact with a powerful agent as a mode of healing, it was a sort of "off-label" use for the medicine. It is passed in to offer to the stones but here it was being used to soothe the suffering of a man with its recognized power.

Conclusion

Still, I must be careful here not to present this phenomenon in the familiar trope of the white savior of an endangered tribe.[83] I do not mean to suggest a soteriology: that opening Lakota religion to Euroamericans has redeemed the Lakota as a people and given them a new reason to live; or that they have been saved by outsiders; nor that participation by outsiders in Lakota religion can or will "save" them from the emptiness of "modern society." Rather, I am suggesting that, *within the frame of religion and healing,* indigenous people searching for ways to heal from a traumatic history can view this religious extension, the gradual opening to outsiders, as a religious healing movement. The ultimate effect of this extension on non-Lakota societies is yet to be known. I will suggest that it is having a decolonizing effect, by creating decolonizing spaces, but notice these are active verbs, not conditions. I hold no delusion that all of American society will *be decolonized* by Lakota religion or any other one system (religious or otherwise). What I have shown here is that this movement fits within a category of contemporary healing movements by American Indian tribes throughout North America.

The lens of religion and healing is useful for my purposes here precisely because it accounts for social context and then examines how social contestations play out on the *body* as a site for the construction, arbitration, and subversion of meaning and experience.[84] The body thus provides another avenue by which to explore Native American movements of decolonization and religious renewal and extension. In framing

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[83] Shari M. Huhndorf. *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination.* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001) 5

[84] Levi, "The Embodiment of a Working Identity," 135.

healing movements with Brave Heart's theory of historical trauma, I have sought to interpret "healing as a mode of empowerment" that can mean the difference between coping and defeat, between effective rejuvenation and the slip into despair.[85] Indeed, inside the sweat lodges that I have attended, the primary reason people speak up to pray aloud is for a relative who is ill. They ask for help praying for the person's healing and, in effect, for help and support dealing with their own feelings about the suffering and possible death of a loved one.

[85] Csordas and Kleinman, "The Therapeutic Process," 19.

Chapter 4

Racial Identity and Religious Authority: Adaptation, Identity, and Place

> [Opening] tribal religious ceremonies into the lives of interested [outsiders]…is regarded by many Indians as a theft, while others believe that Indian religions should be available to everyone. Therein lies the intellectual dilemma of the future for Indians. --Vine Deloria, Jr.[1]

My research on the confluence of identity politics in the American Indian diaspora and authority in urban religious contexts shows that these urban spiritual networks are diverse multi-racial and inter-tribal groups. In order to investigate dispute processes like those surrounding ritual innovation in a conservative religious tradition, scholars must pay attention to issues of migration and diaspora in the global era, while also closely following the developments of local meaning and cultural/religious expression as they draw from the resources of global culture and law. With respect to this pivoting between the local and the global, I examine how a colonized culture that has adapted into the social mainstream in some respects, maintains a distinct, coherent set of religious beliefs and practices from within the globalized capitalist, racially diverse world. While previous chapters have argued that native identity is a vexing and hotly contested realm of law and social positioning, this chapter shows some examples of how such identifications are enacted during actual ceremonies. As people move into sacred space and sacred time marked off by ritual acts, these subtle contestations take on more charged meaning.

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[1] Vine Deloria Jr., "The Passage of Generations: An Afterword," in *Native Voices: American Indian Identity and Resistance*, ed. George E. Tinker, David E. Wilkins, and Richard A. Grounds (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 321–322.

Participant Observation in the Sweat Lodge[2]

> When I arrived at the community sweat lodge site on the outskirts of Ventura in September, 2011, I was immediately struck by the racial diversity of the people present, including several interracial couples - Asian/white, Black/white, a Chicana lesbian couple, etc. Several black men were present and assumed experienced roles, showing newcomers around. Spanish as well as English was being spoken. Tudor, the man pouring this lodge, speaks both. Tio Moses is pouring the lodge next door.
> I got in line for the Lakota lodge, stripping down to only shorts and a towel. I offered tobacco to the fire. We went in. It was very hot. Near the end of the first round a man asked to be let out because he was "going to be sick."
> Soon more people asked to be let out. At times there was some confusion. People started talking, got distracted when people were being let out. At one point, someone wondered if people were trying to leave through the back door. This prospect caused great commotion. People said "NO!" and then an exchange of interest to me pursued:
> At one point, a woman yelled out over the hubbub for everyone to be quiet. She said, "No one is supposed to be talking except the leader of this lodge" and then, sensing the irony in her words, followed with, "excuse me."
> The leader had to call the lodge to order, like a judge in a courtroom. He even threatened to disband the lodge and send everyone out if we couldn't keep it together. I think about 10 people left altogether, 4 women, 4 men, and the 2 boys who started the lodge.
> An older Indian man spoke up after some of the commotion had died down. He said he wanted to share with his brother, the leader, and maybe teach him the ways he had been taught by his elders. That if anyone had even put their hand or foot out the back door, that would have broken their circle and the only way to bring it back together would be for everyone to get out and walk around the lodge 4 times backward and counterclockwise (or perhaps just counterclockwise as every ceremonial circle moves clockwise in these ceremonies). There was a collective hush at the prospect of having to do this and then a young man spoke up and with certainty in his voice said that no one went out the back door. He knew because he had been lying across it and there was no way anyone could have gotten out. No argument was offered as the leader worked hard to get the lodge back under control. We were processing a lot even while the door was open.

It was interesting the way this dispute played out over how to handle a possible breech of protocol, partially because the leader of this lodge was white. An experienced Indian man, in the lodge as a participant, tactfully instructed the white

[2] From my field notes

leader. How often does that happen? I know from experience that there are often questions of protocol that must be worked out under challenging circumstances, e.g. twenty-five people huddled inside a sweat lodge, extremely hot, deciding whether or not to all crawl out and walk around it four times backward.

How are humans supposed to interact with the cosmos? For that question, native people have answers that they are eager to share with immigrants into their lands. These diverse urban spaces are venues where native people are exploring their relationship to each other and to outsiders, and also offering the technologies for personal transformation and connection that were given to them and developed by their cultures. So for example, the sweat lodge is a widespread spiritual technology used throughout native America that utilizes heat as a medicine that is administered to participants within a deep symbolic matrix where each component, each act, each action is performed within a tightly structured blueprint that creates meaning for each individual and for the group along the way. This matrix is called a fireplace.

Thus the intensity of the heat affects one, but the feeling of being hot is interpreted through this symbolic meaning that is woven around the entire event. You have stepped into the space created by this medicine person's fireplace. That fireplace was earned through specific requirements. It is passed on exclusively through apprenticeship and consent of another holder. You cannot obtain an Indian fireplace from the colonial authorities. This space is autonomous; it is dedicated to "All my Relations" and held accountable to them. Native identity, place, and community emerge from a native epistemology, even when it is pursued in the company of diverse outsiders in the urban centers of the 21st century world.

Participant Observation in the Native American Church

I have witnessed contestations over protocol come up in each peyote ceremony I have attended. White attendees to the ritual, visitors, have attempted to introduce an element into the ceremony when it was their turn to sing. Not knowing peyote songs, they sought to contribute something to the harmony and sense of community that is created by passing the drum around the tipi and giving each participant the chance to sing. These attempts have been met with mixed results.

The first attempt to introduce a "foreign" element into the peyote ceremony that I witnessed was a white man who asked very politely if he could read a poem when it was his turn. The Road Man, the official conducting the ceremony, promptly, but kindly, said no. He explained that although he appreciated the man's enthusiasm and wanted to accommodate him since he was there for the first time, that there was a certain way that things are done within the ritual structure of the meeting and he was compelled to follow that. This structure is often referred to as "these ways." The following recounts what happened next from my field notes:

> Interestingly, the same issue came up again immediately. The man passed the staff and gourd rattle to a white woman in her 20's next to him. Not knowing any peyote songs either, the young woman asked if another official would drum for her while she expressed herself in song. The Road Man, perhaps eager to accommodate his visitors and not give the impression as overly strict, consented. He said, "Normally we don't do this, but if you want to try it, I'll support you."[3] The drummer beat a rapid, heartbeat rhythm on the drum and she commenced to vocally express herself in a sort of native inspired gibberish, which, despite its unusual character, displayed considerable vocal skill, and the group seemed to accept it with a bit of a smile.
>
> In another ceremony, this one much larger, a white man received the staff and rattle and passed them to his wife, sitting next to him, and accepted the drum. This was quite unusual because ordinarily the person holding the staff

[3] I am quoting from memory here.

sings and either the person next to him or the designated official for the job plays the drum. Then, without asking permission, he began to play the drum in a distinctly non-peyote rhythm and sing at the same time. On top of this, the man was singing the Chumash welcome song, a non-peyote song widely sung at native gatherings in Southern California to recognize and pay homage to the Chumash, the tribe whose ancestral territory covers most of Ventura, Santa Barbara, and San Luis Obispo Counties. Many indigenous songs can only be sung at proper times by an authorized person who has either received the song him/herself or been given permission. This song, however, has been declared open by the Chumash community and is used in many different contexts, not all of them religious, to signify and recognize Chumash heritage on this land.

There was a collective unease in the group by the insertion of this unusual element. The visiting Road Man, who was not Chumash, asked the local Road Man in the tipi, who was serving as Drum official for this meeting, to go and stop the white man who was singing. This he did, again very kindly and appreciatively, not scolding. But the singer was triggered. He protested. The woman who had sung before him had sung a peyotized version of the Lord's Prayer, put to the peyote song rhythm and embellished with native syllables.[4] I will try to reconstruct their conversation:

White singer: That's a Chumash song.

Local Road Man: I know. I'm Chumash. My brother here's Chumash. (pointing to the man sitting next to the singer who had not sung but passed the staff)

White singer: Well it seems like that would be welcome here.

Local Road Man: We do things a certain way here.

White singer: Well she got to sing a Christian song (points to the woman who sang before him)

Local Road Man: (interlacing his fingers) Ya, because this is a mixing of the two traditions.

The staff and drum were passed and the singing started up again. Not long after this the white man left the tipi with his young daughter and did not return. Later the next morning I spoke with the local Road Man about the incident. He said that he was not planning to stop the song- that it was only because the Road Man in charge of that meeting asked him to that he stopped the man from finishing his song. This, and the

[4] "Our Father who art in Heaven hey a wana hey a naw hey nay yo way…"

young woman's song described above, reveals some degree of *flexibility* by officials during peyote ceremonies. It seems it was not the local Road Man's call to make in this instance so he appropriately recused himself of the decision within the ritual norms of his position. It was only when asked by the Road Man in charge that he performed the task as also required of his position. I suspect the Road Man in charge displayed shrewd strategy in employing a *Chumash* official to carry out this task.

This example brings up questions about race and religion. Does race play a part in the *perception* of tradition and orthodoxy. American whites, like myself, are accustomed to a certain degree of privilege. This unspoken, and even unconscious sense of privilege does not dissolve when one crosses the symbolic boundary into sacred space. As much as religious followers hope to express a ritual space that does not discriminate based on something as "shallow" as skin color, the reality is that sacred space is not *necessarily* a space set apart from the habits and assumptions of individuals who exist every moment of their lives in a cultural and racial context. The fact that this is a racial minority tradition (even though there were numerous other whites in the tipi, including myself) practiced on the bare earth, allows the sense of privilege to remain intact even as the group ritually crosses the symbolic border into sacred space. It is not conceivable that this same man would individually perform a similar song in, say, the middle of a Catholic Mass.

Victor Turner argued that ritual time and space create "*communitas*," the breakdown of hierarchies, distinctions, and fosters a feeling of equality between participants.[5] I have heard exactly that kind of discourse at ceremonies, e.g. that we are

[5] Turner, *The Ritual Process*.

all equal in the lodge, or that we are all one in this circle. However, Turner's conclusions were based on experience he obtained in a homogenous village among the Ndembe in Africa. A transnational, multi-racial, emerging context like the ones I observed in 21st century California yields an interesting challenge to his general assertion.

First, as contestation over identity and authority increases among a heterogenous group, it follows that it would spill over into ritual space and time. Theoretically, this happens in a predictable way. Turner's principle holds true in a discursive way, but it needs adjusting to account for the types of positioning contests that occur in ritual contexts that are socially diverse. In religious groups negotiating authority and authenticity, the discursive claim that social hierarchy is nullified in the ceremonial circle plays an important role in the ongoing contest. Although ritual time is set apart symbolically, it is not empirically removed from social observation, gossip, and judgment. Even in communities at war, ritual can provide a space of peace; peacemaking must be done in a ceremonial way. So community ceremonies offer a space apart in which to negotiate these questions, and I suspect they did just the same in the Ndembu village where Turner observed. This is not to deny the strong feelings of connection forged in a ceremony as a rule, just that they are not without exception.

Relevant here, too, is Grandmother Margaret's comment on the purpose of ceremony. In conversation with me, she pushed back on the strict adherence to protocol as the only consideration guiding how a ceremony is conducted. Being herself a full-blood Cheyenne-Arapaho and a leader in her religious network, she has the legitimacy, the freedom, to follow her calling or intuition within a ceremony. Flexibility should be enacted, according to her, when a dogmatic adherence to protocol might interfere with

the participants' spiritual experience. For her, the ceremonies were designed to facilitate spiritual consciousness, connection to the spirits, and communication with divine forces. Protocols were developed in accordance with communities' successful experiences doing so. If the needs of participants has changed, by virtue of them being part of a different social category, then the ceremony needs to change as well to maintain its efficacy. Those changes can be made based on her *reading* of the ceremony. But who decides on such changes?

Racial Identity and Religious Authority

In both of the examples shared above, the group's categorical identity is complicated by their racial diversity but they do engage in Indigeneity as a real and imagined community whereby a group carries on the symbolic work to create a real and imagined connection to a place. To say that there is diversity and rhetorical unity is not to imply that the identity politics within this group are without hierarchy. There is definite social contestation for "Real Indian" authority played out in multiple venues that cross over the explicit boundaries of sacred space and time. In difficult moments, leaders must take action to adapt or enforce the ritual protocol? What logic is at work in those hot moments of decision? I argue that part of that logic is determined by the "cultural capital" possessed by the assembled group. It is fluid case-by-case. In some cases there will be a clear leader to whom everyone will defer. In other cases, I have seen senior actors present look to each other as a quorum and discuss the matter together until they arrive at consensus. This authorization, either alone or in cohort, is partially arbitrated by one's degree of Indian identity, measured either in blood or in demonstrated

commitment to the path, as illustrated in the vignettes above.

Sense of Place

The work of Basso, Nelson, and others has established place as a central theme in Native American cosmologies, religious traditions, and epistemologies. Native traditions are well known for not being proselytizing, that is, there is no formula for integrating outsiders into a localized system of knowledge and practice. Faced with separation from their homelands and an inter-tribal community, urban Indians have turned to ceremonial traditions as mobile technologies that can feasibly be practiced in cities and residential areas. What is repeatedly remarked about these traditions is that the protocols, the rules for appropriate behavior and respect are of paramount importance to carry along with the ritual structure. The knowledge associated with the ceremonies is just as important as the physical elements. For native participants, the integrity of the tradition depends on the contextualization of the physical acts within the symbolic matrix of the protocols that give it meaning.[6]

"Knowing the origins of their people, their place, and the all-important things the place contains is considered essential orientation for a tribal person. A person's origin story maps and integrates the key relationships with all aspects of the landscape."[7] The native science idea of the universe as unfolding in participation with creative human beings and all things informs a religious practice that is open and dynamic while still being rooted in origin and place. Native American traditions serve the people in the

[6] Owen, *The Appropriation of Native American Spirituality*.
[7] Cajete, *Native Science*, 46.

present, co-creating our world; they do not bind people to an idealized past. How is "place" as a Native value guaranteed in a portable ceremony?

Urban ceremonies – Mythical time

In the urban context, does the focus shift from primary instructions and re-enacting mythical story in beginning times to following the prescribed protocol that was obtained from an elder? Is the fact that we are not in that place where those mythical events occurred make their retelling a problem?

Especially for non-native leaders, they do not have the authority to tell myths, tell stories about "our people" or the first people. We live in the city where the scientific/secular discourse is hegemonic. We know they don't believe those myths as literal. But we do tell stories about ourselves and the past. So where do the sources of knowledge and stories come in urban religion? Epistemology? Where do the sources of protocol come from and how will they be enforced?

The reservation itself, what Tudor calls "the Rez," becomes the faraway land and source of knowledge. Does it replace the mythical time of beginnings? Instead of mythic time as the referent for tribal practice, the time of freedom before confinement becomes the operable time to be venerated at urban practices. In the city, we are twice removed from that freedom. So a kind of mimesis or symbolic replacement/displacement of mythical time with pre-confinement time takes place to fit into the history of colonization. The colonial calendar gets transmitted to future generations as marking sacred time.

But how does mythical time play into urban ceremonies? Or mythology at all? I don't hear people telling stories at local ceremonies, except Julie Tumamait. The oral recitation of origin myths may be a point where only blood authenticity is recognized because there are too many phrases about "us." When "our people" emerged from the land below. How can a non-native tell those stories with authenticity?

For someone like Tudor, concern moves to who are the "Real" Bear Dancers from a focus on what do the first instructions mean for people today. A kind of competition over who follows protocol most stringently versus who interprets the first instructions to facilitate or empower ritual participants to have the most powerful sacred experiences and access the spiritual power that the ceremonies are designed to invoke.

I noticed a different approach to that in the tipi meetings with Gilbert, a Navajo Road Man, where he was comfortable enough in his authority/authenticity that he made a lot of allowances for people to have healing experiences even when it contradicted strict protocol. That is the power for me, but how does an ethnic tradition in diaspora empower non-native leaders to have the leeway to do that? One idea is to relax the stringent focus on race. I noticed the same thing with Santo Daime practiced in the US, where the Brazilian Padrinhos focused on the power of the medicine to invoke sacred experiences, while the American leaders tended to obsess about protocols and "what would Brazilians do?" In terms of this line of questioning, how does NAC differ from place-based traditions? Are place-based traditions even being practiced in urban areas outside their regions of origin? Further research is neede to trace what was changed in Lakota traditions to render them portable and accessible to other tribes and non-natives?

Participant Observation: Another Sweat Lodge

For example, just in the last sweat I attended, in January 2014, after 15 years of attending sweats, I was corrected from crossing the lines from the fire to the lodge. Of course I know about the symbolic function of this border that one does not cross. But the lodge was not dressed yet- that is, the frame was then with the pit inside visible to all because the blankets had not been layered over it yet. And just a few minutes earlier, I had been tasked with cleaning out the stone put from debris that might smoke when the hot rocks are put there. So I had not only crossed the line, but I stepped inside the lodge itself in order to care for it. I thought I was still allowed to cross it when they called for help dressing the lodge. I was thinking that the line wasn't activated until the lodge was dressed. But Isaac, a firekeeper and sundancer, corrected me, nicely, and reminded me that we are not supposed to cross the line once the fire is lit, adding that I would see children exempt and firekeepers would cross it in the course of 'working with the fire."

Playing Indian, Pan-Indianness

Berkhofer argues that Americans have been unable to see Native America as whole, complex, messy, contested, and rather has made a construct that serves white agendas and white interests by reshaping the diversity of native nations into one generic Indian: simplified, exotic, stuck in the past- a exaggerated stereotype that is easy for us to understand.[8] It fills a clear niche in the American imagination and narrative. The narrative of American identity is that we absorbed this Indian identity, utilizing what was real and good, and we modernized the rest of the Indian's superstitious throwbacks, irrational fear of sorcery and quaint veneration of the spirits inherent in stones and animals. We modernized what imagined could be salvaged and discarded the rest. Kill the Indian, Save the Man.

This tendency to stereotype Indians is precisely why Sherman Alexie's work is so good, so popular. He fights against a flat, 2-dimensional version of Indians n every line. The native characters in his stories are smart, dumb, victorious, traumatized, self-

[8] Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian, from Columbus to the Present*.

loathing, educated drunks, criminals, and professionals. They defy simplification in their every act.[9]

In contrast, the white players Phillip Deloria describes in *Playing Indian* are fascinated with exactly that stereotype: the exotic, noble, deeply spiritual Other who, conveniently, is mostly disappeared from their everyday lives- removed from American land and removed from mainstream American life. But why? Deloria notes that much of that fascination with Indians in American culture can be explained as a need to find cultural authenticity in a composite Euroamerican Society where ethnic difference between English, Scottish, Irish, polish, and Scandinavian cultures have largely been subsumed and repressed into the idea of a melted American identity. One primary marker of that is its syncretism: a formation of opposing ideas in the sharing of a common enemy—Indians. Indians play the part of a common ally as well. A common land also unites us with our imagined Indians—Indeed, this identity is named after the land- America, not its European cultural-linguistic roots.[10]

But did the amalgamation of European societies into America leave Indians alienated and fragmented?

The problem is that Euroamericans did not discover America and transplant their culture here. Rather, they discovered themselves and that experience changed and developed Europe as well as the European diaspora.[11] One of the consequences of that amalgamation was a straightjacketing of ethnic populations into the American mold. While there was always the frontier fancy of drinking and wild revelry, respectable

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[9] Sherman Alexie, *Blasphemy* (New York: Grove Press, 2012).
[10] Deloria, *Playing Indian*.
[11] Peter d' Errico, "Native Americans in America: A Theoretical and Historical Overview," *Wicazo Sa Review* 14, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 7–28.

members of American society were restricted to a Victorian-derived code of conduct that especially included a submission to the social order for the underprivileged. The working classes were indoctrinated in the Protestant work ethic and the promise of the American capitalist system. Thus the sense of a slogging industrial existence was born.

In this milieu, *Playing Indian* serves as a release valve, allowing mainstream Americans to escape into a fancifully free way of life, even if only temporarily. Also, to assuage the racial unease in the nascent syncretic American whiteness, *Playing Indian* serves as a marker of a common/constructed American experience in an immigrant nation potentially riven with cultural differences. In terms of the common Indian enemy, Americans have ever been doubtful that their extermination was necessary or justified, or complete. Thus playing Indian also inoculates against guilt about culture and literal genocide. It addresses deep emotional needs of feeling lost, unmoored from a deep historical cultural root system. Masking and play at least can give a sense of belonging to a tribe, a nation, a land. Surely our presence and prosperity on this land has spurred many of us to inquire into our legitimacy to be here. Do we belong here?

Now, in terms of non-native participation in Indian ceremonies today and the development of Pan-Indian traditions and identities today, are people falling into the same trap? Is Pan-Indian-ism replicating the process Berkhofer described of constructing a generic type of Indian that many people can conform to in their own identity projects? If that's true for Indian people and especially mixed-blood Indians, then it must be removed from racial measurements and traditional markers of health and identity. It had to be made available to victims-graduates of boarding schools who could no longer claim linguistic belonging, or the privilege of growing up in their tribal

ceremonial ways. In theoretical terms, the Pan-Indian religious identity has pushed an extending paradigm, lowering boundaries and circulating religious knowledge. Even if this was only intended to extend at first to people recognized as Indian by blood, the consequence has clearly been to extend acceptance beyond that racial border. It opened up a powerful spiritually potent space in the American landscape and just as it was enormously popular among young disaffected native activists in the 1970s, it is currently still wealthy in cultural currency to other Americans alienated from the mainstream narrative of history and identity and Christianity.

Conclusion

Urban Indians and Activism

The urban ceremonial gatherings I attended in Ventura County, California are explicitly multi-racial, but they are a de facto decolonizing project in that they seek to reinforce an indigenous model of knowledge and practice. The leaders and practitioners are resisting assimilation into mainstream society by looking to their own traditions for ways to incorporate outsiders. It is a native-led project of inclusion, which moves in a different direction than multi-culturalism. The movement is *toward* multi-culturalism through indigenous knowledge rather than *from* multi-culturalism toward indigenous knowledge. Outsiders are welcome to participate on indigenously rooted terms. It is an inter-cultural dialogue based on respect and the demand that ceremonies held sacred by native ancestors continue to be practiced in an appropriate way. Outsiders can learn those appropriate ways.

A society under indigenous control today would include all the settlers. Autonomy and self-determination for Indian nations flow from LAND. A western notion of Sovereignty flows from the right to control and occupy land, but native control today would be expressed by changing the orientation of society toward land and resources; by bringing recognition of the land and the more-than-human community of persons into the circle of agents whose rights and desires are considered by the leaders of society. This is exactly what I believe these urban spiritual networks are creating at their ceremonial gatherings. When native people create space where outsiders are welcome but with conditions, that is an expression of self-determination. It is different

than minority cultural expression appreciated by an American mainstream that increasingly seeks to please itself by consumption of the cultural practices of Others. Cultural expression is different than self-determination: the former will never threaten the political order, whereas the unique historical relationship of tribes to the American state does situate native people to make claims upon the rights and resources of this land.

Native American Religious Traditions strive to be decolonizing spaces in the ways that they follow from native epistemology and cosmology that situates humans in a respectful and co-creative relationship with the more-than-human world. The protocols of each ceremony reinforce that position of respect toward the watchful world and emphasize the importance of acting appropriately. That is, acknowledging one's humanness and attending to the obligations placed on the human race by mythical characters in native cosmogonies, mythologies, and first instructions. Those characters represent the relationship humans have with the non-human world and express the impact all human actions can have on the cosmos. This native perspective on ethics differs markedly from a colonizing view of the world that seeks to exploit the natural world for extractable wealth.

A central question animating my dissertation research here has been whether the knowledge that informs these ways of native spiritual traditions is eligible for trans-nationality. Is it rightly engaged in reciprocity with outsiders? Or is that appropriation a continuation of the colonial project's propensity toward cultural theft? An underlying implication in this well-worn question is that all that sharing is one-way from native to white people, bye they academics or seekers. This implication, in my experience, is

wrong. Knowledge exchange is always two-way, and it is patently obvious that religious knowledge- and conversion- flowed to native people, evidenced by the fact that the majority of them today identify as Christian. And it is wrong that the only spiritual seekers who explore native spirituality are white ones. In the context of my fieldwork, the non-native visitors/practitioners are far more diverse: Black, Asian, Latino. Whiteness is not a pre-requisite for outside interest in Native American Religions.

Another line of inquiry intersects the questions of identity: epistemology. What is the knowledge of this urban religious network? What counts as legitimate knowledge here and how is it transmitted? Epistemology intersects with identity because persons construct their identities based on knowledge and the types of knowledge they are exposed to. However, the fact that these ceremonies are open to outside attendance does not mean they are an open book, ripe for the appropriation. Rather, there is a noticeable mystique surrounding the space and protocols of the ceremony. Outsiders are cued to keep a respectful distance by reminders of restricted areas, behaviors, and expected protocols.

Reverse Colonization

If we talk about native spiritual networks as decolonizing spaces, it implies a stripping of colonizing mentalities and constructs—but stripping down to what? We would be hard-pressed to claim that multi-racial networks in the Pan-Indian model will decolonize participants back to a pre-colonized state—one that is quintessentially, prototypically indigenous. Rather, we must recognize hybridity—that native and European cultures have developed in a dialectic that has grown to global proportions.

Particularly relevant in the context of urban displacement is that tribal members met and mingled with Indians of all tribes in the urban diaspora-- other Indians and other nationalities from all over the world in America's fantastically diverse cities. We are a nation in diaspora. Now even this land's autoctonous people are dispersed.

Just as D'Errico argues that Europe became itself via its interaction with Native America, to approach the possibility of a decolonized Native people, a healed people, we must acknowledge that today, native communities have developed alongside the colonial power, engaged in a long-standing cultural, religious, linguistic exchange. Strong self-determined, autonomous native nations today will be so in full acceptance of that historical reality. And naiveté or cultural nostalgia aside, the only humane wish is for an outcome where indigenous societies worldwide emerge from this historical colonial encounter the stronger for it. Just as Marx envisioned a communist society as rising from the capitalist ashes, a society whose goals and priorities were set by the injustices wrought by the previous order, in the very same way, a reverse colonization is happening in the transnational space created by trans-Indigenous religion. Non-native participants are turning away from an exploitative, assimilative logic in mainstream society and internalizing the rhetoric of indigeneity: an obligation of respect for all our relations; respect of diversity and individual autonomy; respect for protocols that honor spirits and ancestors as well as natural forces; respect for reciprocity; and a model of health that seeks balance of the mind, body, and spirit.

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